



Published by the International Reference Centre for the rights of the children deprived of their family (ISS/IRC)

NEWSLETTER

STATISTICS

Towards a stabilization of ICA figures despite an ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in 2021?

As customary, ISS/IRC is pleased to present the intercountry adoption (ICA) statistics for 2021 as well as a brief analysis of these figures.

Last ISS/IRC concluded with an analysis of the unusual 2020 annual ICA statistics, given the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic globally, not just on (intercountry) adoption procedures but also on child protection systems more broadly.

What can we gather this year from ICAs carried out in 2021? Despite global efforts focused on vaccination, 2021 remained a year during which the virus kept on spreading, mutating and further compounding challenges for children and their families. During 2021, the consequences of the pandemic became increasingly visible: surges in poverty, impact on livelihoods and resourcesⁱ, increasing violence (digitally and offline), worsening mental health, school closures and unemployment leading to increased

inequalities, etc. In many contexts, these consequences have increased children's vulnerabilities to family separation. Over 1.5 million children are estimated to have lost a parent or other caregiver as a result of COVID-19 associated deaths, and projections are that another 4 million could do so before this protracted pandemic endsⁱⁱ (see 2021 [DGD Outcome report](#)).

So, how is this situation reflected in the 2021 figures?

Slight increase since 2020

Overall, there is no decrease in the ICA figures compared to 2020. A slight general increase of 6% can be noted (3,683 in 2020 vs. 3,884 in 2021 – see frame n°1).

For Scandinavian receiving States, the increase is more significant, reaching 39% (Denmark), 51% (Norway) or even 148% (Finland). For others, such as Germany and Ireland, there has been a decrease in ICA figures from previous years which persisted in 2021; a 21% and 62% decrease compared to their respective 2020 figures.

Receiving State ⁱⁱⁱ	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
United States of America ^{iv}	8'668	7'094	6'441	5'648	5'372	4'714	4'059	2'971	1'622	1'785
Italy ^v	3'106	2'825	2'206	2'216	1'872	1'439	1'394	1'213	669	680
Canada ^{vi}	1'367	1'242	905	895	790	621	658	576	416	384
France ^{vii}	1'569	1'343	1'069	815	953	685	614	421	244	252
Spain ^{viii}	1'669	1'188	824	799	567	531	445	370	195	171
Sweden ^{ix}	466	341	345	336	257	240	185	170	92	118
Belgium ^x	265	219	144	136	121	133	134	99	80	84
The Netherlands ^{xi}	488	401	354	304	214	210	156	145	70	75
Finland ^{xii}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	27	67

Germany ^{xiii}	801 (420)	661 (272)	209	308	213	81	91	85	81	64
Norway ^{xiv}	231	154	142	132	126	127	87	91	41	62
Australia ^{xv}	149	129	114	83	82	69	65	57	37	42
Switzerland ^{xvi}	212 (314)	169 (280)	105 (226)	104 (197)	91 (101)	82 (69)	58 (79)	72	38	41
Denmark ^{xvii}	219	176	124	97	84	79	64	46	23	32
New Zealand ^{xviii}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	16
Ireland ^{xix}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	29	11
TOTAL	19'312	16'053	13'103	11'966	10'752	8'998	8'031	6'316	3'683	3'884

For States of origin, frame n°2 indicates that the first 30 states of origin in 2021 undertook at minimum 20 intercountry adoptions during the course of the year, representing 88% of intercountry adoptions registered globally.

