



Monthly Review

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The ISS/IRC wishes you all very Happy Holidays as well as a new year of good health and further work together!

It also wishes to congratulate the newly elected and re-elected members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who have been key partners over the years.

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EDITORIAL

2019 intercountry adoption statistics: Same old trends?

As every year, the ISS/IRC has carried out its annual compilation of statistics relating to the number of intercountry adoptions undertaken during the previous year. It is pleased to share the intercountry adoption statistics now available for 2019 as well as a brief analytical overview.

The compilation of intercountry adoption statistics by Central Authorities, as required by Article 7 of the 1993 Hague Convention, is essential in order to identify, understand and address the needs of children and families in adoption, as well as to measure the effective implementation of international standards.

Continued overall adoption trends in 2019...

Based on the data collected, the ISS/IRC is able to make the following four key observations:

1. **Global decrease of intercountry adoptions continues for most States:** It is common knowledge that the total number of intercountry adoptions in the top 12 receiving States is continuously decreasing since 2004. For 2019, the total number amounts to 6,316 in comparison to 8,031 in 2018, likely to be much less in 2020 due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic¹. All receiving States, whose statistics were available to the ISS/IRC, are affected by this decrease, except for a slight increase in Norway in 2019. In some receiving States, the decrease has been significant compared to the 2018 numbers (26% decrease for intercountry adoptions to the USA and to Belgium; 31% for those to France). As for States of origin, China remains the top country, followed by Colombia and India, in second and third positions, and then by Ukraine and Bulgaria. Compared to 2018 and to other States of origin, intercountry adoption numbers from South Korea and Haiti have noted important decreases (see below). The same can be observed for Ethiopia (193 in 2018; 24 in 2019), Ivory Coast (49 in 2018; 27 in 2019), Ghana (188 in 2013; 19 in 2018 and 14 in 2019), Latvia (79 in 2018; 38 in 2019), Poland (332 in 2013; 38 in 2018; 2 in 2019) and the USA (see below). Yet, intercountry adoptions from Bulgaria, Hungary, the Philippines and Taiwan remain quite steady over the past years, with slight fluctuations.

2. **Diversification in intercountry adoption cooperation:** While the decrease in numbers is generally progressive, most receiving States have started diversifying their collaboration with States of origin. For some States, such as Canada and France, the multiplication of collaborations with a wider range of States of origin – outside the group of the ‘top 30’ States of origin for 2018 – reaches up to 29% and 30% of their total number of intercountry adoptions in 2019. The total number from these increasingly ‘visible’ States of origin amounts to 1,101 (16% of the total number of intercountry adoptions in 2019). This is reflected in a very diverse landscape among the top 60 States of origin. While over two third of the latter are contracting States

of the 1993 Hague Convention, the amount of adoptions from non-contracting States is still significant; it seems to be even more on the rise – contrary to the overall decrease in intercountry adoptions. Further, a greater number of ‘traditional’ receiving States adopt from other receiving States, thus making the latter also States of origin (Israel, Germany, Netherlands, Greece, France, Finland). Consequently, these trends make the previously stringent classifications of top 12 receiving States or top 20-30 States of origin less applicable for 2019.

Receiving State ⁱⁱ	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
USA ⁱⁱⁱ	8,668	7,094	6,441	5,648	5,372	4,714	4,059	2,971
Italy ^{iv}	3,106	2,825	2,206	2,216	1,872	1,439	1,394	1,213
Canada ^v	1,367	1,242	905	895	790	621	658	576
France	1,569	1,343	1,069	815	953	685	614	421
Spain ^{vi}	1,669	1,188	824	799	567	531	445	370
Sweden ^{vii}	466	341	345	336	257	240	185	170
The Netherlands	488	401	354	304	214	210	156	145
Belgium ^{viii}	265	219	144	136	121	133	134	99
Norway	231	154	142	132	126	127	87	91
Germany ^{ix}	801 (420)	661 (272)	209	308	213	81	91	85
Switzerland ^x	212 (314)	169 (280)	105 (226)	104 (197)	91 (101)	82 (69)	58 (79)	72
Australia ^{xi}	149	129	114	83	82	69	65	57
Denmark ^{xii}	219	176	124	97	84	79	64	46
TOTAL	19,312	16,053	13,103	11,966	10,752	8,998	8,031	6,316

3. Increase in domestic adoptions: It is encouraging to see that the decrease in intercountry adoptions has led some States to review their priorities, including removing obstacles to the domestic adoption of their own children. As for States of origin, the ISS/IRC welcomes the efforts, for example, of India, Ukraine and Vietnam, as they are reinforcing family strengthening and prevention services as well as their alternative care systems.

