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Key Points

Number of children subject to adoption continued to rise

A total of 4,790 children were reported as subject to final adoption orders during 2013-14; an increase of 27% on the previous year. During the same period, adoption placements commenced for 5,365 children; there were around 600 more adoption placements than in the previous year (4,767 in 2012-13). This was an increase of 13%. The rise in adoption is likely to be the result of the increased government emphasis on achieving permanence for children through adoption.

Adoptive families were matched to children more quickly; VAAs made the biggest improvement

Of the 4,275 adoptive families matched in 2013-14, 11% waited longer than nine months to be matched to a child. This was an improvement on the previous year when 16% had waited longer than nine months. In 2012-13 78% of adoptive families approved by VAAs were matched to a child within nine months; in 2013-14 this increased by 11 percentage points to 89% of adoptive families.

Adopted children were slightly younger than in previous years

A large majority of adopted children were older than two years (66%). However, the age profile of children was slightly younger than that in the previous year: in 2013-14 just over a third of children adopted (35%) were younger than two years old; an increase of five percentage points on the previous year.

Number of approved adopters had risen

Overall, the number of approved adoptive families increased by 16% from 5,011 at 31 March 2013, to 5,795 at 31 March 2014. The number of adoptive families has increased by 36% since March 2011).

Number of disruptions to placements prior to final adoption orders remained low

The proportion of children experiencing disruptions prior to their final adoption order remained at three per cent. During 2013-14 there were a total of 130 disruptions in adoptive families, which affected 155 children.

Introduction

Adoption services are provided by local authority (LA) adoption agencies and voluntary adoption agencies (VAA). LAs have parental responsibility for children looked after, deciding whether adoption is in a child's best interests, and will then make arrangements for a child to be adopted. A VAA is a not-for-profit organisation that places children for adoption. The focus of all adoption agencies is on placing children successfully into adoptive families whom the agency recruits, assesses, prepares and supports, so they will meet the children's needs and enable them to develop and achieve throughout their lives.

This is the third national publication of data collected by Ofsted from adoption providers. The data were collected in April-June 2014 and are used, primarily, to inform the inspection of adoption provision. In addition to supporting inspection work, the data and this publication are used to inform policy decisions which aim to improve the outcomes for children who are adopted. It is also used by LAs to inform practice, and by other organisations, including charities, campaign groups and academics, which have an interest in this subject.

These official statistics report on the numbers and profile of adopters and children, in both LA adoption agencies and VAAs, covering the period between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014. It also gives data relating to recruitment activity of adoptive families, adoption processes, adoption support, complaints and inter-country adoptions.

These statistics are based on data supplied by LAs and VAAs; supplementary agency level data will be published in the new year. Ofsted will publish these data annually and the next release is currently scheduled for autumn 2015.

Contents

Key Points	2
Key findings	5
Placement Types.....	5
Local authority and voluntary agencies	7
Children and young people	8
Ages of children when their final adoption order was granted.....	8
Ethnicity of children	10
Children with disabilities.....	11
Sibling adoption placements	12
Adoptive families.....	13
Stage in the process	13
Recruitment of adopters.....	14
Timescales.....	16
Characteristics of adopters	18
Disruptions	21
Adoption support services	22
Inter-country adoptions	22
Complaints and allegations	22
Methodology	24
Response Rates	25
Additional information	25
Glossary	26
Chart 1: All children subject to an adoption plan at 31 March, by stage in the process.....	6
Chart 2: Proportion of children whose placement commenced in the year 2013-14, by sector	7
Chart 3: Children who were made subject to a final adoption order, by age.....	8
Chart 4: Ethnicity of children subject to adoption plans, looked after and all resident children in England ...	10
Chart 5: Disabled children subject to an adoption plan at 31 March 2014, by stage in the process.....	11
Chart 6: Adoptive families in England as at 31 March 2014, by stage of the adoption process	13
Chart 7: Outcome of all concluded applications to adopt, by year and sector	15
Chart 8: Time taken between application and approval of adopters.....	16
Chart 9: Length of time adoptive families waited between being approved and being matched	17
Chart 10: Ethnicity of adopters at 31 March 2014	18
Chart 11: Ethnicity of children and adopters at 31 March 2014	19
Chart 12: Adopters approved as at 31 March 2014, by religion	20

KEY FINDINGS

PLACEMENT TYPES

- A total of 4,790¹ children were reported as subject to final adoption orders during 2013-14.² This was an increase of 27% on the previous year (3,782 in 2012-13).³ This increase was most likely due to increased government emphasis on achieving permanence for children through adoption.⁴ However, it should be noted that a report by the Adoption Leadership Board in November 2014 indicates a decrease in adoptions since April 2014.⁵ (Annual adoption dataset 2013-14 A1.8)
- Adoption placements commenced for 5,365 children during 2013-14. There were around 600 more adoption placements than in the previous year (4,767 in 2012-13); an increase of 13%. (A4.1-4.3)
- The number of children subject to an adoption plan on 31 March 2014 (9,805) has fallen from the previous year. There were approximately 370 fewer children than on the same day in the previous year (a decrease of 4% from 10,177 children as at 31 March 2013).⁶ (A1.1)
- Chart 1, below, shows all children who were reported by LAs as being subject to an adoption plan at 31 March 2014, by their stage in the adoption process.

¹ Data has been rounded up to the nearest five, i.e. no data has been rounded down. This is to ensure data protection and non-disclosure of personal or sensitive data; see the methodology section for further explanation. However, it should be noted that this means, throughout the report, some sub-divisions of data may not add exactly to the total quoted and could be up to five over or under. The effect of this suppression on percentages, rates and proportions has been minimal. Due to rounding, percentages may not add to exactly 100.

