

Presidency of the Council of Ministers

Commission for Intercountry Adoptions

Central Authority for the Hague Convention of 29.05.1993

Data and perspectives in International Adoptions

Summary Report

of records from January 1st to December 2021

In collaboration with Istituto degli Innocenti



SUMMARY

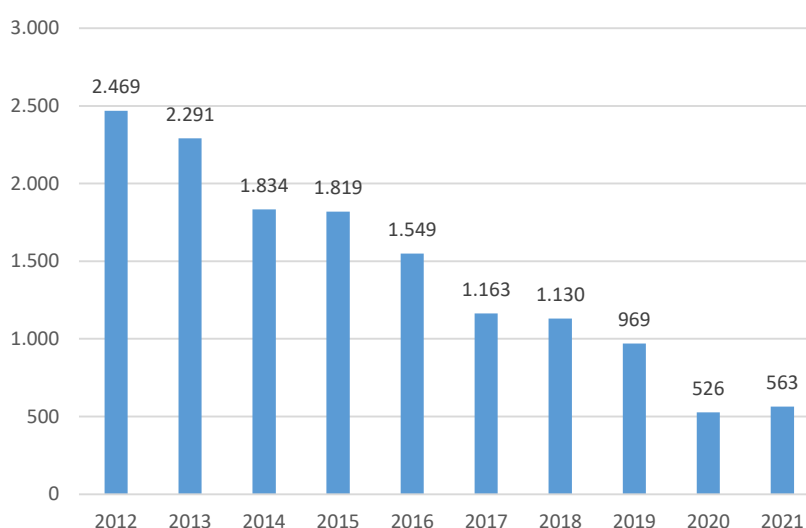
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THE PROTAGONISTS OF ADOPTION

Main features of adoptive couples and international adoption trends and scope

Couples who requested authorization for foreign children to enter in Italy for adoption has been steadily decreasing over the years: from 2,469 registered in 2012, the annual quota of adoptive couples crossed the 1,000 mark (969) in 2019 – a decrease, over the period considered, in absolute terms of 1,500 couples and in relative terms of 60.8%. In 2020, the year of the beginning of Codiv-19 pandemic, there is a clear break in the historical data series, i.e. couples who applied for authorization to enter foreign minors in Italy dropped to only 526 units, 443 less than the previous year, accounting for an annual 45.7% decrease. Inevitably, the effects of the pandemic are also visible in 2021. Although, for the first time in the last decade, the number of couples (563) increased compared to the previous survey, the overall numbers still remain far from those recorded in the last pre-pandemic year.

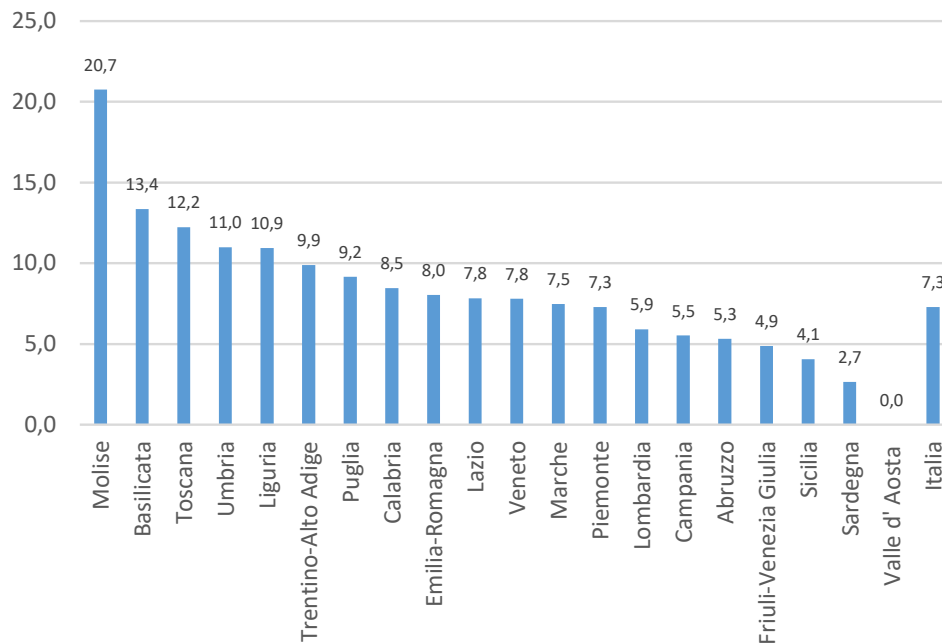
Figure 1 - Couples who requested authorization for foreign minors to enter Italy for adoption purposes, years 2012-2021