Country of origin ^{xx}	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Colombia ^{xxi}	901	562	355	359	314	542	559	597	387	492
India ^{xxii}	362	298	242	233	323	518	456	503	263	432
Ukraine	713	674	560	339	339	270	280	366	277	310
Thailand	251	272	207	172	250	218	215	208	117	267
South Korea	797	206	494	406	362	396	303	254	266	227
Bulgaria ^{xxiii}	350	421	323	262	324	289	201	270	169	205
Philippines ^{xxiv}	374	525	405	354	313	304	206	214	112	156
Hungary	145	104	77	84	88	233	235	238	158	145
Nigeria	238	225	175	163	139	206	185	140	96	132
South Africa ^{xxv}	81	147	176	172	103	130	112	113	53	127
Vietnam ^{xxvi}	216	293	285	287	248	356	215	220	108	106
Haiti	262	460	551	236	324	398	325	257	209	103
Taiwan	291	188	147	172	150	157	109	149	124	97
United States of America ^{xxvii}	178	167	155	160	147	89	140	76	89	94
Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) ^{xxviii}	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	28	ND	41	36	57
Russia	2,442	1,703	381	210	151	319	260	221	44	49
Bolivia ^{xxix}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	6	40
Burkina Faso ^{xxx}	87	74	99	56	61	59	37	59	45	37
Jamaica ^{xxxi}	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	52	37	36
Brazil	337	246	31	32	29	127	38	66	55	35
Dominican Republic ^{xxxii}	21	21	21	20	32	20	24	33	15	33
Burundi ^{xxxiii}	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	40	59	53	36	33
Morocco ^{xxxiv}	102	32	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	35	27	32
Peru ^{xxxv}	122	92	97	79	91	71	56	67	32	31
Madagascar ^{xxxvi}	46	40	57	77	62	54	40	40	31	30
Romania ^{xxxvii}	0	7	14	23	19	29	41	24	33	29
Letonia ^{xxxviii}	59	131	96	189	89	84	79	38	20	28
Liberia ^{xxxix}	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	22	30	51	29	27
Mexico ^{xl}	10	10	19	10	19	6	20	40	23	27
Sierra Leone ^{xli}	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	34	13	22

While some States of origin have maintained stable figures (Hungary, Vietnam, USA, Jamaica, Peru, Madagascar, Liberia), others have experienced a slight decrease (South Korea and Taiwan), or a more significant decrease (Haiti and Brazil). The first 30 countries of origin have gone through an average increase of 39% of their intercountry adoptions. In fact, significant increases between 2020 and 2021 figures can be observed in

certain States such as in Bolivia (from 6 ICAs in 2020 to 40 in 2021), Dominican Republic (15 ICAs in 2020 to 33 in 2021), India (263 in 2020, 432 in 2021), Sierra Leone (13 in 2020, 22 in 2021) and South Africa (53 ICAs in 2020 to 127 in 2021).

Are these improvements linked to more responsive systems and adapted adoption procedures that address the new normal since early 2020? Or to the

regularization of some “blocked” adoptions due to the pandemic?

Furthermore, an increase of 11% in the number of states of origin is noted, growing from 126 referenced countries to 122. New countries such as: Djibouti (4) Armenia (3) Gabon (3) Eritrea (2) Papua New Guinea (2) Somalia (2) Jordan (1) Myanmar (1) Sao Tome and Principe (1) Sweden (1) Switzerland (1) Tchad (1) Trinidad and Tobago (1) Turks and Caicos Island (1) can be mentioned.

...but overall remaining trends

In comparison to pre-Covid times (2019 figures), however, overall ICA numbers in 2021 decreased (39%). This trend is observed among all receiving States, reaching up to a decrease of 54% (Spain) and of 48% (The Netherlands – having in mind that the country suspended all intercountry adoptions in February 2021). With few exceptions, this is equally true for the great majority of States of origin, reaching up to 78% (Russia), 60% (Haiti) or 52% (Vietnam).

Where does the explanation for the general continued decrease lie? The overall decrease in the need for ICA is certainly significant as a trend since years. However, a more nuanced country-by-country analysis is necessary. In some States such as Burkina Faso or Haiti for example, a deterioration in the security situation of the country for the past years has surely also played an important role, such as suspensions following investigations such as in the Netherlands.

As per the general geographical distribution, no changes are to be stressed: in 2021, most ICAs took place from Asian countries followed by the continents of the Americas, Europe, and Africa (659). The least ICAs took place from Oceania.

Concerning mayor *receiving States*, the USA remains by far the receiving State that adopts the most internationally, followed by Italy in Europe and Canada in the Americas. France, Spain, and Sweden are respectively at positions 4, 5 and 6. As per the ranking of receiving States, there are only slight fluctuations to observe.

As far as *States of origin* are concerned, on the other hand, bigger fluctuations can be observed: Colombia remains at first position, followed by India, Ukraine, and Thailand. South Korea went from 3rd position to 5th. States with an important decrease in their ICA figures, which consequently do not figure among the top 30 countries anymore, are the following: China (14 in 2021, 250 in 2020), Belarus (1 in 2021, 42 in 2020), Lithuania (8 in 2021, 32 in 2020), Pakistan (8 in 2021, 28 in 2020), Uganda (12 in 2021, 26 in 2020) and Ivory Coast (17 in 2021, 22 in 2020). The ICA evolution from China is significant: it went from being first State of origin for many decades, still among the top 5 States

of origin in 2019 and 2020, to being among the first 50 States of origin with only 14 ICA in 2021. This can especially be explained through the actions taken by the country during the Covid-19 pandemic where the Chinese Central Adoption Authority stopped processing intercountry adoptions of children from social welfare institutions.