² DfE have reported a higher figure for 2013-14: 5,050 adoptions, or 260 more than in this data collection. The discrepancy between the two figures is likely to be a result of the purposes for which and the way in which data is collected by the two organisations. The DfE collects data about all children looked after through their annual SSDA903 return, which requires local authorities to report on only those children for whom they are responsible. These data are collected primarily for the purposes of inspecting and evaluating the effectiveness of adoption agencies. As a result, some questions in the dataset ask the agency to report on all children living with adopters approved by their agency, which may include children who have been placed by other LAs with adopters approved by their agency. While agencies should be able to provide these data, as they are responsible for these children, there are in some cases small discrepancies between the data sent to the DfE and the data sent to Ofsted. *DfE (30 September 2014) Children looked after in England, including adoption* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>)

³ This is the first year that adoption data has been rounded. Therefore, figures quoted from previous years will be the exact numbers as published. See the methodology section for further explanation of changes to methodology and disclosure considerations.

⁴ The number of adoptions have risen over the past three years. Some concerns have been voiced about the increased use of Special Guardianship Orders occurring at the expense of the number of adoptions in England. Barnardo's and Coram commissioned research, in 2012, on the National Early Permanence Centre initiatives, for example, which suggested that the introduction of Special Guardianship Orders in 2005, increased court delays and the removal of ring-fenced funding for adoption, led to the fall in adoptions in 2007 (https://www.barnardos.org.uk/coram_barnardos_evidence_review_on_adoption.pdf). DfE have, though, reported a rise in the use of SGOs in the same period (a rise of 20% as reported for 2013-14. *DfE (30 September 2014) Children looked after in England, including adoption*).

⁵ According to the Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) there has been a sharp fall in the number of children being adopted since April 2014; the number of children being placed for adoption falling by 54% in the three months to June 2014. The ALB believes this is due to recent court judgments that have been misinterpreted by the sector. In an attempt to clarify the judgments, and reverse the drop in adoption applications, the ALB produced an *Impact of Court Judgments on Adoption* guide in November 2014: <http://www.adcs.org.uk/download/resources/adoption/ALB%20-%20Impact%20of%20Court%20Judgments%20on%20Adoption%20-%20November%202014.pdf>

⁶ It is not clear why, when the number of children being adopted had risen, there would be fewer children on adoption plans as at 31 March. However, it is possible that this is a result of adoptions proceeding more quickly than in previous years. For further detail see Adopters: Timescales below.

Chart 1

All children who were subject to an adoption plan at 31 March 2014, by stage in the process



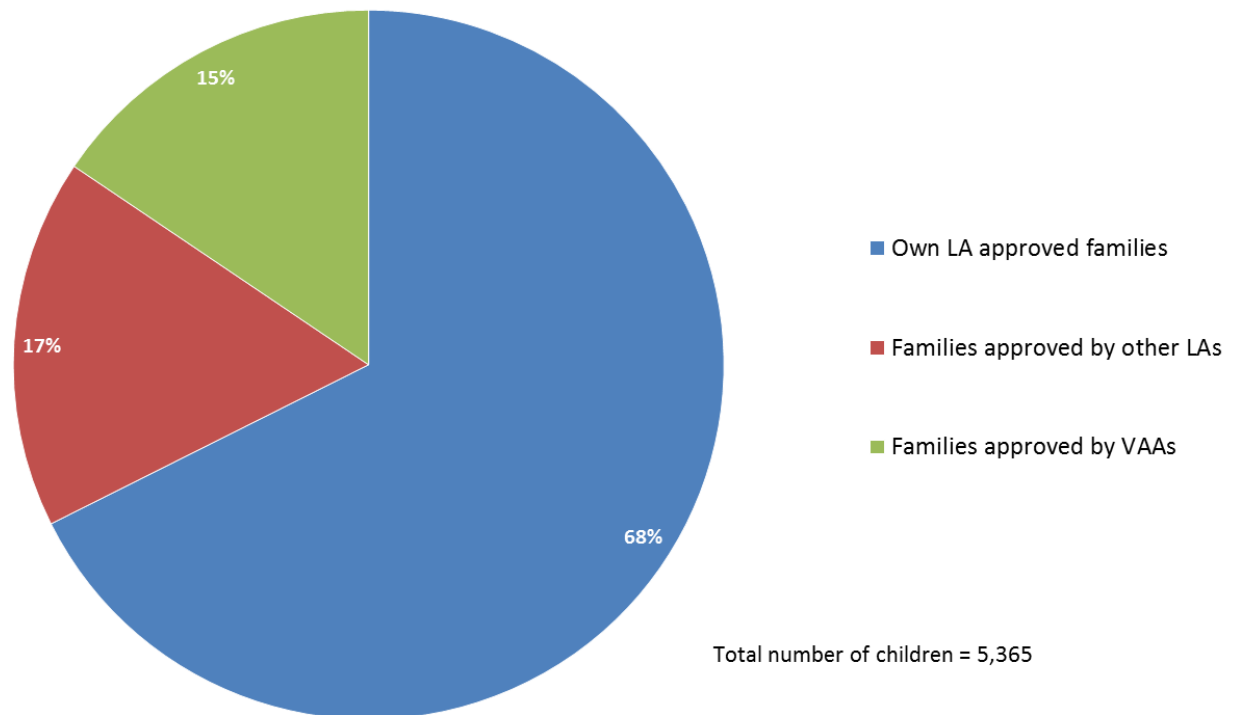
- Of all children subject to an adoption plan, just over two in five children were waiting to be matched to adoptive families (4,040 children), as at 31 March 2014; a reduction of five percentage points from the previous year (41%, down from 46%).
- Just under two in five were awaiting their final adoption orders (3,820 children) as at 31 March 2014, a higher proportion than the previous year (39%, up from 34%).⁷ (A1.1-1.5)

⁷ Ofsted do not currently collect data on the timescales of the adoption process at child level. For data on timescales for adopters see "Adoptive Families" below. For data on the average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (647 days as an average across 2010-13), or the average time taken to match a child with an adoptive family (210 days 2010-13) see Department for Education, Adoption Scorecard underlying data 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-scorecards>. Scorecard data for the year ending March 2014 is forthcoming. More recent data from the Adoption and Leadership Board shows that, for 2013-14 only, the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adopted family was 586 days. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-leadership-board-quarterly-data-reports>

