



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

Intercountry Adoptions by Parents Habitually Resident in Ireland: 1991 – date

A core objective of the Adoption Authority of Ireland is to develop a research function, as described in Goal 3 of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2016 – 2019:

“To inform and influence adoption policy and service delivery through provision of a comprehensive information, research and communications framework”

This is the first in a series of short research reports. It is a recent analysis of Intercountry Adoption figures from the period January 1991 – September 2019.

To ensure the provision of the highest possible standards of adoption related services, throughout the lifelong adoption process, with the best interests of children as the first and paramount objective.



Intercountry Adoptions by parents habitually resident in Ireland: 1991 – date

Introduction:

The information presented in this report is divided into 2 sections:

Section 1 refers to all intercountry adoptions recognised between January 1991 and October 2010 by the then *Adoption Board* in respect of parents habitually resident in Ireland at the time of the adoption (entered at the time in the Register of Foreign Adoptions [ROFA]).

Section 2 refers to all intercountry adoptions from November 2010 to September 2019 recognised by the *Adoption Authority of Ireland* in respect of parents habitually resident in Ireland at the time of the adoption (entered into the Register of Intercountry Adoptions [RICA]).

Brief Overview:

A total of **4989** children have been adopted by parents habitually resident in Ireland from 1991 to date. The vast majority of these (**4,282**) were adopted over the 19-year period from January 1991 to October 2010. In the remaining 9 years under the new legislation, there has been a decline in numbers, with **707** children adopted since 2010.



Section 1: January 1991 – October 2010

Table 1: Number of children adopted per country, 1991 – 2010¹

Country where adoption effected	Number of children 1991 - 2010
Belarus	145
Bolivia	*
Bosnia and Herzegovina	*
Brazil	17
Bulgaria	*
Cambodia	*
China	381
Colombia	18
El Salvador	*
Ethiopia	197
Jersey	*
Kazakhstan	145
Kenya	*
Malawi	*
Mexico	82
Paraguay	7
Peru	*
Philippines	*
Poland	*
Romania	807
Russia	1414
Rwanda	*
South Africa	*
Sri Lanka	*
Taiwan	14
Thailand	100
Ukraine	99
UK	11
USA	31
Uzbekistan	*
Vietnam	785
Zimbabwe	*
Total:	4282

¹ Register of Foreign Adoptions 1991 – 2010, Irish residents only * Adoptions from all countries listed in the above table have been included in the table's Total figure, however in cases marked with '*', the number of children adopted from this country is too small to be individually reported for reasons of anonymity and confidentiality.



Table 1 (above) illustrates the number of children adopted per country in alphabetical order between January 1991 and October 2010 by parents habitually resident in Ireland. While 33 countries are represented, the countries from which most children were adopted were Russia, Romania, Vietnam, China and Ethiopia. These 5 countries accounted for **83%** of the intercountry adoptions during this time. The breakdown of numbers involved is graphically represented in Figure 1 (below).