As mentioned above, there is an increase in collaboration with States of origin. Those that newly feature on the list of the top 30 countries in 2021 are Bolivia, Dominican Republic, and Sierra Leone. It is to be noted that these last two countries were part of the list of the top 30 countries in 2019 already. Further, on the 126 identified States of origin, 62% have undertaken maximum 10 intercountry adoptions, confirming a trend identified since 2019 that collaborations with States are diversifying, with consequently more States of origin but fewer adoptions in each of these States.

Continued standard setting

It is worth noting the ratification of the 1993 Hague Convention by Niger in 2021, which has entered into force in the country on February 1, 2021. The Convention now has [105 contracting States](#), counting also the recent ratification of Botswana which will enter into force on February 1, 2023.

It is noteworthy that over 81% of states of origin with over 20 ICAs (“top 30”) were carried out in virtue of the 1993 Hague Convention, which is consistent with previous figures from 2019 (80% in 2020, 87% in 2019). Among the States of origin which constitute the top 30, seven States (Ukraine, Morocco, Nigeria, Taiwan, Jamaica, Liberia, and Sierra Leone) have not ratified or adhered to the 1993 Hague Convention. The total number of ICAs conducted in these countries amounts to 656 ICAs which represents 19% of the total ICAs for all top 30 states of origins (total: 3,439).

Similar trends for domestic adoptions?

Despite slightly lower figures in some contexts (3,351 in 2019 compared to 2,991 in 2021 in India; 718 in 2019 compared to 569 in 2021 in Colombia), domestic adoptions in States of origin have seemingly been less affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In Burkina Faso and in Romania, a slight increase in the domestic adoption numbers can even be observed: 43 in 2019 to 70 in 2021 in Burkina Faso and from 1,264 in 2019 to 1,653 in 2021 in Romania.

Profile of children

With ICA statistics becoming more precise, States of origin increasingly provide more details on the adopted children’s age, gender and situation prior to the adoption, as per the type of adoption in question.

With regards to age, data available from States of origin confirm that children adopted domestically were generally younger than in ICA.^{xliii} In the majority of States, children adopted internationally are between one year old and four years old (Australia, France, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland) with countries such as Italy, having the majority of children ageing between 5 to 9 years old, and Canada having the majority of children aged at least 10 years old.

Further, in Colombia, Peru, Latvia and Bulgaria^{xliiii} for instance, it can be noticed that the percentage of children with disabilities being adopted internationally is prioritized over domestic adoptions. In addition to age and gender details, it is also noteworthy that more and more States provide details on the children's backgrounds (adopted from institutions, family of origin, foster care or guardianship). In certain contexts, such as Bulgaria or Latvia, it is encouraging to see that the large majority of children are being adopted from foster care or guardianship.^{xliiv}

Leaving aside the specific figures for 2020, the figures for 2021 follow the trends observed in recent years: decline in intercountry adoption, diversification of cooperation between States, etc. Yet, these figures will need to be analysed - even more so in the years to come - in the light of the numerous investigations carried out within several national entities, which began in 2020 and 2021, and will certainly have consequences for the intercountry adoption landscape moving forwards.

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December 2022



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ⁱ December 2021: [UNICEF](#) estimates that the percentage of children living in multidimensional poverty has increased to 52 per cent, an increase of 100 million additional children. reventing a lost decade: Urgent action to reverse the devastating impact of COVID-19 on children and young people.

ⁱⁱ Hillis S, Unwin HJT, Chen Y, et al. [Global minimum estimates of children affected by COVID-19-associated orphanhood and deaths of caregivers: a modeling study. Lancet 2021.](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Where a source is not specifically indicated, statistics reported to the [Hague Conference on Private International Law \(HCCH\)](#) have been used.

^{iv} These [statistics](#) are based on the fiscal year as applied in the US.