LOCAL AUTHORITY AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

Chart 2

Proportion of children whose placements commenced in the year 2013-14,
by sector



- A total of 5,365 children started adoption placements in 2013-14; this was an increase of 13% on the previous year (4,767 children). (A4)
- A very large majority of the children placed with adoptive families were approved by LAs (84%). Sixteen per cent (835) were placed with families approved by VAAs; this was a slightly higher proportion than that of the previous year (14%).⁸ (A4.1-4.3)
- Of the 84% of children placed with adoptive families approved by LAs, not all were placed with families approved by their own LA. The proportion of children whose placements commenced with

⁸ As these data are collected at agency level, the number of children LAs and VAAs reported as placing were both collected and collated. There is a very small discrepancy in the data between the number of children for whom placements commenced that local authorities (LAs) say were with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and the number of children that VAAs reported placing on behalf of local authorities. The data used in this section of the report refer only, then, to the data given by local authorities. Elsewhere in these findings when referring only to data provided by VAAs, their data will be used and will refer to slightly more children. This is due to errors in reporting by adoption agencies that cannot be addressed via any quality assurance procedures. (A4.2 and A4.5)

adoptive families approved by *other LA* agencies was 17% (905 children). There has been no change since 2012-13.⁹ (A4.3)

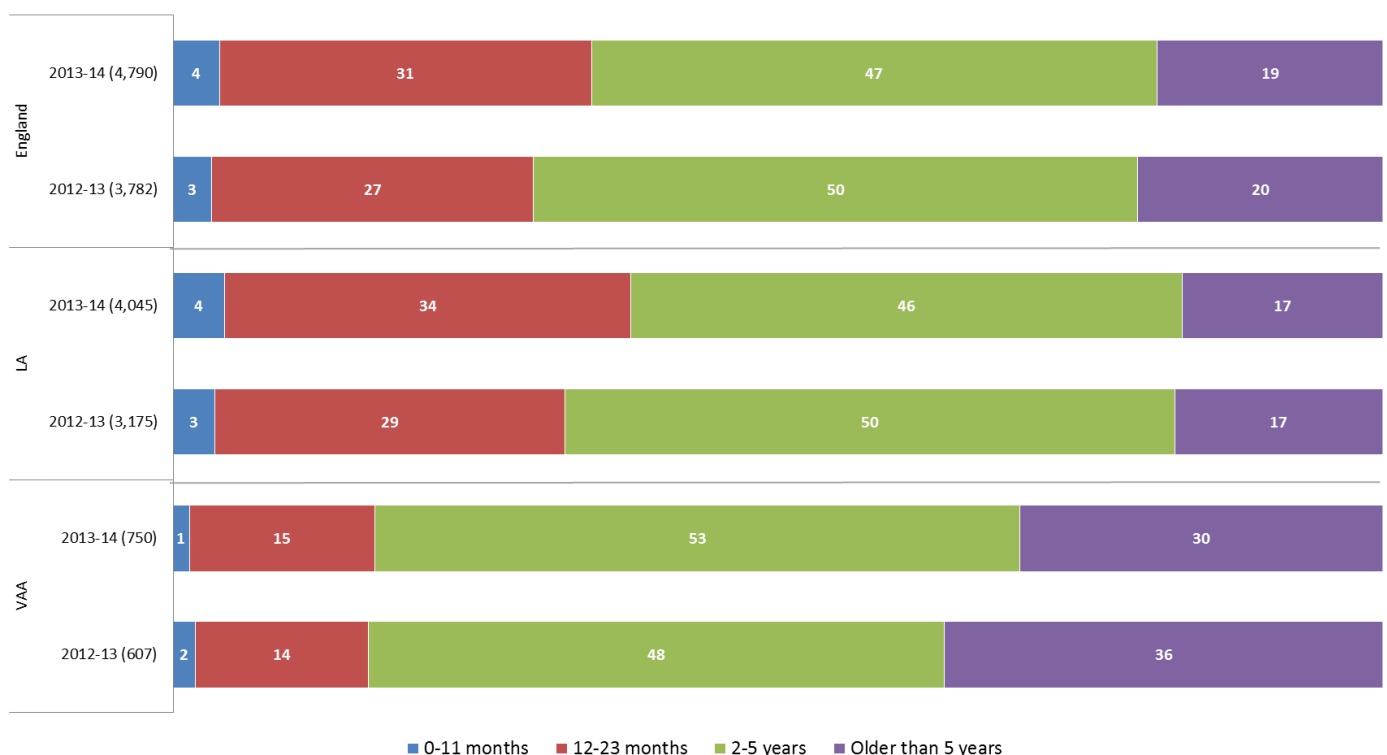
- While there was an increase of 27% in the number of children subject to final adoption orders during 2013-14¹⁰, compared to the previous year, the proportion of children adopted by families approved by LAs and VAAs remained the same. This means that there was an increase across all sectors. The number adopted by families approved by LAs was 4,045 (84%) whilst 16% of children (750) were adopted by VAA approved families. (A1.8)

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

AGES OF CHILDREN WHEN THEIR FINAL ADOPTION ORDER WAS GRANTED

Chart 3

Children who were made subject to a final adoption order, by age (%)



- Of the 4,790 children who were subject to a final adoption order during 2013-14, four per cent (185 children) were aged 11 months or younger, 31% (1,475 children) were aged between 12 to 23 months,

⁹ Furthermore, there was a discrepancy in the data between the numbers of children local authorities say they placed on behalf of other LAs and the number of children LAs say they placed with other LA agencies. This report refers only to those children whom LAs report as placing using adoptive families approved by other LAs. This error is likely to be caused by different interpretations of the arrangements between LAs and, therefore, the way that data is understood, stored and reported by each agency. (A4.3 as opposed to A4.4)

¹⁰ See above: Placement Types

47% (2,245 children) were aged between two and five, and 19% (895 children) were older than five. (A6.1-6.4)