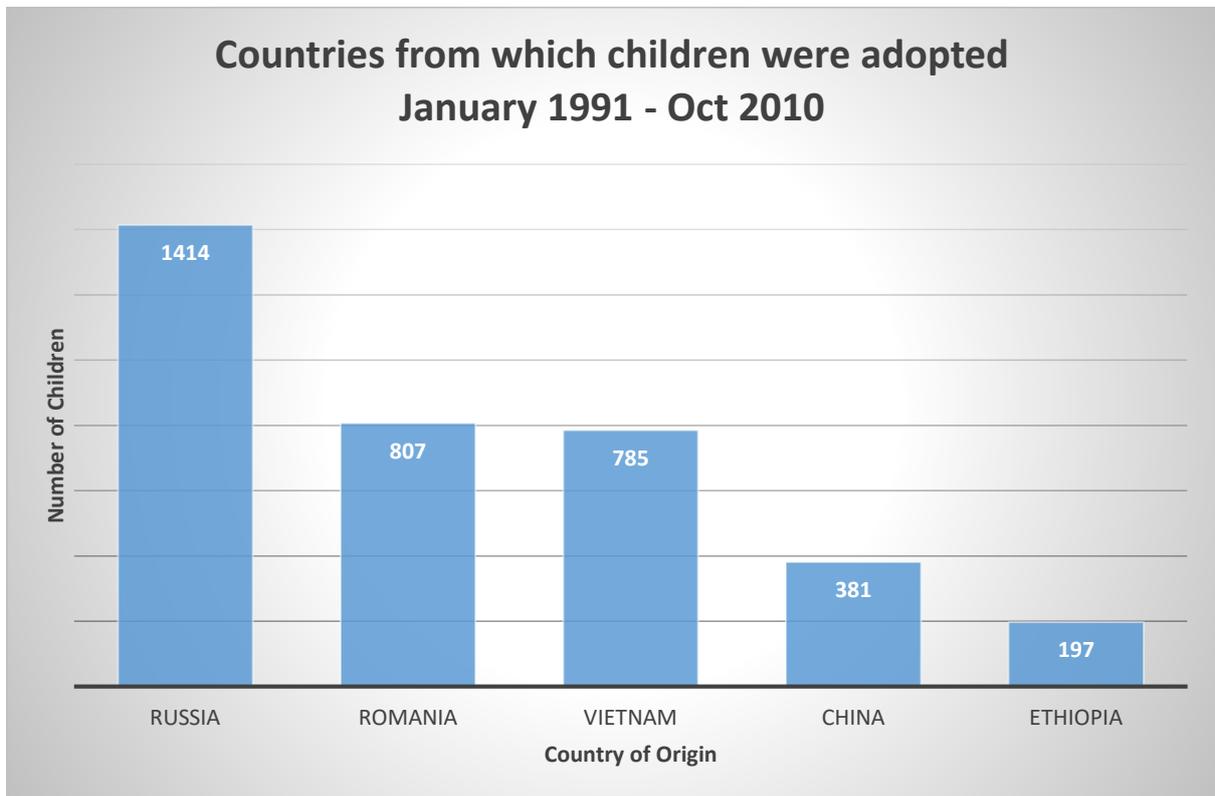


Figure 1: Main countries from which children were adopted, January 1991 – October 2010

