

ADOPTEE CITIZENSHIP IN THE U.S.

Adoption Events

1940s

U.S. intercountry adoption formally begins as a temporary response to emergency situations, such as children of American GIs born in Europe and European children displaced or orphaned by WWII.

1950s

Proxy adoptions are common, allowing U.S. families to adopt foreign-born children without traveling outside the U.S. Some U.S. families adopt through **special acts of Congress**.

1953

U.S. immigration law **broadens the definition of orphan** to include children with two living parents.

1961

The Orphan Eligibility Clause of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1961 includes adoption in immigration law and **permanently provides non-quota visas, but not citizenship, for intercountry adoptees**.

1999

The **first known adoptee deportation** occurs.

2000

The Child Citizenship Act (CCA) **allows only certain* intercountry adoptees to acquire U.S. citizenship automatically**.

* Those who entered the U.S. on certain visas and who were under 18 years of age on February 27, 2001.

2011

A global coalition led by adult adoptees and AdopSource began **working to amend the CCA to lift the age restriction**. The coalition halted the pending deportations of Russell Green to South Korea and Kairi Shepherd to India.

2015

Adoptee Solidarity Korea – Los Angeles (ASK-LA) and a coalition of adoptees revive work on amending the CCA, spurring the formation of the Adoptee Rights Campaign in partnership with the National Korean American Education & Service Consortium (NAKASEC) and **leading to the introduction of the Adoptee Citizenship Act into Congress**.

2016

Adam Crapser is the most recent adoptee to be deported. He is returned to Korea as an adult. More than 25 adoptees are known to have been deported.

2017

An estimated 35,000–50,000 **intercountry adoptees do not have citizenship**.

Related Events

1948

The **Displaced Persons Act** temporarily expedites immigration of European refugees, including a non-quota provision for 3,000 “eligible displaced orphans.”

1953–1961

Refugee Relief Act permits 4,000 orphans to enter the U.S. regardless of country of origin. The **Refugee-Escaper Act** offers unlimited visas to foreign orphans adopted by U.S. families.

1989

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child is the **first international statute to mention adoption explicitly**. The U.S. is not bound by these rules because it has not ratified the Convention (the only country except for Somalia not to ratify).

1996

Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) **dramatically expand detention and deportation of immigrants**, making adoptees without citizenship even more vulnerable.

2008

Fourteen years after signing **The Hague Convention**, the U.S. begins to implement it. The Convention seeks to protect the best interests of all people involved in intercountry adoption.

510,207

Children adopted by U.S. parents from other countries from 1948 to 2016.

Adoptee Citizenship and Deportations

25

Number of U.S. adoptees known to have been deported. They are deported as adults to their birth countries, where many have no known connections and don't speak the language.

35,000
to
50,000

Estimated number of U.S. adoptees who do not have citizenship.

0

Number of U.S. government sources that centralize adoptee citizenship and deportation information. This makes it difficult for adoptees to determine their citizenship and for communities to monitor deportation activity.

Intercountry Adoptions

The U.S. Adopts the Most Foreign-Born Children of Any Country in the World

The U.S. has adopted 115,593 children from South Korea alone, the top sending country.

Top 20 Sending Countries (1953–2016)

South Korea
China
Russia
Guatemala

76% of all U.S. intercountry adoptions come from the top four sending countries.

Ethiopia
Ukraine
Vietnam
India
Romania
Colombia
Kazakhstan
Philippines
Haiti
Bulgaria
Cambodia
Taiwan
Mexico

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