

## Adoption Statistics

In sports, there pundits who oppose using statistics alone to measure a player's performance. They say that these numbers only tell part of the story and fail to capture certain intangible aspects of the game that cannot be quantified. This is particularly true of adoption statistics, which are unfortunately incomplete. There is no one body which tracks adoption statistics, leaving what numbers are available scattered somewhat outdated. Useful figures can still be found, however, and serve to paint part of the adoption picture.

Perhaps one of the more striking numbers is the number of Americans who are personally touched by adoption in one way or another. A study done in 1997 by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute found that 60% of Americans had an adoption experience. As defined by the authors of the study, this means that either the participant or one of their family members or close friends had adopted, had placed a child for adoption, or was adopted. Although the research is ten years old, it's still quite interesting, as its findings mean that people who have been affected by adoption compose a majority in the United States.

Another tale is told by examining the demographics of women who place their children for adoption prenatally. As it turns out, the likelihood that a woman will place their unborn child has an inverse relationship with socioeconomic status (SES) and level of education within the birth mother's family. For example, if a woman's mother completed at least one year of college, then she is statistically three times more likely to place a child for adoption than a woman whose mother did not finish high school, according to one study. Researchers explain such trends by claiming that these women come from families which are generally more supportive than those of women from lower SES and educational backgrounds. One California study bucks this trend, however, finding that women who placed their children tended to not have an education beyond high school.

It was stated above that most of the extant statistics pertaining to adoption are inaccurate or outdated. As with all things, however, financial records remain meticulous, allowing for an accurate estimate of the costs of adoption. The biggest factor influencing adoption cost is the kind of agency of involved. A domestic adoption via a public agency may cost as much as \$2500 down to nothing at all. On the other hand, that same adoption when handled by a private agency can cost as little as \$4000, or upwards of \$30,000. The difference is due largely to the fact that public agencies are subsidized by the state, and private agencies often offer more support services which can be costly.

As stated above, these statistics paint only a small part of the picture of adoption. They are merely descriptive, and do not necessarily predict future

adoption figures or trends. They do however, provide a certain degree of insight and can be useful for those considering either adopting or placing a child for adoption.