As in 2020, no region has more than 100 adoptive couples, with the highest values recorded in Lombardy (76), Lazio (58) and Tuscany (55). After the substantial decrease recorded in 2020, there has been again a substantial rise of the average annual reference rate, which is obtained by relating the couples who have applied for foreign children to the theoretical reference population, i.e., the resident population of married people aged 30-59. In 2020, this indicator resumed the national average value of 6.6 adoptive couples per 100 thousand married couples of the above-mentioned age, while in 2021 it stands at 7.3. The highest regional performances are found in Molise (20.7), Basilicata (13.4), Tuscany (12.2), Umbria (11) and Liguria (10.9). They are followed with values above the national average in Trentino-Alto Adige (9.9), Apulia (9.2), Calabria (8.5), Emilia-Romagna (8), Lazio, Veneto (7.8) and

Marche (7.5). The remaining regions are all below the national average value with particularly low values for Sicily (4.1) and Sardinia (2.7).

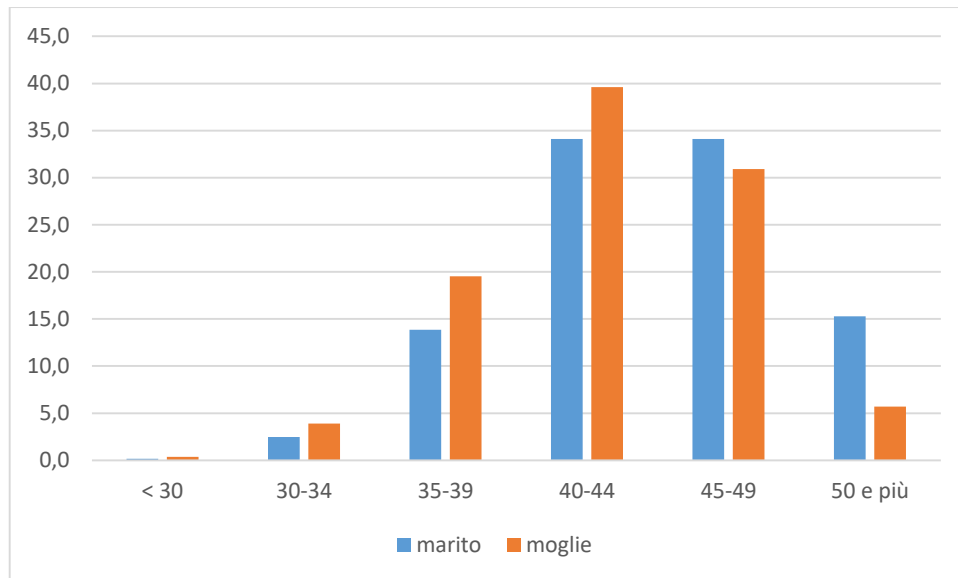
Figure 2 - Couples who requested authorization for foreign minors to enter Italy for of adoption purposes according to region of residence. Rates per 100,000 married couples aged 30-59, year 2021