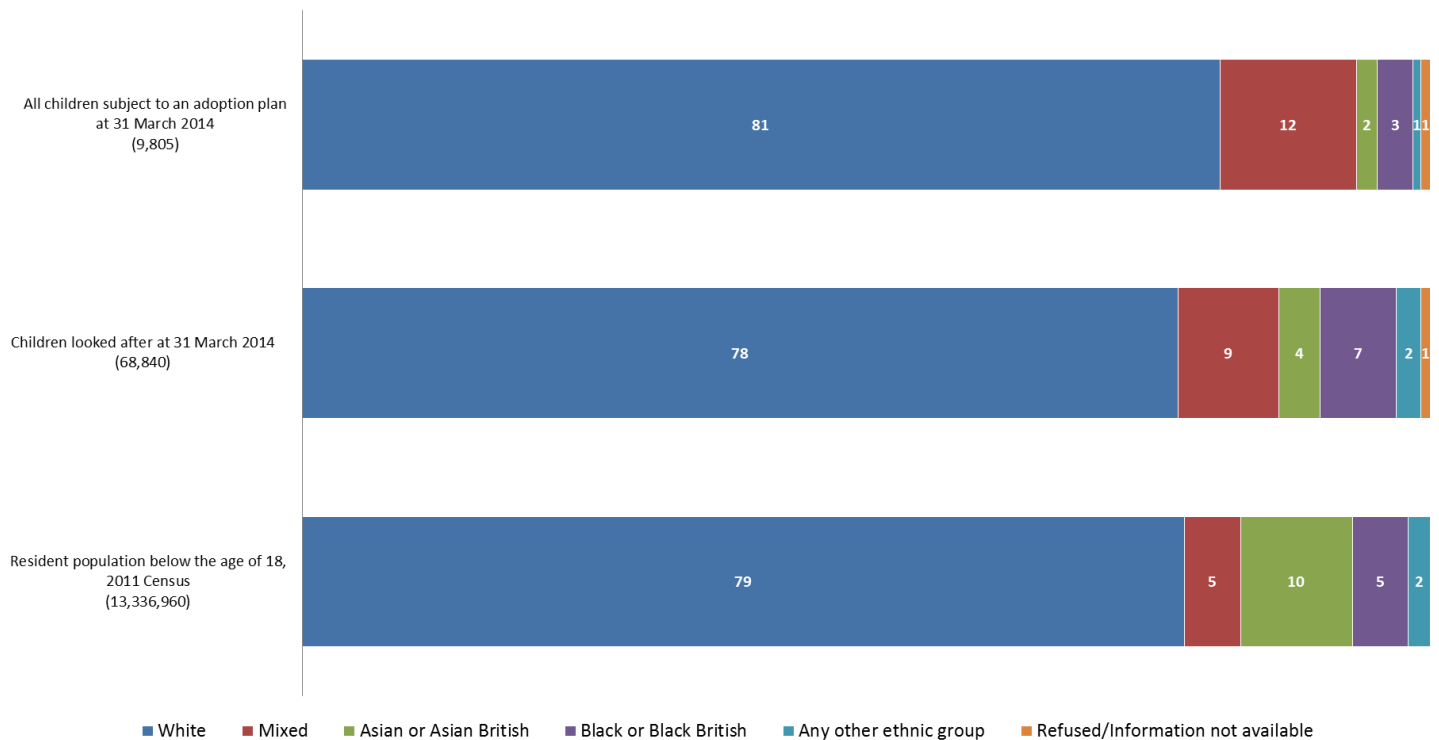
- A large majority of adopted children were older than two years (65%), however the age profile of children was slightly younger than that in the previous year: in 2013-14 just over a third of children (35%) were younger than two years old, while in 2012-13, 30% of children were younger than two when their final adoption orders were granted; an increase of five percentage points.¹¹ (A6.1-6.4)
- There was a five percentage point increase on the previous year in the proportion of children aged between one and two years old who were adopted in LAs; in 2012-13 29% (918 children) were between one and two years old, while in 2013-14 this had risen to 34% (1,360 children). (A6.1-6.4)
- Children adopted through VAAs in 2013-14, and in 2012-13, were older than those adopted via LAs. In 2013-14, of the 750 children adopted through VAAs, 84% were over the age of two with 30% (225) older than five years in comparison to 17% in LAs. In 2013-14, though, just over half (53%) of children adopted via VAAs were older than two and younger than five; an increase of five percentage points on the previous year. (A6.1-6.4)

¹¹ While the DfE report the age breakdown of adopted children slightly differently, these findings are in line with data published by the DfE in September 2014. The DfE reported that of 5,050 children ceasing care due to adoption in the year ending March 2014, four per cent were under one year old; 76% were between one and four years old; 19% were between five and nine years old; and one per cent (70 children) were between 10 and 15 years old. Children who were adopted were, overall, slightly younger than the previous year. See *DfE: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2014, Tables: SFR36/2013* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption>)

ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN¹²

Chart 4

Ethnicity of children subject to adoption plans, looked after and all resident children (%)



- The proportion of children from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, subject to adoption plans, was broadly in line with that of all children from BME backgrounds in England (21%), and those who were looked after (22%). As Chart 4 shows, this masks an over-representation of children of Mixed ethnicity (12%, compared to 9% children looked after and five per cent of all children) and an under-representation of all other groups.¹³ (A5)
- While Black and Black British children were slightly overrepresented in the looked after population (seven per cent compared to five per cent of all children nationally), they are under-represented among children subject to adoption plans (three per cent).¹⁴ (A5)
- Asian or Asian British children represent 10% of the population of children under 18 in England, but represent only four per cent of children looked after, and two per cent of children subject to adoption plans.¹⁵ (A5)

¹² The Children and Families Act 2014 has repealed the requirement (under the Adoption and Children Act 2002) to give due consideration to the ethnicity of children and adopters when matching. However, these data are still of interest to various groups, charities and academics.

