



Summary Report

Intercountry Adoption in Service to Older Children and Children with Special Needs

A Survey

Older Children & Children with Special Needs

In response to recent media reports portraying intercountry adoption, as only benefiting healthy infants, Joint Council, initiated a survey to discern the validity of said criticism. Of the 25 responding adoption agencies representing 4736 placements, approximately 29% benefited Older Children and about 27% Special Needs Children.

Key Findings of the Survey

Children with Special Needs

In contrast to the widely portrayed image, approximately 27% of intercountry adoptions were for children with Special Needs.

Approximately 59% of China intercountry adoptions were for children with special needs.

South Korea, a significant country of origin, had placements of children with special needs of nearly 27%.

Other countries where the percentage was relatively high are Moldova (60%), Haiti (45%), India (28%), Vietnam (25%) and (domestic) U.S. (21%).

Older Children

Contradicting recent media reports, approximately 29% of children who find a family through intercountry adoption were 3 years of age or older.

Nearly 44% of Russian and just over 40% of Ethiopian children being served through intercountry adoption were 3 years of age or older.

Contradicting the common perception that only infant Chinese children find a family through intercountry adoption, 34% of China adoptions were older children.

The lowest percentage of older child placements occurred with South Korea (1.5%).



A Survey of Intercountry Adoption

Joint Council recognizes the unique needs and challenges of finding families for older children and children with special needs living outside parental care. As part of the Joint Council Education and Research Program, a survey was conducted in March 2009 to assess the level to which intercountry adoption is a permanent solution for these highly vulnerable children. The results of the survey establish a benchmark for annual trends in these placements and provides a basis of information for discussion and planning to strengthen intercountry adoption as an option for these children.

The survey is based on placements in calendar year 2008. Responding to the survey were 25 Joint Council member agencies, whose total placements for the year numbered 4,736, approximately 28% of all placements to the U.S. in fiscal year 2008. Given the respondent organizations and their significant weight relative to the number of placement in the countries concerned, the survey results provide an accurate reflection of Joint Council Member Organization's activity in finding families for older children and children with special needs.

The data for Joint Council Member Organizations clearly contradicts the widely held misperception that intercountry adoption only serves "healthy infants".



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Definitions of Children with Special Needs

Minor Special Needs:

A condition that does not significantly impair the child's functioning (such as: small holes in the heart; heart murmurs; low birth weight; prematurity; Hep B carrier; missing or extra digits; strabismus; or conditions effectively controlled by medication).

Moderate - Major Special Needs:

- A. *Conditions requiring intensive treatment for a period of years during childhood (such as: cleft lip and/or palate; other conditions requiring two or more surgeries; conditions requiring significant services from one discipline or several disciplines; and anal fistulas).*
- B. *Conditions requiring life-long management (such as: at least part of a limb; ear atresia; deafness; blindness; dwarfism; and ambiguous genitalia).*
- C. *Conditions prohibiting the child from living independently as an adult (such as: mental retardation [including Downs Syndrome]; genetic syndromes with gradual loss of functions; and CP affecting every body quadrant).*

Definition of Older Children

A child 3 years or more at the time of the referral or finalization of the intercountry adoption.

JOINT COUNCIL
ON INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

117 South Saint Asaph Street
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA

+1.703.535.8045

jcics@jcics.org

www.jointcouncil.org

Data Summary Tables ⁽¹⁾

Total Placements: 4, 736 ⁽²⁾

Older Children Placement – By Group ⁽³⁾

Approximately 29% of placements were children 3 years or older with 63% of this total in the 3 – 5 year range.

0 – 2 years	3, 347
3 – 5 years	879
6 – 10 years	390
11 – 13 years	89
14+ years	31

Older Children Placement – By Region ⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾

Asia	45%
Eastern Europe	12%
Americas	18%
Africa	25%

Total Placements of Special Needs Children ⁽⁵⁾

Approximately 27% of placements were children with minor to major special needs

Minor	451
Moderate/Major	811

Placement of Special Needs Children – By Region ⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾

Eastern Europe	3%
Asia	82%
Americas	11%
Africa	4%

(1) All data is accumulated from responding organizations, and percentages are rounded to nearest whole number.

(2) Total Placements represents the total number of placement for responding organizations; some data were not included because they were not statistically significant.

(3) Refer to the text for definitions of older children.

(4) Percentage of Total Older Child Placement.

(5) Refer to the text for definitions of children with special needs.

(6) Percentage of Total of Special Needs Child Placement.