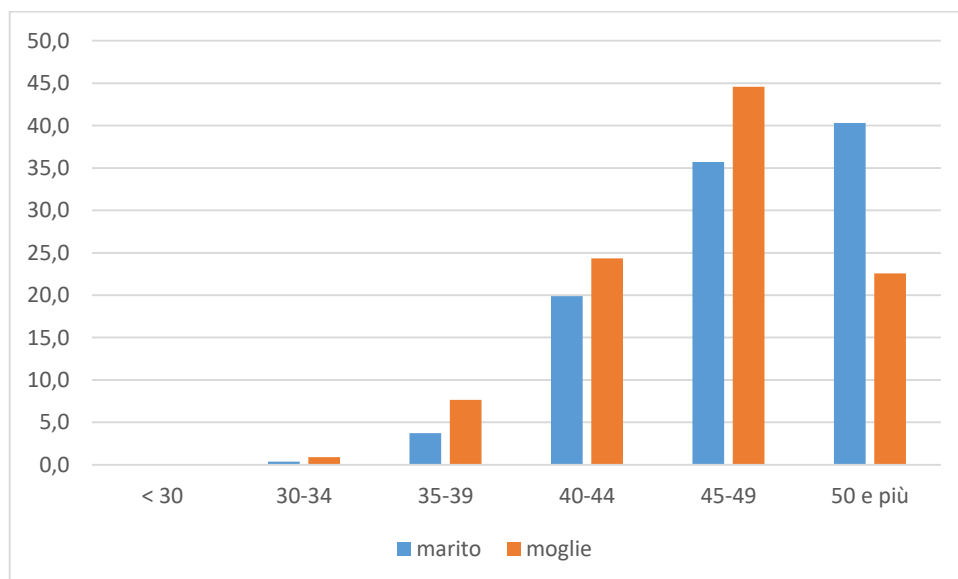
Figures in 2021 are confirmed compared to past years, with reference to the average age of couples at the date of the eligibility decree and at the date of entry clearance. In the former case, the average age is slightly higher than in 2020 with 44.6 years for men (44.2 years in the previous survey) and 42.7 years for women (42.5 years in the previous survey). Moreover, at the time of the issuance of the eligibility decree, the age group with the highest frequency is the one aged 40 to 44 years for women (39.6%), while the same incidence – 34.1% – is recorded for men in the 40 to 44 and 45 to 49 age groups. The latter is also the second most common class for women with an incidence of 30.9%, while those over 50 account for 15.3% among men and 5.7% among women. Only a marginal 2.7% of husbands and 4.3% of wives are under the age of 35. In the subsequent stage, which is the authorization for foreign minor's to enter Italy entry for adoption, the age distribution of spouses is even more extreme and moves toward the more mature ages of life with an average of 48.1 years for men and 46.2 years for women. For the former, the age group with the highest frequency is the over-50s (40.3%) while for wives it is the 45-49s (44.6%). The latter turns out to be the second most frequent age group for husbands (35.7%) while for women it is the 40-44 age group (24.3%). In contrast, neither men nor women are counted as completing the adoption process before the age of 30.

Figure 3 - Couples who requested authorization for foreign minors to enter Italy for adoption purposes according to age group at the date of the eligibility decree and at the date of the authorization of entry (percentage values), year 2021

Age class of the spouses as of the date of the eligibility decree



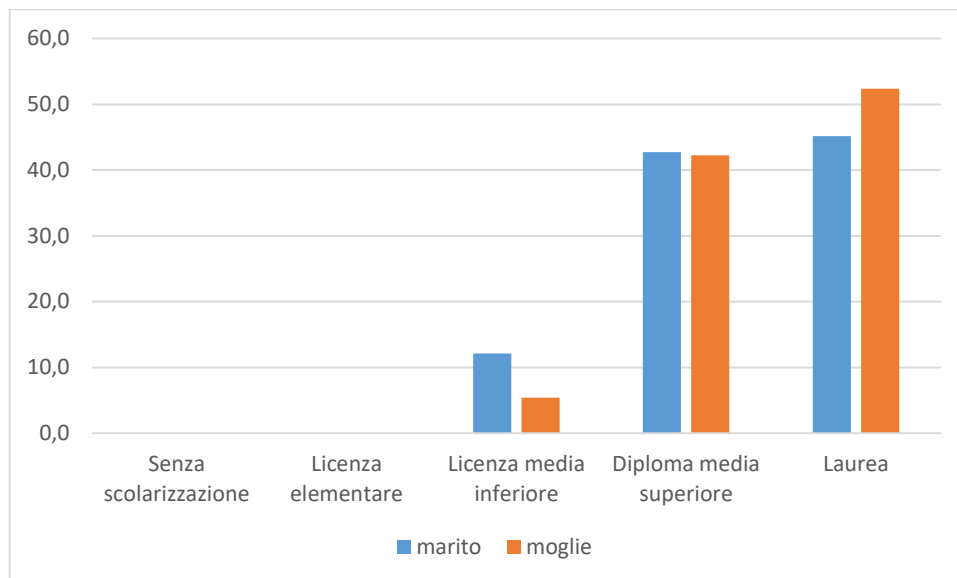
Age of the spouses as of the date of authorization of entry