¹³ Office for National Statistics (ONS): 2011 census (<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/dc2101ew>), DfE Children looked after, including adoption Table A1

¹⁴ 2011 Census, DfE Children looked after, including adoption Table A1

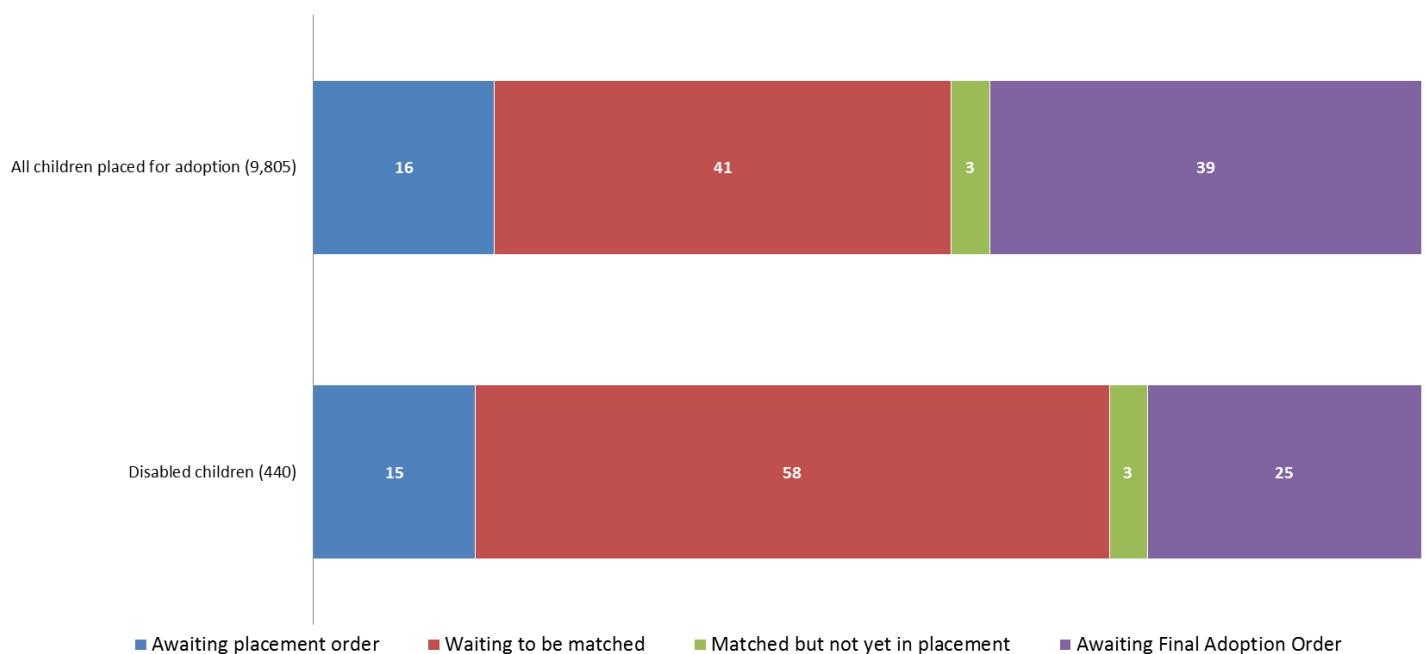
¹⁵ 2011 Census, DfE Children looked after, including adoption Table A1

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- There were 440 children on an adoption plan, on 31 March 2014, identified as disabled. This represented 4% of the total number of children; a one percentage point decrease on the previous year.¹⁶ (A1.1)

Chart 5

Disabled children subject to an adoption plan on 31 March 2014, by stage in the process



- Fifty-eight per cent (255) children with disabilities in the adoption process, as at 31 March 2014, were waiting to be matched to adoptive families. Comparatively, two in five (41%) of all children subject to an adoption plan were waiting to be matched; a 17 percentage point difference. (A1.1, A1.3)
- One quarter of children with disabilities in the adoption process, as at 31 March 2014, were awaiting a final adoption order. This compares to almost 40% of all children. (A1.5)
- Children with disabilities (135) represented three per cent of all children subject to a final adoption order during the year, with very little difference in the proportion of disabled children adopted by families approved by LAs and VAAs. (A1.8)

¹⁶ There are no national statistics available that outline the prevalence of disabilities in children looked after or adopted children. The figures submitted to Ofsted seem low if estimates such as, for example, that by the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) of 40% of children waiting for a new permanent family, having an impairment or some form of special need, are correct. See: <http://www.baaf.org.uk/info/disability>

SIBLING ADOPTION PLACEMENTS

- There were 970 brothers and sisters (2,130 children) who were placed for adoption in the year 2013-14. Therefore, of the 5,365 children placed for adoption in the year, 40% were part of a sibling group and 60% were not. This compares to 43% of children in 2012-13, who belonged to a sibling group.¹⁷ (A3.1-3.3, A4.1-4.3)
- Of the 13% increase in the number of adoption placements that commenced in the year, between 2012-13 and 2013-14, the inferred increase in adoptions of children without siblings was more pronounced: a 20% increase in placements of single children compared to a three per cent increase in placements of children who had siblings. (A3.1-3.3, A4.1-4.3)
- Of the 2,130 children who did belong to a sibling group, 1,645 were placed together (77%). This was a lower proportion than in 2012-13, when 80% of siblings were placed together. (A3.1-3.3, A4.1-4.3)
- The proportion of children who were assessed to be placed together but were actually placed apart remained the same as the previous year (five per cent). (A3.1-3.3, A4.1-4.3)
- The proportion of children who were assessed to be placed apart grew to 18% in 2013-14, from 15% in 2012-13. (A3.1-3.3, A4.1-4.3)

