

Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri

Commission for International Adoptions

Central Authority for the Hague Convention of 29.05.1993

Data and prospects in International Adoptions

Summary Report

January 1st to December 31, 2019

in cooperation with the Istituto degli Innocenti



Introduction

This year too, the Commission for International Adoptions is publishing, with the collaboration of the Istituto degli Innocenti, the annual report on international adoption procedures undertaken and completed throughout 2019.

The report focuses on the data held by the Commission for International Adoptions, contained in the files of foreign minors authorized to enter and to reside permanently in our Country for adoption purposes. The report seeks to provide an analysis of the phenomenon of international adoptions from a quantitative and qualitative standpoint, thus providing the description of the evolution of the phenomenon, and outlining the profiles of the foreign children adopted and those of the adopting couples.

The multiple tasks performed by the Commission include that of providing information to the community about the legal institution of international adoption; it is, therefore, extremely important to provide a detailed and exhaustive picture of the phenomenon. Only by means of an accurate and rigorous analysis of the ongoing phenomena it is possible to understand the changes in progress and the new challenges international adoptions are now facing.

The overall analysis of the figures collected on the procedures of international adoptions undertaken and completed throughout the past year, outlines quite a complex picture which confirms a general downward trend –already recorded in previous years- yet showing significant differences among the different Countries.

From a general standpoint, the datum which appears to be very clear is the progressive decline of procedures completed, along with the number of minors who received the authorization of entrance for adoption purposes, with an almost 50% drop compared to 2015 figures. Nevertheless, within this trend there are significant differences, depending on the Countries of origin of the minors, including some Countries that have positively inverted the trend as, for example, Colombia and Peru.

Focusing merely on the numerical data would mean providing a partial analysis of the phenomenon. The report, in fact, aims to analyzing not only quantitative data but also qualitative ones, as the profiles of the adopting couples alongside with those of the minors who entered in Italy for adoption purposes.

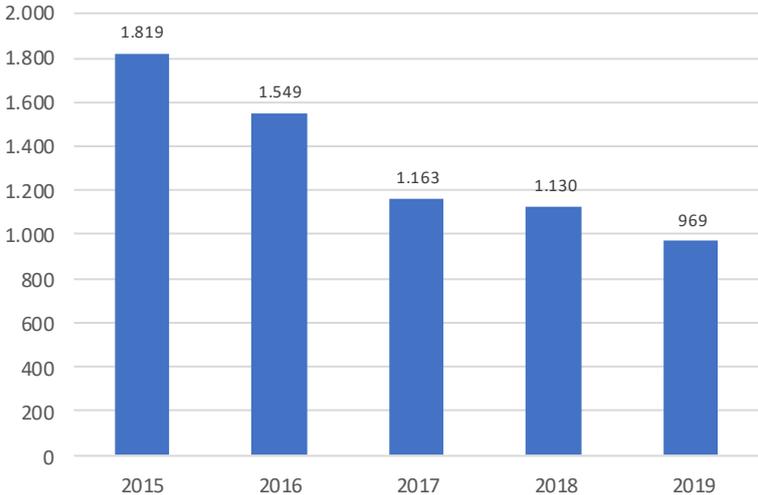
Without detailing all the data analyzed, generally the profiles of adoptive couples confirm an upward trend of the mean age, and a high cultural and socio-economic level; as for the profiles of the minors, the age class mostly represented is the one between 5 and 9 years of age, with a slight prevalence of males (53%) over females.

Lastly, another important fact worthy of mention refers to the high number of minors with one or more special needs (over 60% of the total). This datum, on the one hand testifies better than any other the subsidiary function of international adoption, a value which the institution of adoption has increasingly consolidated in time, and on the other hand is evidence of the importance of territorial services in their informative and supportive function with regard to adopting families throughout their path.