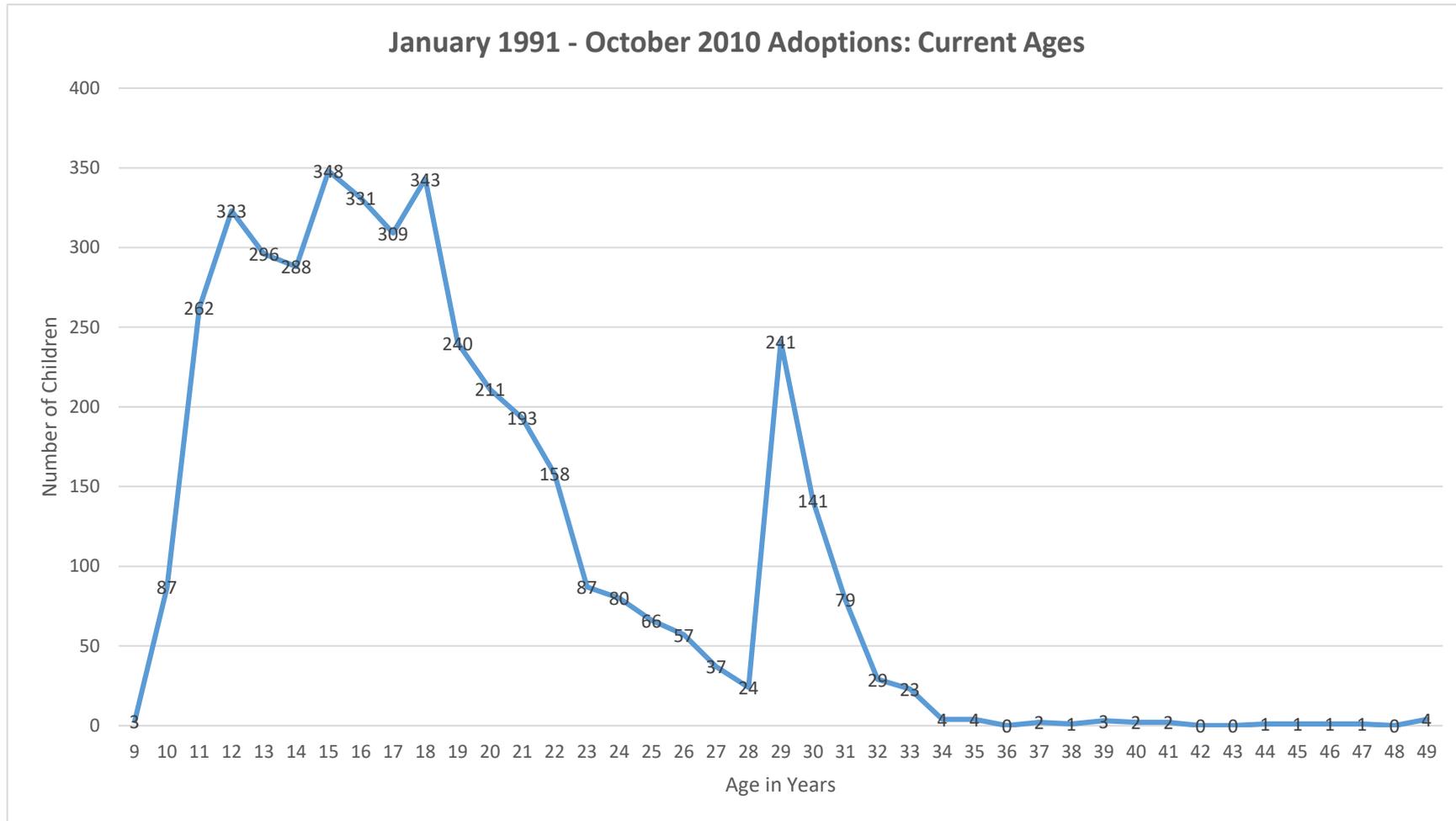


Figure 2: Current Ages of Individuals Adopted January 1991 – October 2010 by parents habitually resident in Ireland

To ensure the provision of the highest possible standards of adoption related services, throughout the lifelong adoption process, with the best interests of children as the first and paramount objective.



Figure 2 (above) illustrates the current ages² of individuals adopted between January 1991 and October 2010.

It is notable that there are two peaks in the above graph. 81% of all children adopted in the period between 1991 and 2010 are currently aged between 10 and 16. The number of older children/young adults falls steadily thereafter until the age of 28. However, the numbers then rise sharply: 11% of all individuals adopted as children in this period are now aged 29 – 31. This figure is largely driven by the high number of infants adopted from Romania in the early 1990s.

Provision was made in the Adoption Act 1991 for the then Adoption Board to enter into the Register of Foreign Adoptions children who were the subject of an intercountry adoption up to the age of 21 if their adoption had occurred prior to the enactment of the legislation, or up to the age of 18 if their adoption had occurred after the commencement of the Act. *Each of these cases was examined individually to ensure they met the specific criteria*³ *outlined in the Act.* This accounts for the small number of individuals in the above graph aged 34 – 49 (n=26/4282 or 0.6% of the total number of children adopted in this period).

² Calculated on 23rd October 2019

³ For further details on these criteria please see <https://www.aai.gov.ie/images/Section-1-AA-1991.pdf>



Section 2: November 2010 – September 2019:

From November 2010 to September 2019, children were adopted from 23 countries by parents habitually resident in Ireland. A breakdown of adoptions per country in alphabetical order is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of children adopted per country, November 2010 – September 2019⁴

Country where Adoption Effected	No. of Children Nov '10 – Sept '19
Bulgaria	27
Cambodia	*
China	49
Colombia	*
El Salvador	*
Ethiopia	111
Haiti	*
India	24
Kazakhstan	6
Lithuania	*
Mexico	26
Peru	*
Philippines	*
Poland	*
Romania	*
Russia	215
South Africa	*
Taiwan	8
Thailand	29
UK	7
Ukraine	*
USA	79
Vietnam	114
Total:	707

⁴ Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA), November 2010 – September 2019 *Adoptions from all countries listed in the above table have been included in the table's Total figure, however in cases marked with '*', the number of children adopted from this country is too small to be individually reported for reasons of anonymity and confidentiality.