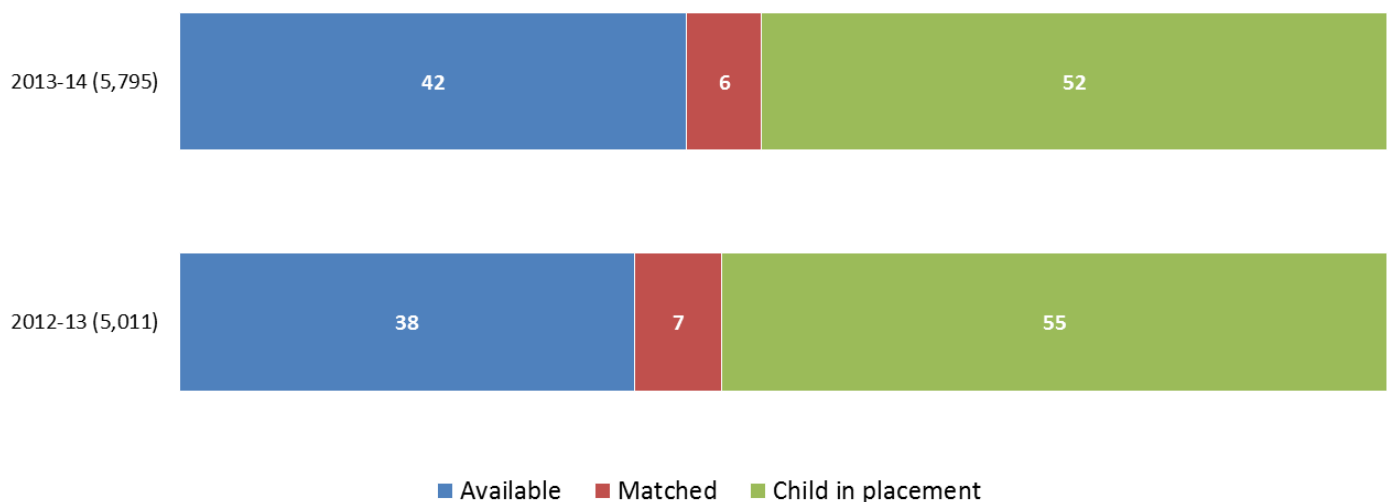
¹⁷ During National Adoption Week (3-7 November) BAAF made sibling adoptions their focus, due to concerns over the availability of adopters for sibling groups. For further information see: <http://www.baaf.org.uk/blog/tag/Siblings>

ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

STAGE IN THE PROCESS

Chart 6

Adoptive families in England as at 31 March 2014, by stage of adoption process (%)



- There were 5,795 approved adoptive families at 31 March 2014. This was a 16% increase from the same point the previous year (5,011); a net increase of approximately 785 families. Compared to the year ending March 2013, a slightly higher proportion of adoptive families were 'available' at 31 March 2014 (42% compared with 38% the previous year). (B1.1-1.4)
- The number of approved adoptive families on 31 March 2014 was higher than the number two years previously by around 1,500 families, or 36%. (B1.1, 2011-12 England B1.1)
- The large majority (83%) of the approved adoptive families as at 31 March 2014 had been approved by LAs (4,815), while 17% (985) had been approved by VAAs. This was a very similar picture to the proportions of approved families as at 31 March 2013 (84% LA; 16% VAA). (B1.1)
- Final adoption orders were granted for 3,685 adoptive families during the year ending 31 March 2014. This was an increase of 18% from 2012-13 (3,120). (B1.5)
- In March 2014, 3,125 families (85%) were LA-approved and 565 (15%) VAA-approved. While the number of adoptive families granted orders increased, the proportional split with LAs and VAAs remained unchanged from the previous year. (B1.7)
- In 2013-14, 510 foster carers were approved to adopt the child/children they were fostering; this was an increase of 23% on the previous year. (B1.11)

RECRUITMENT OF ADOPTERS

On 1 July 2014 changes to the application process for adopters and adoptive families came into force. The new two stage process was designed with the intention that applications to adopt be decided within six months (two months to complete stage 1, and four months to complete stage 2), although prospective adopters have the option to have a break between the stages.¹⁸

The data collected about the recruitment timescales of adopters that was specific to this new two stage process will be used on an individual basis for inspection purposes but is not suitable for aggregation on a national level. The explanatory notes from adoption agencies in the returns indicated that some had not implemented the two stage process by 1 July 2014 and therefore, the data submitted did not reflect the time periods specified in the question.

Other data collected about volumes of recruitment of all applications in the year was unaffected by the implementation of the two stage process. Therefore, the following data on recruitment and timescales includes all applications and Registrations of Interest reported during the period 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014.

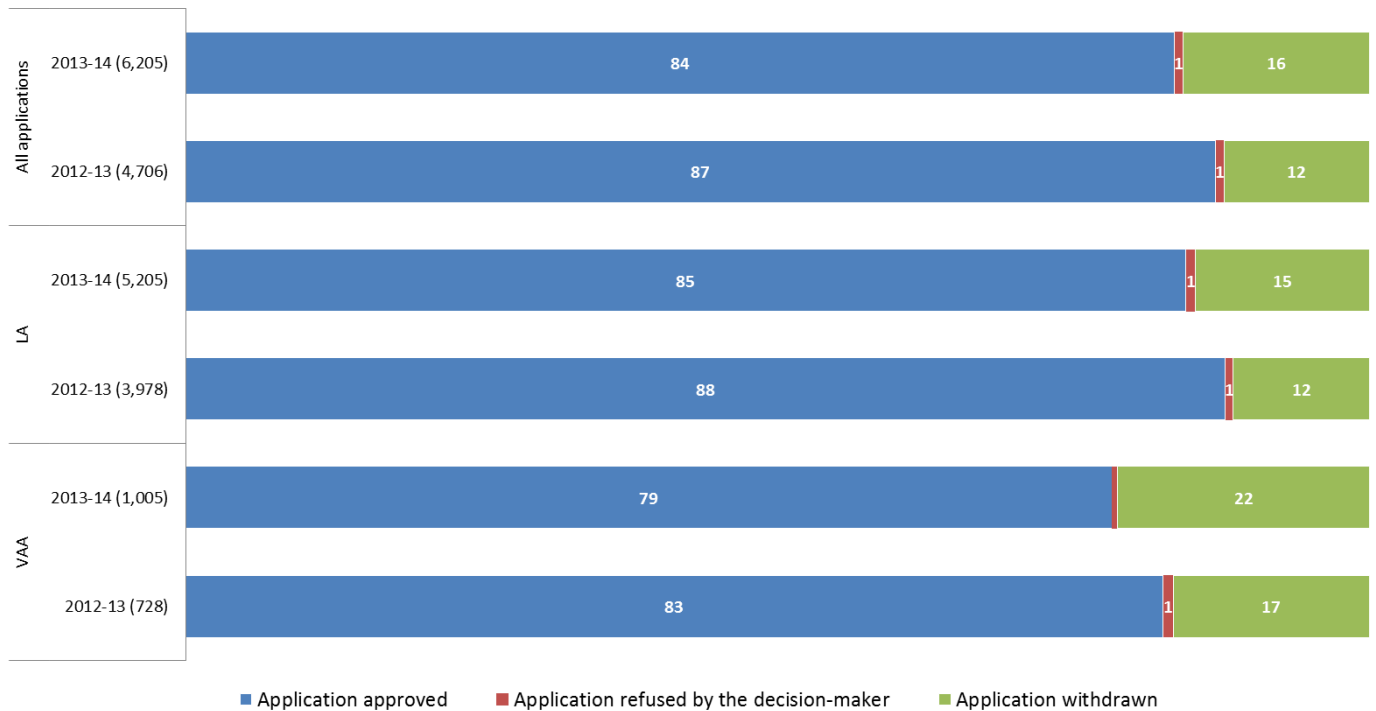
- There were 34,615 initial enquiries to adopt recorded during 2013-14. This was an increase of 28% on the previous year (27,080 during 2012-13). Applications/Registrations of Interest were received from 7,445 prospective adoptive families, from which it may be inferred that just over one in five enquiries progress into applications from people wishing to adopt. Despite changes to the process at 1 July 2013, the ratio of enquiries to applications remained at approximately 5:1 in 2013-14, as in 2012-13.¹⁹ (B2.1-2.3)
- The number of applications still being processed at the end of the year has substantially increased from 2,982 at 31 March 2013, to 4,245 at 31 March 2014; a percentage increase of 42%. (B2.3-2.4)
- The number of applications concluded in the year was 6,205, an increase of 32% on the figure (4,706) from the previous year.