Adoptive couples: figures and main features

The last annual report drafted by this Commission regarding couples who applied for the authorization for foreign minors to enter Italy in 2018 –that is, couples who had obtained the decree of eligibility and had completed the adoption procedure with the intermediation of an authorized agency- highlighted the fact that a new low record number of cases was reached which accounted for only 3% less than 2017 figures. This fact suggested the possibility that the end of the progressive drop of the phenomenon observed in the past few years was now being reached and that the lowest threshold was not likely to go further down. Observing the new data which refer to 2019, this expectation was disregarded and the negative trend which characterized the past decade emerges prominently. The high number of adoptive parents reached a new low record number dropping, for the first time, under 1000 units (969), accounting for a 14% drop compared to the previous year.

Figure 1 – Couples who requested authorization to enter in Italy for foreign minors for adoption purposes, years 2015 - 2019



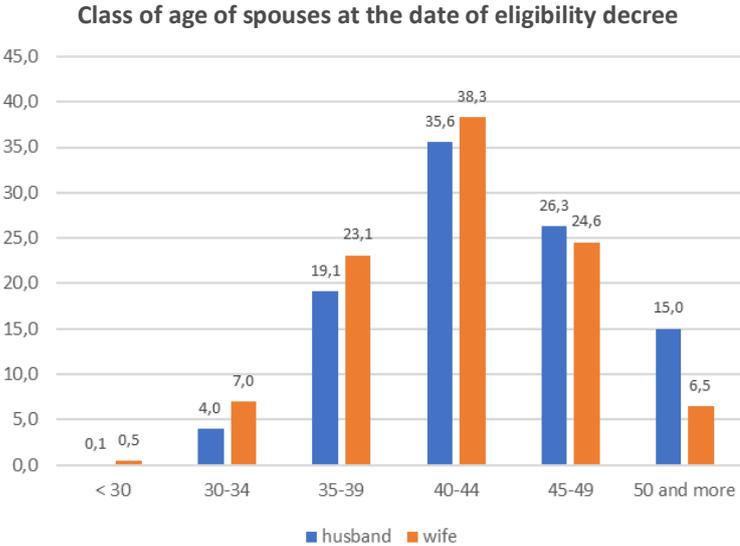
From a territorial standpoint, the regions with the highest number of adoptive couples continue to be Lombardy (128) and Veneto (101) which, along with Campania (104) are the only three regions with a number of adopting couples over 100 units, despite they report a significant decrease.

Also the national yearly rate reports a downward trend accounting for approximately 12 adoptive couples every 100,000 married couples between 30 and 59 years of age, which shows marked territorial differences and showing the highest values in two southern regions and in the central regions and in the north-western ones of the Country. The highest regional figures are reported, in fact, in Calabria (18,9) and Basilicata (18,5) followed by Tuscany (17,4), Umbria (15,2) and Veneto (15,1), while the ones showing the lowest figures – and far from the national average- are the two islands -Sicily (4,6) and Sardinia (7,8)- as well as in Liguria (9,1), Lombardy (9,4) and Abruzzi (9,4).

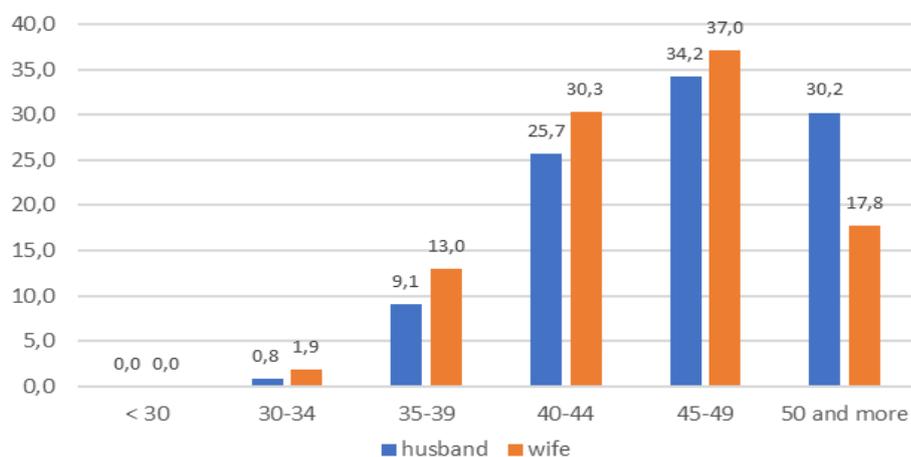
Data recorded in 2019 enable a monitoring of the trend of some of the features of the couples, which were reported already in previous years, and namely:

- An upward trend of the average age of couples at the date of the eligibility decree is confirmed, as well as at the date of the authorization to enter. The age of adoptive couples at the date of the eligibility decree ranges prevalently between the age of 40 and 44, i.e. 35.6% for husbands and 38.3% for wives. Lower, yet still significant, is the incidence of the classes of older age –between 45 and 49 years- which is represented by 26.3% for husbands and 24.6% for wives. In terms of the age of the spouses at the date of the authorization of entry of the foreign minor for adoption purposes, the distribution is even more marked and shifting towards more mature age. Hence, the prevalence is between 45 and 49 years of age (34.2%) for husbands as well as for wives (37%). There is no evidence of neither husbands or wives who file for an adoption before 30 years of age. The average age for husbands at the date of authorization of entry of the minor is over 47 (47.2) and that of wives is over 45 years of age (45.5).

Figure 2 – Couples who requested authorization to enter in Italy for foreign minors for adoption purposes according to the class of age, at the date of the eligibility decree and at the date of the authorization of entry for spouses (percentage values), year 2019

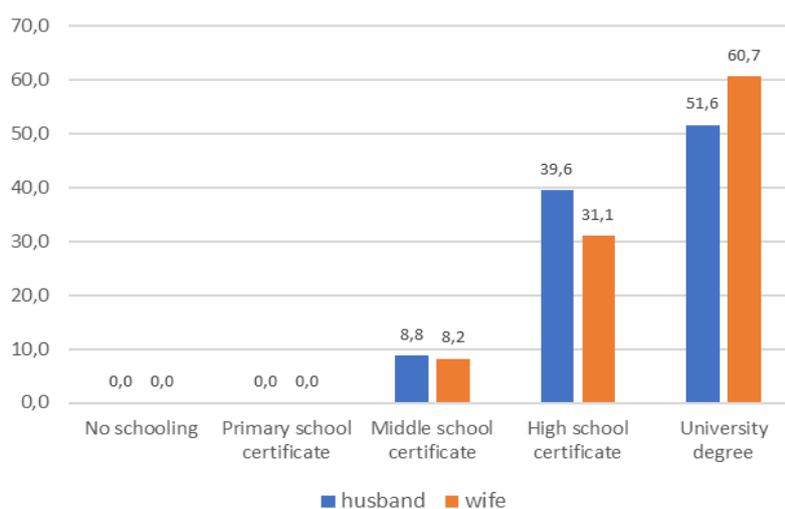


Class of age of spouses at the date of authorization of entry



- the level of education of husbands shows a common prevalence of the high school diploma (39.6%) and of a university degree, which in the last year was even more frequent than in previous years, accounting for more than half of the husbands (51.6%). Even more emphasized than the figures reported for spouses, also for wives there is a significant prevalence of the university degree (60.7%) against the high school diploma (31.1%).

Figure 3 – Couples who requested the authorization to enter in Italy for foreign minors for adoption purposes according to schooling level of spouses (percentage values), year 2019