^v Intercountry adoption statistics for the years 2016 to 2021 were provided to ISS/IRC by the Italian Central Authority. Link to [the report](#)

^{vi} For 2012 and 2015 to 2018, statistics were provided to the ISS/IRC by the Canadian Federal Central Authority. Data for 2013, 2014 and 2019 are based on statistics provided by the country to the HCCH. The statistics for 2020-2021 were provided to the ISS/IRC by the Canadian Central Authority.

^{vii} The data for 2021 are those available on the [MAI](#) (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs) website as well as on the [French official statistics website](#).

^{viii} As in previous years, data for 2021 includes statistics from all Autonomous Communities and has been provided to the ISS/IRC by the Spanish Central Authority.

^{ix} For 2017-2019, statistics have been provided by the Swedish Central Authority. Data for the years 2016 and 2020-2021 are based on statistics provided by the country to the [HCCH](#).

^x The ISS/IRC has included Belgium in its collection of statistics since 2014. The data for the years 2014, 2017 and 2019 are based on statistics provided by the country to the HCCH. In 2015, the statistics were provided by the Belgian Federal Central Authority. For 2018, the statistics were provided by the [Federal Public Service Justice](#). For 2016, the data was provided by the French and Flemish Community Central Authorities. They related to children who were physically received by their adoptive families, although the adoption was sometimes formally pronounced months or years later. For 2020-2021, the data is based on statistics provided by the Belgian Federal Central Authority.

^{xi} Data for 2021 have been provided to the ISS/IRC by the Dutch Central Authority.

^{xii} The ISS/IRC has chosen to add Finland from the year 2020 onwards in the compilation of its statistics. The data for 2021 was provided by the Finnish Adoption Board. In order not to distort the statistics published in recent years by the ISS/IRC, the statistics for previous years (2012-2019) are not included in the total but are available at the [following link](#).

^{xiii} For the period 2014-2019, the ISS/IRC used various sources (*Statistisches Bundesamt*, statistics provided by the country to the HCCH). For 2020-2021, the German Federal Central Authority, *Bundesamt für Justiz*, provided the statistics presented in the table to the ISS/IRC and the HCCH. However, the Federal Central Authority made it clear that these figures only include adoptions that took place in a country that is a Contracting Party to the 1993 Hague Convention and that were mediated by a German accredited adoption body or by a regional Central Authority. Furthermore, these statistics do not include private and independent adoptions.

^{xiv} Data for 2019 are based on statistics provided by the country to HCCH. Data for 2020-2021 have been provided to ISS/IRC by the Norwegian Central Authority, *Barne-, ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet*.

^{xv} The 2020 statistics are based on the fiscal year as applied in Australia which runs from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020. The 2021 statistics are based on the fiscal year from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 (see [link](#)).

^{xvi} Several sources were used for the period 2014-2020 (Federal Statistical Office, Swiss Central Adoption Authority, statistics provided by the country to the HCCH). In 2019, the Swiss Federal Central Authority has decided to revise its data compilation and analysis system, so that an intercountry adoption is recorded based on the time of arrival of the child in Switzerland over a certain year. Previously, the data analysis was based on the year in which the adoption decision was issued. Swiss intercountry adoption figures have been adjusted up to 2008 using this new method, which is why the ISS/IRC decided to highlight the differences in the table above. Data based on the old system is provided in brackets. Data for 2021 are those provided by Switzerland to the [HCCH](#).

^{xvii} The data for 2019-2021 has been provided to the ISS/IRC by the Danish Central Authority and is available at the [following link](#).

^{xviii} The ISS/IRC has chosen to add New Zealand from the year 2020 in the compilation of its statistics. The 2020 statistics are based on the fiscal year as applied in New Zealand which runs from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020. The 2021 statistics are for the fiscal year 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. In order not to distort the statistics published in recent years by the ISS/IRC, statistics for previous years (2012-2019) are not included in the total but are available at the [following link](#).

^{xix} Data for 2021 has been obtained from the HCCH website. The ISS/IRC has chosen to add Ireland from the year 2020 onwards in the compilation of its statistics. In order not to distort the statistics published in recent years by the ISS/IRC, the statistics for previous years (2012-2019) are not included in the total but are available at the [following link](#).

^{xx} Where a source is not specifically indicated, statistics are based on those of the main receiving States. ISS/IRC has chosen here to propose an overview of States of origin having made at least 20 intercountry adoptions during the year 2021. Variations with the statistics provided by States of origin to HCCH may exist and may be related to the different methods of accounting for an intercountry adoption between States of origin and receiving States.