¹⁸ See DfE (July 2013) *Statutory Guidance on Adoption: For local authorities, voluntary adoption agencies and adoption support agencies* available: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270100/adoption_statutory_guidance_2013.pdf

¹⁹ Due to the change in the application process of adoption halfway through the year, comparisons to previous years or between LA and VAA agencies are made with caution.

Chart 7

Outcome for all concluded applications to adopt, by year and sector



- A greater proportion of all concluded applications were withdrawn (either by the applicant or the agency) in 2013-14 compared to the previous year. The proportion of applications that were withdrawn increased from 12% of concluded applications in 2012-13 to 16% in 2013-14. More than one in five applications to VAAs were withdrawn, compared with 15% of applications to adopt with LAs. It is unclear why this split occurs. (B2.7-2.8)
- Although the proportion of approved applications was lower, the number of applications that were approved in the year had increased by 27% compared to the previous year due to an increase in the number of potential adopter applications. During 2013-14, 5,185 applications were approved, whereas during 2012-13 a total /of 4,093 applications were approved.²⁰ (B2.6; 2012-13 B2.5)

²⁰ The Adoption Leadership Board reported, in November 2014 that the "Adopter gap is closing", with their most recent estimate suggesting that, as at 30 June 2014, there was need for "140 more adopter families". See: http://www.adcs.org.uk/download/resources/adoption/ALB-3_Paper1_data_pack.pptx

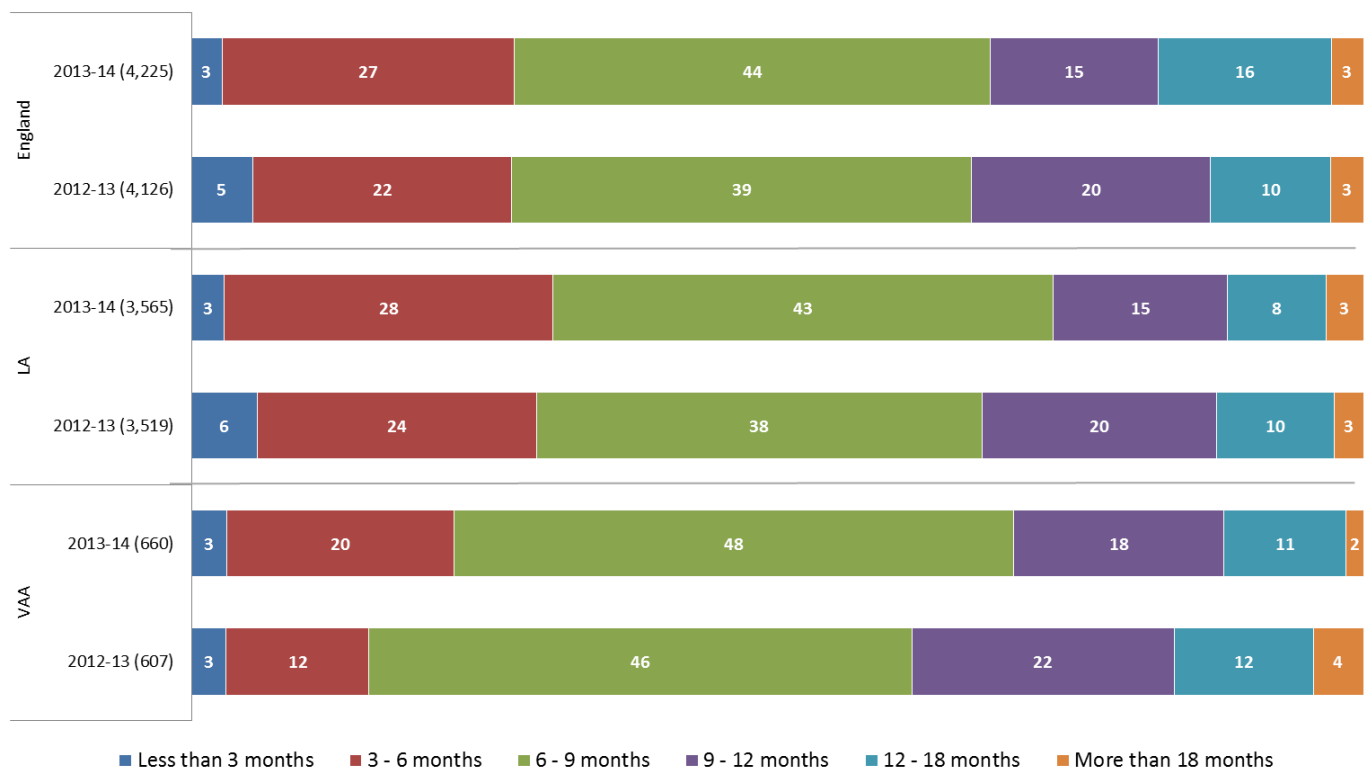
TIMESCALES

Application to approval

- Data were collected on timescales between application and approval decision, for prospective adoptive families, as an indication of the length of time taken for assessment processes.
- A higher proportion of adoptive families were assessed within six months in LAs; 31% compared with 23% among adoptive families in VAAs. However, while LAs approved approximately the same proportion of families within six months in the previous year, VAAs have been closing the gap. In 2012-13 only 15% of applications to VAAs were approved within six months, compared with 23% in 2013-14.²¹ (B4.1-4.6)