The incidence of the educational qualification of adoptive spouses shows a return to a very high cultural level among adoptive couples, given that the spread of a college degree in the Italian population of the corresponding age group regards on average – among males and females – just over 20% of the population. In percentage terms among 2021 adoptive couples, men with a bachelor's degree amount to 45.2% and women to 52.4%. A high school diploma is the second most common

qualification for both men (42.7%) and women (42.2%). Entirely residual is the incidence of the junior high school diploma, and there are no couples with lower educational qualifications.

Figure 4 - Couples who requested authorization for foreign minors to enter Italy for adoption purposes according to the educational qualification of spouses (percentage values), year 2021



The levels of education attained resonate with the profession of the spouses. Based on the National Statistics Institute (ISTAT) job classification, the most common working condition among adoptive couples concerns intellectual, scientific and highly specialized positions, which account for 25.3% of men and 31.8% of women. These are followed, for both genders, by clerical professions (23.9% among men and 27.6 % among women), followed, for men, by technical jobs (16%), artisans, skilled laborers and farmers (11.2%), legislators, executives and entrepreneurs (7.3%) and skilled jobs in trade and services (5.9%). For women, on the other hand, the first two professions mentioned above are followed by housewives (10.9%), technical professions (9.4%) and skilled jobs in trade and services (8.6%).

Among adoptive couples, 83.8% have no natural children and 81.9% are seeking the adoption of one child, compared with 15.8% requesting two children and a remaining 2.3% applying for three or more.

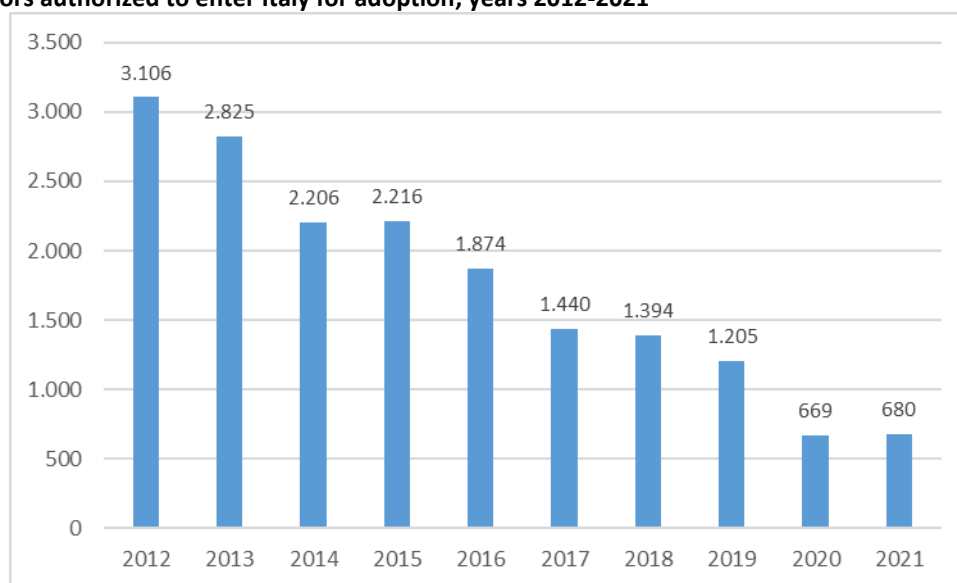
While 2020 data showed that on average the adoption process took about 47 months (i.e. almost four years), in 2021 there is significant increase in this timeline, which exceeds the four-year threshold to an average of about 52 months.