The ISS/IRC is privileged to support these States through assessment and capacity-building missions (Mexico, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Ukraine, Viet Nam, etc.). This trend can also be observed in most receiving States where – similar to previous years – domestic adoptions are proportionally higher in numbers (e.g. 175 vs. 99 intercountry adoptions in Belgium; 253 vs. 57 in Australia; 3,385 vs. 85 in Germany). Furthermore, the great majority of domestic adoptions are intrafamily or step-child adoptions (211 out of 253 in Australia; 113 out of 175 in Belgium; 2231 out of 3385 in Germany; etc.) or in some contexts also adoptions by the child’s caregiver (142 out of 253 in Australia).

4. Increasingly precise data: Another positive observation is that data becomes more specific. Several receiving States have continued collecting and sharing statistics on adoption breakdowns (e.g. The Netherlands) and provide differentiations between the profile of adopted children (age groups, children with disabilities, etc.) as well as the nature of the adoption (step-child, intrafamily, by caregiver, etc.).

State of origin ^{xiii}	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1. China	3,998	3,316	2,734	2,817	2,475	2,189	1,773	1,059
2. Colombia	901	562	355	359	314	542	559	597
3. India	362	298	242	233	323	518	456	503
4. Ukraine	713	674	560	339	339	270	280	366
5. Bulgaria	350	421	323	262	324	289	201	270
6. Haiti	262	460	551	236	324	398	325	257
7. South Korea	797	206	494	406	362	396	303	254
8. Hungary	145	104	77	84	88	233	235	238
9. Russia	2,442	1,703	381	210	151	319	260	221
10. Vietnam	216	293	285	287	248	356	215	220
11. The Philippines	374	525	405	354	313	304	206	214
12. Thailand	251	272	207	172	250	218	215	208
13. Taiwan	291	188	147	172	150	157	109	149
14. Nigeria	238	225	175	163	139	206	185	140
15. South Africa	81	147	176	172	103	130	112	113
16. Belarus ^{xiv}	46	N/A	104	40	90	27	112	81
17. USA	178	167	155	160	147	89	140	76
18. Peru ^{xv}	122	92	97	79	91	71	56	67 ^{xvi}
19. Brazil	337	246	31	32	29	127	38	66
20. Burkina Faso ^{xvii}	87	74	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	37	59
21. Burundi	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	40 ^{xx}	59	53
22. Jamaica ^{xviii}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	52
23. Liberia ^{xix}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	22	30	51
24. Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) ^{xxi}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	28 ^{xxii}	N/A	41
25. Mexico ^{xxiii}	10	10	19	10	19	6	20	40
26. Madagascar ^{xxiv}	46	40	57	77	62	54	40	40
27. Latvia	59	131	96	189	89	84	79	38
28. Uganda ^{xxv}	246	289	203	208	191	60	27	37
29. Morocco ^{xxvi}	102 ^{xxvii}	32 ^{xxviii}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	35
30. Sierra Leone ^{xxix}	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	34
31. Dominican Republic ^{xxx}	21	21	21	20	32	20	24	33
32. Democratic Republic of Congo	499	580	240	229	627	54	47	31

...with some surprising but equally worrying observations

While the 2019 statistics follow the overall trends engaged in previous years, the 2019 numbers show surprising developments, some of which are disconcerting.

First of all, as data becomes more precise, it becomes clear that the number of intercountry relative adoptions is proportionally less important than their numbers at domestic level, as shown above (e.g. 16 out of 85 in Germany, 19 out of 99 in Belgium, 10 out of 421 in France, four out of 91 in Norway, 10 out of 72 in Switzerland). However, one might wonder whether these high numbers at domestic level might, in fact, indicate that international standards are not being applied adequately in such situations (see also the ISS/IRC's [Comparative Working Paper No. 3: Spotlight on solutions. Intrafamily Intercountry Adoptions: Upholding the rights of the child](#)).

Additionally, while the proportion of intercountry adoptions of

children with special needs remains significant in certain receiving States (e.g. 298 out of 421 intercountry adoptions in France, 95% of all intercountry adoptions in The Netherlands, Norway), contrary to last year, the number of adopted children below the age of five is gaining increasing traction and constitute the majority profile of internationally adopted children in certain contexts (e.g. 37 out of 57 in Australia; 63 out of 99 in Belgium; 58 out of 85 in Germany; main profiles for intercountry adoptions from Africa, the Americas and Asia to The Netherlands; 84 out of 91 in Norway; 53 out of 72 in Switzerland, etc.).

Furthermore, it is extremely worrying that certain States include adoptions from *Sharia* law countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Morocco, Pakistan, Yemen, etc.) into their intercountry adoptions statistics. As shared by a receiving State, the children 'adopted' from these States are mainly below the age of four, possibly indicating the non-application of important safeguards as foreseen by the UNCRF. With its new publication on *kafalah*, the ISS/IRC hopes to shed light on this child protection measure that is unique, differs from (full) adoption in its nature and legal effects, and should therefore not be dealt with under adoption schemes.