Figure 3 (below) illustrates the 5 countries from which the highest number of children were adopted in this time period: Russia, Vietnam, Ethiopia, the USA and China. These 5 countries accounted for **80%** of the intercountry adoptions during this time.

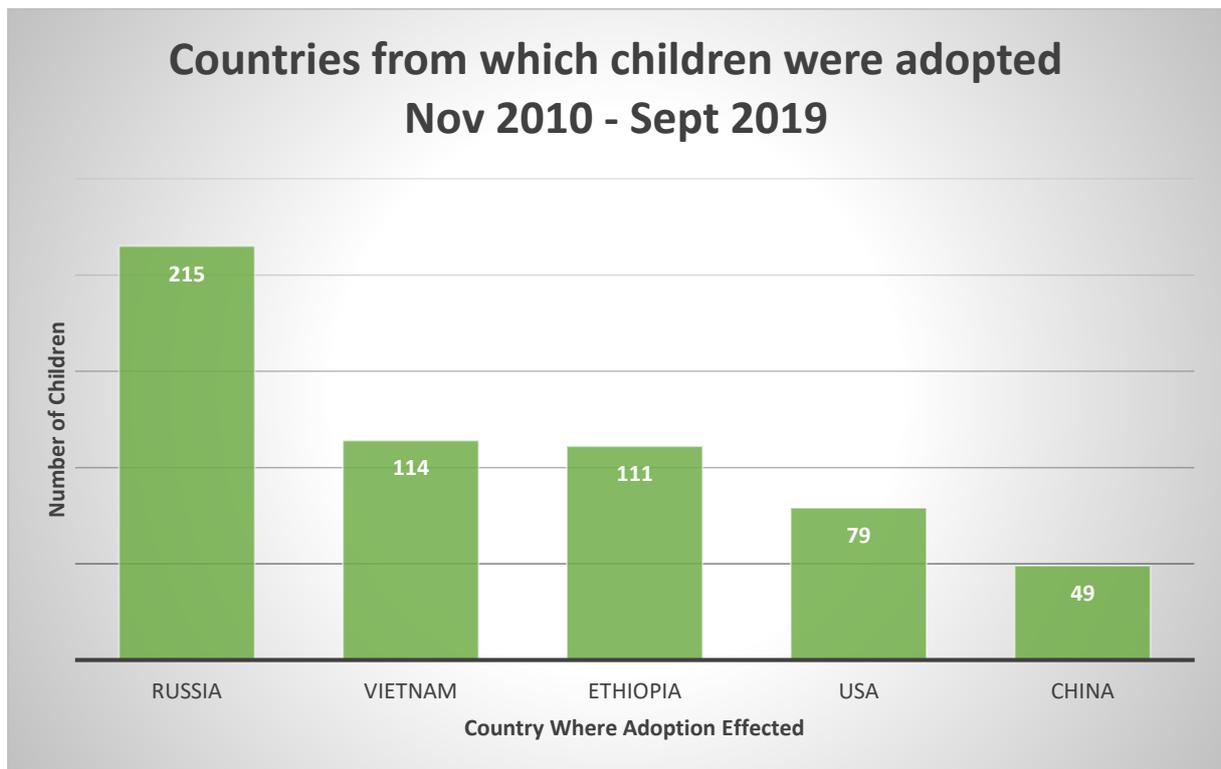


Figure 3: Countries from which children were adopted, November 2010 – Sept 2019



Figure 4 (below) illustrates the current⁵ ages of individuals adopted between November 2010 and Sept 2019.