Minors authorized to enter Italy for adoption

In 2021, for the 563 adoptive couples mentioned in the previous section, there were 680 foreign minors who were authorized to enter Italy for adoption – an average of 1.2 adoptees per couple. As well as for couples, there has been a slight increase for minors, too, compared to the decline of 2020 (669 adoptees).

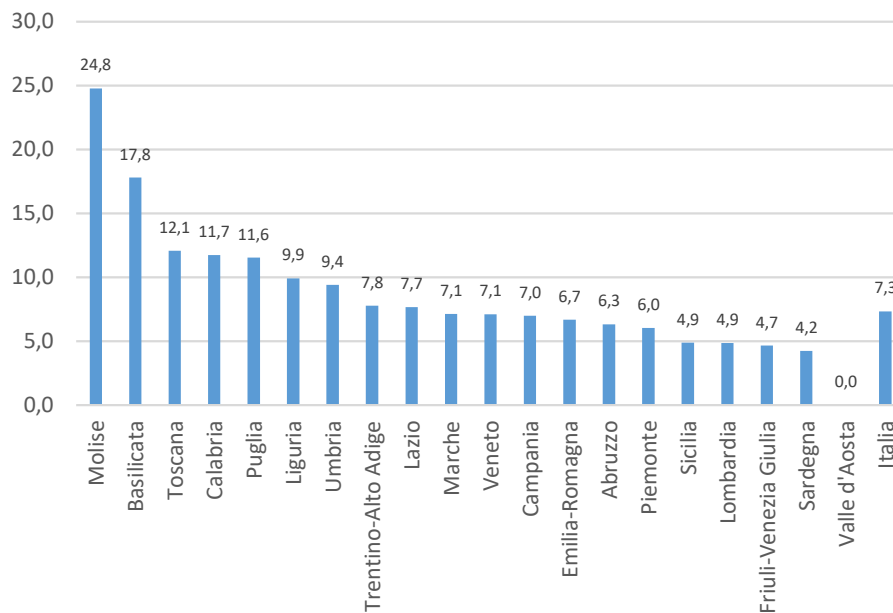
Even for minors adopted in 2021, no region has more than 100 adoptions, with the highest values recorded in Lombardy (78), Apulia (71), Campania and Lazio (69 each).

Figure 5 - Minors authorized to enter Italy for adoption, years 2012-2021



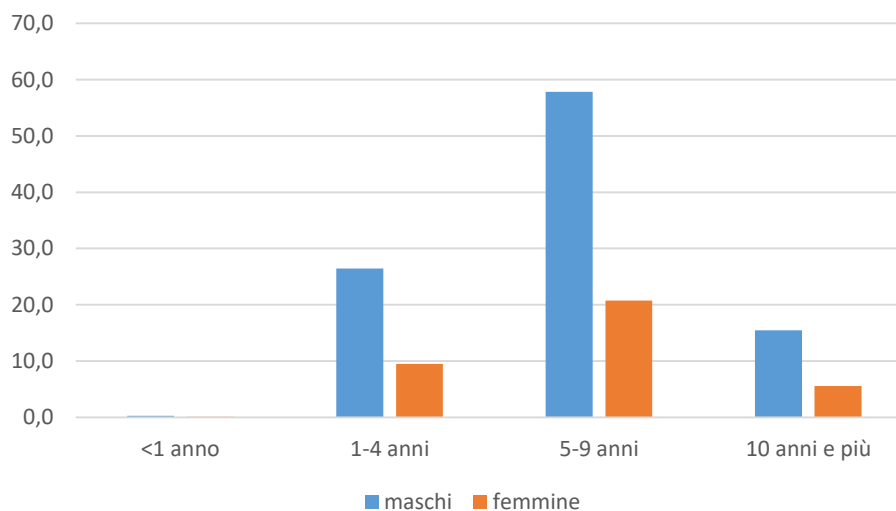
Compared to the reference child population, in 2021 the national average value is 7.3 adoptees per 100,000 territorial residents, which represents a slight increase compared to 2020, when the figure was 7.1, but a sharp decline compared to pre-pandemic years if one considers the 12.4 rate each in 2019. The regions with the highest adoption numbers are Molise (24.8), Basilicata (17.8), Tuscany (12.1), Calabria (11.7) and Apulia (11.6). Excluding Aosta Valley, which recorded no adoptions, the regions with lowest numbers are Sardinia (4.2), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (4.7), Sicily and Lombardy (both at 4.9).