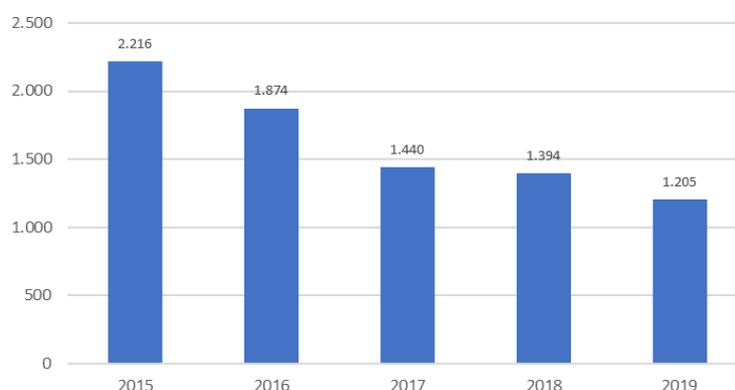


- until a few years ago, the majority of spouses were employed as office staff, as of 2016 – and even more marked in 2018 and 2019, the most common working condition was that of highly intellectual, scientific and skilled professions, as reported in the Italian statistics on employment (Istat). As for the levels of education, wives have a relative advantage; in fact, intellectual, scientific and highly skilled professions include 37% of husbands and 41.2% of wives. Among husbands, a considerable incidence involves a wide range of professions, namely artisans, skilled blue collars and farmers (11%), technical professions (14,4%) and employees (18.2%). Wives, instead, show a narrower range of professions focusing mainly of office jobs (20.8%) and technical professions. (10.2%).
- As for the families who have applied for authorization for the entry of foreign minors, the ones having natural children are a minority – this data has proven to be stable throughout the years of the monitoring. In 2019, almost 9 adopting couples out of 10 (86%) do not have children, while the other couples have one child or more (14%).
- On average, the time required to complete all the phases of the couples’ adoption procedure shows that the entire formal procedure –i.e. the time from the application for adoption to the authorization of entry- is of 45 months. The longer procedures refer to couples who adopted from Haiti (73.2 months) and from Bulgaria (63.2 months). Conversely, relatively short adoption procedures have proven to be the ones with Ukraine and Burundi (less than 36 months).

Minors authorized to enter in Italy for adoption purposes

The upturn in the negative trend of couples who applied for the authorization to enter in Italy for a foreign minor for adoptive purposes will inevitably weigh on the number of adopted children. Given the number of 969 adoptive couples, in 2019, foreign minors authorized to enter in Italy for adoption purposes amounted to 1,205 –an average of 1.2 adopted children per couple. In one year only, the number of adopted children dropped by 189 units –a negative percentage variation of 13.6 %.

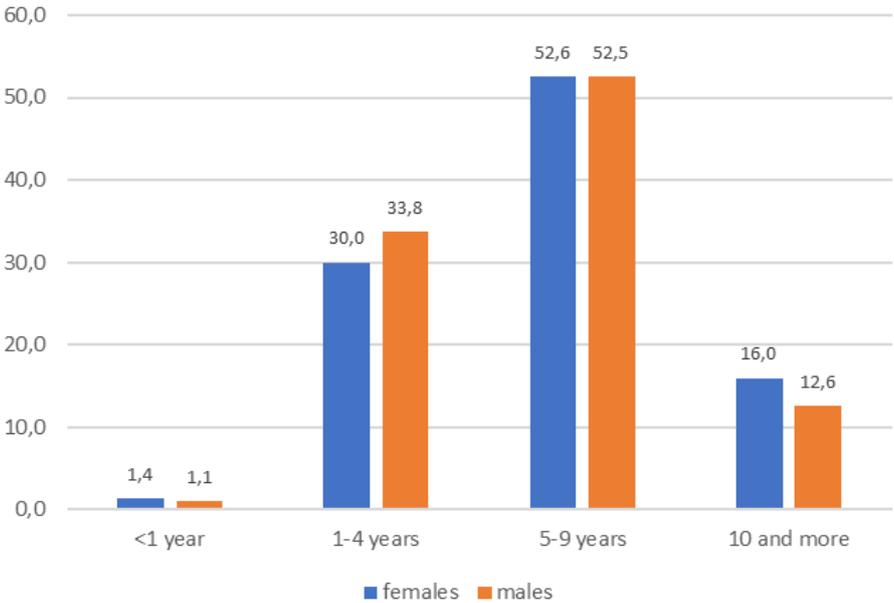
Figure 4 – Minors who received authorization to enter in Italy for adoption purposes, years 2015-2019



Considering the child population as a benchmark and comparing the data of minors from the time when an authorization to enter was granted, in 2019 the mean national value was of 12.4 adopted children for every 100,000 territorial residents. The regions with the highest adoption figures are Basilicata (26.4), Calabria (23.5), Molise (18.8), Tuscany (18.6) and Apulia (17.8). Conversely, regions showing the lowest numbers are Sicily (5.9), Liguria (8.5), Lombardy (9.1) and Piedmont (9.6).