In addition, in recent years, several countries, such as Germany, Australia, Italy, Norway and Switzerland, list certain countries of origin in general categories, such as "several Asian countries" or "other countries". As a result, it was impossible to determine the precise origin of these adopted children. By using the standard HCCH model, this problem seems to have been solved.

^{xxi} It should be noted that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) mention 435 international adoptions in 2020 and 485 in 2021.

^{xxii} It should be noted that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) mention 417 international adoptions in 2020 and 414 in 2021.

^{xxiii} It should be noted that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) mention 178 international adoptions in 2020 and 208 in 2021.

^{xxiv} It should be noted that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) mention 95 international adoptions in 2020.

^{xxv} It should be noted that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) mention 139 international adoptions in 2021.

^{xxvi} It should be noted that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) mention 246 international adoptions in 2020 and 160 in 2021.

^{xxvii} It should be noted that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) mention 42 international adoptions in 2020.

^{xxviii} This country was added in 2019. Data for 2019 and 2020 are based on statistics from the main receiving states. Statistics for 2017 are based on [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#).

^{xxix} This country was added in 2021. Data for the period 2019-2020 are based on statistics from the main receiving states.

^{xxx} This country was added in 2018. Statistics for 2012 to 2018 are based on statistics provided by the country to HCCH. Data for 2019 and 2020 are based on statistics from the main receiving States. Note that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) indicate 27 intercountry adoptions in 2021.

^{xxxi} This country was added in 2021. Data for the period 2019-2020 are based on statistics from the main receiving states.

^{xxxii} Statistics for 2012-2018 are based on data provided by the country to the HCCH. Data for 2019-2021 are based on statistics from the main receiving states.

^{xxxiii} This country was added in 2019. For 2017 and 2018, this is the sum of data provided by the US Department of State (USA); *France Diplomatie* (France); and the *Commissione per le Adozioni Internazionali* (Italy). Data for 2019 and 2020 are based on statistics from the main host states.

^{xxxiv} This country was added in 2019. Data for 2019 and 2020 are based on statistics from the main receiving states. Data for 2012-2013 are taken from ISS/IRC kafalah statistics (see: Status report on Morocco, August 2017).

^{xxxv} This country was added in 2019. Data for the years 2012 to 2018 are based on statistics provided by the country to HCCH. Data for 2019 and 2020 are from the main host states. Please note that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) indicate 34 intercountry adoptions in 2020 and 64 intercountry adoptions in 2019.

^{xxxvi} This country was added in 2018. Data for the years 2012-2017 are based on statistics provided by the country to HCCH. Data for 2018-2020 are based on statistics from the main receiving states.

^{xxxvii} This country was added in 2020. Data for the years 2012 to 2018 are based on statistics provided by the country to HCCH. Data for 2019 and 2020 are based on statistics from the main receiving states. Please note that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) indicate 32 intercountry adoptions in 2021.

^{xxxviii} It should be noted that the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#) mention 8 international adoptions in 2021.

^{xxxix} This country was added in 2019. Data for 2017-2020 are based on statistics from the main receiving states.

^{xl} Data for 2012-2018 are based on [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#). Data for 2019 and 2020 are based on statistics provided by the main receiving States; please note that the [statistics provided by Mexico to the HCCH for 2019](#) only mention nine intercountry adoptions in 2019.

^{xli} This country was added in 2019. Data for 2019-2021 are based on statistics provided by the main host states.

^{xlii} E.g. Bulgaria: 309 children out of 361 adopted via domestic adoption were below the age of 1 or between 1-4 whereas no child below the age of 1 years was adopted internationally; Romania: 529 children out of 1653 children adopted domestically were below the age of 2, whereas children adopted internationally were mainly aged between 3 and 6 years old.

^{xliii} Colombia: out of 485 ICAs 395 were special needs adoptions; Latvia: out of 8 ICAs 8 were special needs adoptions; Bulgaria: out of 208 ICAs 73 were special needs adoptions; Peru: out of 31 ICAs 23 were special needs adoptions.

^{xliv} Bulgaria: 348 children were adopted from foster care out of a total of 361 domestic adoptions; Latvia: all children adopted domestically came from foster care or guardianship arrangements