The ISS/IRC team,
December 2020

References:

ⁱ See: Smolin, D. (publication pending 2021). *The Case for Moratoria on Intercountry Adoption*. In *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 2. Draft available at: https://works.bepress.com/david_smolin/22/. See also: *ISS/IRC Monthly Review* No. 245, September 2020, p. 5.

ⁱⁱ Unless specified, statistics used for 2019 are those shared with the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), based on a standard form.

ⁱⁱⁱ For 2018: Fiscal Year: 1 October 2017 – 30 September 2018. For 2019: period not specified.

^{iv} Statistics for 201–2019 were shared by the Italian Central Authority with the ISS/IRC.

^v For 2012, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, the statistics were provided by Canada’s Central Authority. For 2013, 2014 and 2019 the numbers originate from the statistics shared with the HCCH.

^{vi} The 2019 statistics for all *Comunidades Autónomas* were shared with the ISS/IRC by Spain’s Central Authority.

^{vii} For 2017, 2018 and 2019, the statistics were provided by MIA. For 2016, the statistics are those of the HCCH.

^{viii} The ISS/IRC has included Belgium since 2014. For 2014 and 2019, the statistics are those shared with the HCCH; for 2015, they were provided by Belgium’s Central Authority. For 2016, the numbers were provided by the French and Flemish Communities, and represented those children physically cared for in their adoptive families, even when the adoption is sometimes declared months or years later. For 2017, the numbers stem from the statistics published by the HCCH. For 2018, the statistics are those published by the [Service public fédéral justice](#).

^{ix} Germany’s Central Authority states that there are no official, nor exact statistics on intercountry adoption. Thus, the ISS/IRC has decided to base its numbers on the data published by the HCCH for 2014. For 2015 and 2016, it resorted to the Statistisches Bundesamt, whose numbers exclude relative adoptions. Finally, for 2017–2019, the numbers are those of the [HCCH](#).

^x Data for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 were provided by the *Office fédéral de la statistique*. The numbers for 2016, 2017 and 2018 do not include relative, nor adult adoptions. Between 2011 and 2013, the statistics were provided by Switzerland’s Central Authority, and for 2014 the numbers are those registered by the HCCH. The 2019 data has been provided by the Swiss Federal Central Authority ([Office fédéral de la justice](#)). In 2019, the Swiss Federal Central Authority decided to review its data collection and analysis system, by recording an intercountry adoption based on the child’s time of arrival to Switzerland in a given year. Previously, data analysis was recorded based on the year of the adoption decision (*i.e.* recognition procedures or Swiss adoption decision for cases where recognition is not possible, such as non-Hague States or States with simple adoptions). The Swiss intercountry adoption numbers were adjusted back to 2008 by using the changed calculation method, which is why the ISS/IRC has chosen to highlight differences in the table above (data based on the old system is provided in parenthesis).

^{xi} [For 2018: Fiscal Year: 1 October 2017 – 30 September 2018](#). Period not specified for 2019 statistics.

^{xii} Statistics shared with the ISS/IRC by the Danish Central Authority.

^{xiii} Over the past years, several countries, *e.g.* Australia, Germany, Norway, Switzerland and Italy, include some countries of origin in general categories, such as ‘several Asian countries’ or ‘other countries’. Thus, it was impossible to determine the exact origins of these adopted children. By using the HCCH Country Profiles, this issue seems to have been addressed.

^{xiv} This country was added in 2018. The 2018 statistics are those registered by the HCCH. The 2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.

^{xv} This country was added in 2019. Figures for 2012–2018 are based on the statistics provided by the country to the HCCH. The 2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.

^{xvi} The 2019 figures submitted by Peru to the HCCH are 64. See: [MIMP, at Slide 7](#).

^{xvii} This country was added in 2018. The 2018 statistics are those registered by the HCCH. The 2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.

^{xviii} This country was added in 2019. The 2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.

^{xix} This country was added in 2019. The 2017–2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.

^{xx} For 2017 and 2018, these numbers represent the sum of data provided by the US Department of State (USA); *France Diplomatie* (France); and the *Commissione per le Adozioni Internazionali* (Italy).

^{xxi} This country was added in 2019. The 2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.

^{xxii} See: [HCCH Statistics](#) provided by the Republic of Congo in 2017.

^{xxiii} Figures for 2012–2018 are based on the [statistics provided by the country to the HCCH](#). The 2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States; the [statistics provided by Mexico to the HCCH for 2019](#) only mention nine intercountry adoptions.

^{xxiv} This country was added in 2018. The statistics are those registered by the HCCH.

^{xxv} This country was added in 2019. The 2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.

^{xxvi} *Ibid.*

^{xxvii} According to the ISS/IRC’s statistics of *kafalah* (Country Situation: Morocco, last updated in August 2017).

^{xxviii} *Ibid.*

^{xxix} This country was added in 2019. The 2019 data are based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.

^{xxx} The figures for 2012–2018 are based on the statistics provided by the country to the HCCH. The 2019 data is based on statistics shared by the main receiving States.



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