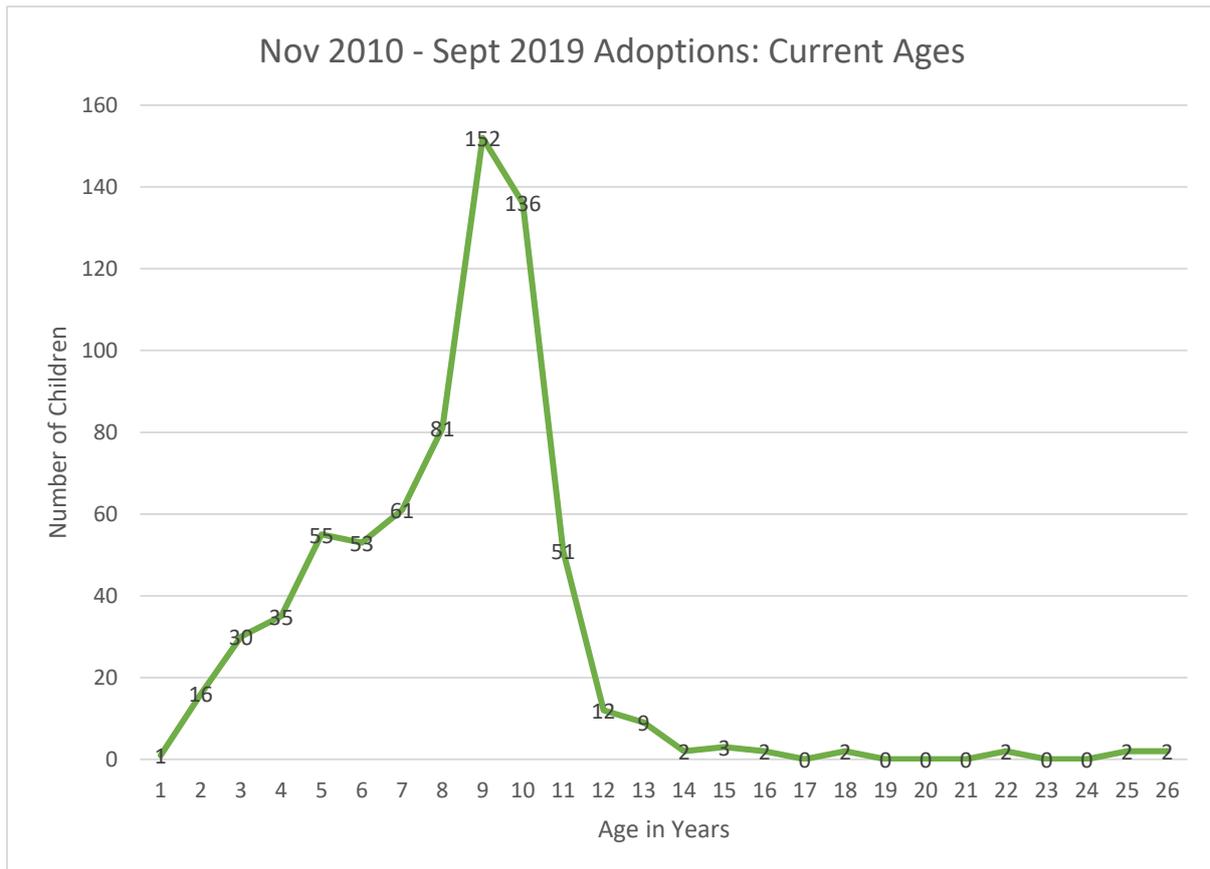


Figure 4: Current ages of individuals adopted November 2010 – Sept 2019

The majority of the children adopted since the introduction of the new legislation in 2010 could be described as being in *middle childhood*. More than half of the total number are aged 9 – 11, with the 6 – 12 year-old age bracket accounting for 86% of all children adopted during this time. Children and young adults aged 14 – 26 account for just 2% of the overall total in this timeframe.

⁵ Calculated on 23rd October 2019



Conclusion:

Intercountry adoption has been divided into 2 categories for the purpose of this report, pre- and post the Adoption Act 2010. Overall there has been a marked decline in the numbers of children being adopted from other countries by parents habitually resident in Ireland, and the number of countries from which children were adopted has also declined from 33 pre-November 2010 to 23 in the period thereafter.

Most of the children adopted from 1991 to date, i.e. combined across both categories, are now in middle to late childhood, with the majority aged between 6 and 16.

It is notable that the highest numbers of children adopted into Ireland across both time periods came from 4 countries: Russia, Vietnam, Ethiopia and China. The large number adopted from Romania prior to 2010 was very much a product of the social and political circumstances at the time, peaking in 1992 and decreasing steadily thereafter.