Figure 6 - Minors authorized to enter Italy for adoption purposes in relation to the residence of the adoptive parents. Rate per 100 thousand 0-17 year-olds, year 2021



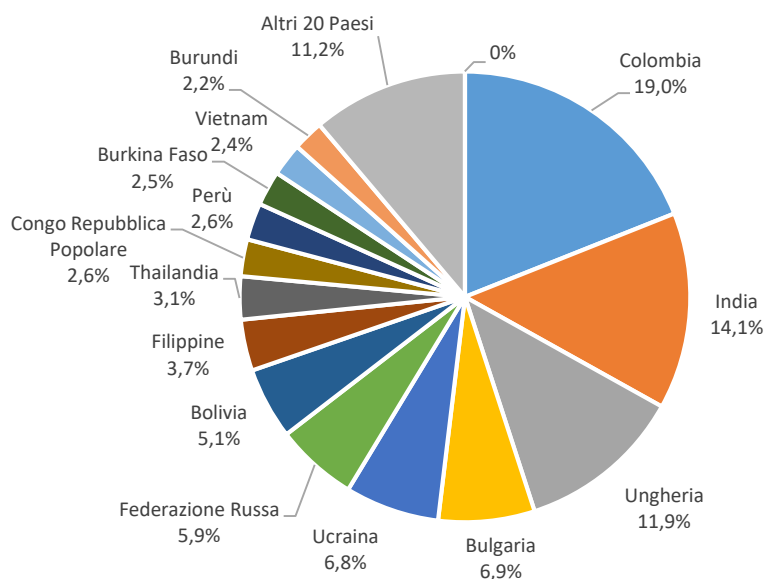
Between 2020 and 2021, the adoptees' average age at entry in Italy remains virtually unchanged as almost 7 years – (6.8 years in 2020 and 6.7 years in 2021). The percentage composition by gender of adopted children is not affected by significant fluctuations over the years and is consistent with a higher figure for males: 59% compared to 41% of females – basically in line with what was observed in 2020 when the percentage of males was of 57.8%.

Figure 7 - Minors authorized to enter Italy according to age group and gender (percentage values), year 2021



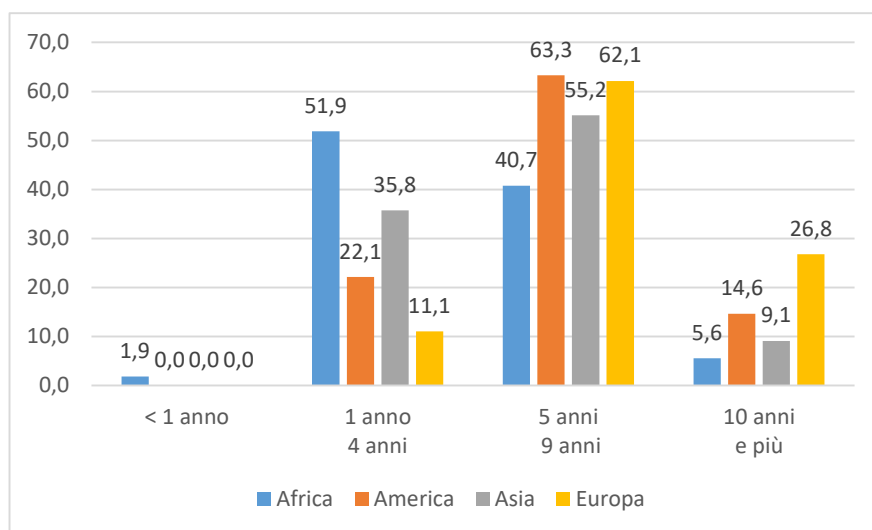
As in the previous two years, in 2021 Colombia remains the country of origin with the highest number of children, accounting for 129 adoptees or 19% of adoptions. India follows in this special ranking (96 adoptees and 14.1% of the total), Hungary (81 adoptees and 11.9% of the total), Bulgaria (47 adoptees and 6.9% of the total) and the Russian Federation (40 adoptees and 5.9% of the total).