The percentage changed slightly in 2019 as far as the age distribution of minors who entered in the country for adoption purposes. The number of children between 5 and 9 years of age increased compared to 2018, thus affecting the total number of adoptions (52.5%), followed by the category of 1-4 years of age which amounted to 32% of the total. Definitely less important is the incidence of extreme age categories, that is, only 1.2% for the category up to 1 year of age, and 14% for the category of 10 and over 10 years of age. The gender percentage composition does not show evidence of significant shifts in time. In 2019, the male prevalence is confirmed (53.3%) against same-age females (46.7%), with a minor shift compared to date referring to 2018 and previous years, where males accounted for 59% of the total.

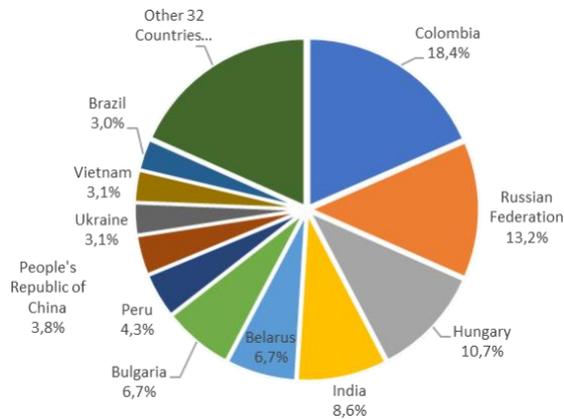
Figure 5 – Minors who received authorization to enter in Italy according to classes of age and gender (percentage values), year 2019



In 2019, there was a marked prevalence of Colombia over the Russian Federation in terms of the major Country of origin of adopted minors in Italy. Between 2018 and 2019, Colombia reported an increased the number of adoptees from 169 to 222, accounting for 31.3%; adoptions from the Russian Federation dropped from 200 to 159, a 20.5% decrease. The two countries are followed by Hungary (129), India (104), Bulgaria and Belarus (81). Further down, and under 100 adoptions, are Countries as Peru (52), the People’s Republic of China which between 2018 and 2019 went down from 84 to 46 adopted minors, Ukraine and

Vietnam (37 adoptees each) and Brazil (36). Thirty-two other Countries complete the list with less than 30 minors adopted.

Figure 6 – Minors who received authorization to enter in Italy according to the Country of origin (percentage values), year 2019



Choosing to adopt from one Country rather from another, has a significant incidence on the profile of children allowed to enter for adoption purposes and affects considerably the average age. In fact, in 2019 the mean age of children adopted in Italy was of 6.6 years – in line with 2018, but rising if compared to previous years- and differs with reference to the Country of origin. The range of the mean age of the Countries of origin varies from 1.6 of children coming from South Korea - the only Country with a mean age under 3 years - to 12.4 of Belarus children –the only Country with a mean over 10 years of age. Children over 8 years of age include adoptees from Brazil (8,9 years of age), Ecuador (8.8), adoptees from Bulgaria (8.5) and from Chile (8.4). The youngest include adoptees from Togo (3.6) and Vietnam (3.7).

Gender distribution may vary significantly in some Countries of origin. Diametrically opposite is the behavior of the two major Countries in terms of number of adoptees. Unlike what occurs on the total trend of adoptions, Colombia shows a higher incidence of females (56%). Conversely, adoptees from the Russian Federation account for 69.8% of males and 30.2% of females. The People’s Republic of China has the lowest incidence of female adoptions – girls, in fact, account only for 23.9%.