Figure 8 - Minors authorized to enter Italy according to country of origin (percentage values), year 2021



Shifting the analysis from individual countries of origin to continents, Europe remains the first continent by number of adoptions, although it is continuing its downward trend (34.6% in 2021, versus 39.5% in 2020 and 44.1% in 2019), while, due to the figures regarding Colombia, America is confirmed as the second continent in 2021 with 33.2% (versus 34.9% in 2020). Compared to before, the Asian continent reported an increase with 24.3% (compared to 18.4% in 2020), while Africa's share remains in line with past years (7.9%).

Figure 9 - Minors authorized to enter Italy according to continent of origin and age group (percentage values), year 2021



In 2021 Europe also remains the continent of origin with the highest average age among adoptees who were authorized to enter: about one in four children (26.8%) is over the age of 10, while 62.1% are between 5 and 9 years old; the incidence of 1-4-year-old children is lower (11.1%) and there's no incidence of children under the age of one year. As for America, adoptees with ages 5-9 years (63.3%) largely prevail, followed by 1-4 years (22.1%). Likewise, in Asia, where the dominant age group is the one 5-9 (55.2%), in contrast to the previous year when the 1-4-year-old group had the largest share; in 2021 the latter still represents a substantial share accounting for 35.8%. Adoptees from the African continent are between 1 and 4 years old in 51.9 % of cases, and this is the only continent where adoptees under one year of age (1.9 %) are recorded.

Regarding the reason for adoption, the generic reason of "abandonment" affects 62.6% of them in 2021, while 22.5% were adopted as a result of withdrawal of parental responsibility of biological parents. In only 9.7% of the cases biological parents relinquished parental responsibility and only 2.6% of children were adopted as orphans.

Lastly, there is the phenomenon of special needs, which testifies better than any other to international adoption's subsidiary function, whose value has been significantly increasing over time. There are three macro-categories into which special needs are placed and which can also occur simultaneously: 1) age over seven years; 2) presence of trauma, behavioral problems, physical and mental incapacity; and 3) presence of siblings.

In 2021, out of 680 children adopted through international adoption in Italy, 425 (i.e. 62.5%) manifest one or more special needs. Special needs children remain hence the majority of the adoptees, with a higher incidence than in 2020 (59%) but lower than in previous years (64.2% in 2019 and 70% in 2018). A particularly high share concerns adoptees over the age of seven, who account for 48.5% of the

special needs total (206 minors). These are followed by 128 cases of special needs children with trauma, behavioral problems, physical and mental incapacity (30.1% of the total special needs children); 50 adoptees (11.8% of the total special needs children) present simultaneously the two above-mentioned features, while 22 adoptees (5.2%) have siblings and are older than seven and only the 0.5% of the adoptees cover the three categories simultaneously

Among the countries with at least 10 children authorized to enter for adoption in 2021, the figures of two countries from Eastern Europe and two from America stand out in terms of incidence of special needs: The Russian Federation (75%), Ukraine (71.7%), Colombia with 89.1% of special needs out of the 129 adopted, and Brazil (78.6%). In contrast, the lowest incidences are in the following four countries: Thailand with 28.6% of special needs, Burkina Faso with 17.6%, Haiti with 16.7%, and Burundi where no special needs were reported.