Chart 8

Time taken between application and approval of adopters



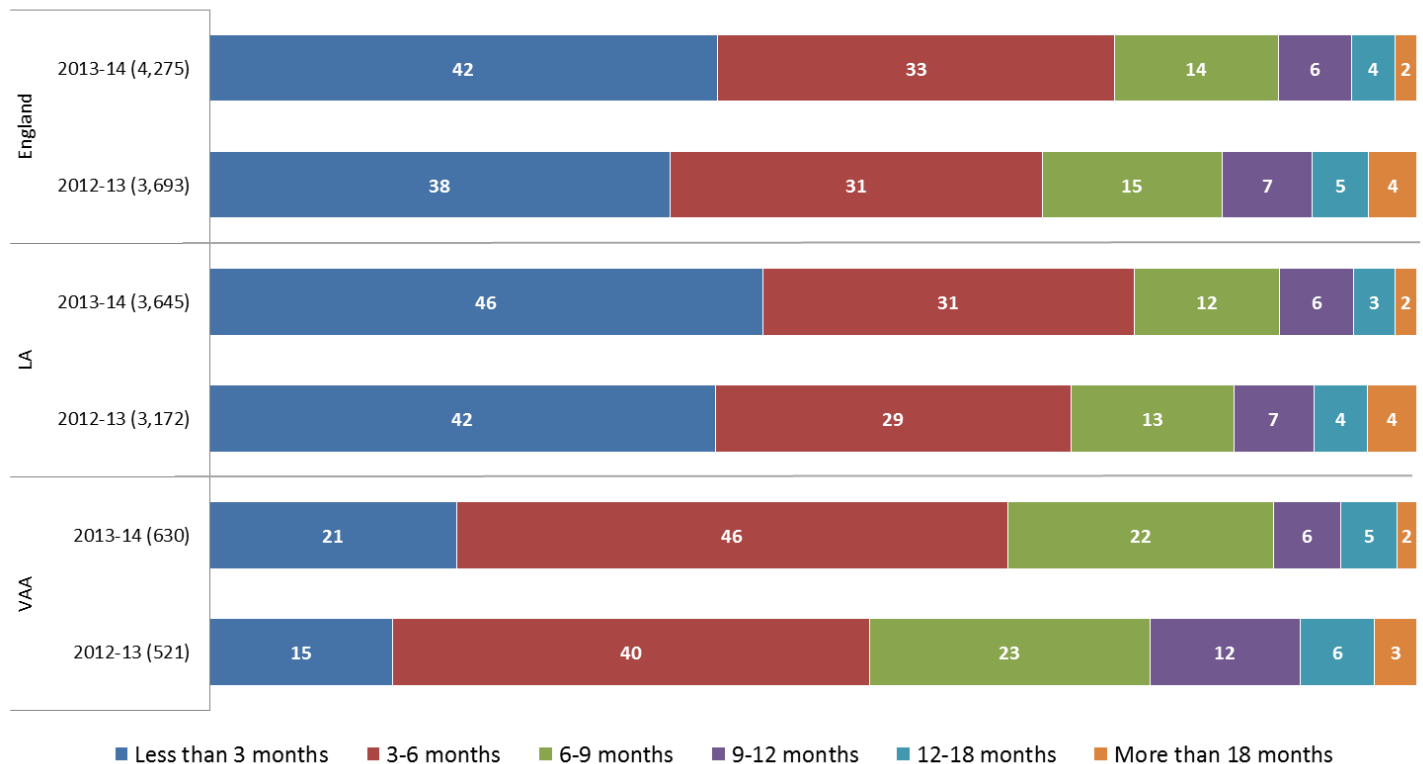
²¹ In July 2014, the government launched their updated policy for "Improving the adoption system and services for looked-after children". Changes to adoption provision, including testing proposals to give approved adopters access to the Adoption Register and expanding the role of the Adoption Leadership Board, were designed to reduce delay and increase the recruitment of adopters. See Department for Education: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-adoption-system-and-services-for-looked-after-children>. Despite the government's commitment to speeding up the adoption process, social workers have expressed concerns about the government's adoption reforms. A national survey, by Community Care, shows that 69% of 411 social care professionals did not agree with the government's approach, while only 4% (18) did agree. See: <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/social-workers-reject-governments-adoption-reforms/>

Approval to matching

- Upon being approved, adoptive families were matched to children more quickly in 2013-14 than in the previous year. A very large majority were matched with children within nine months of their approval decision (89%), compared with 84% in 2012-13. Overall, 42% of adoptive families were matched to children within three months of receiving their approval decision. See Chart 9 below: (B3.1-3.6)

Chart 9

Length of time adoptive families waited between being approved and being matched to a child(ren) (%)



- Adoptive families were matched to children more quickly through LAs than VAAs: matching was completed within six months for 77% of adopters in LAs compared with 67% in VAAs. However, VAAs and LAs matched 89% of their adoptive families to children within nine months of their approval; a higher proportion of matches took between six and nine months in VAAs compared with LAs (22% and 12% respectively). (B3.1-3.6)
- The proportion of adoptive families with VAAs who were matched to children within nine months of their approval decision notably increased between 2012-13 and 2013-14. In 2012-13 78% of adoptive families approved by VAAs were matched to a child within nine months; in 2013-14 this increased by 11 percentage points to 89% of adoptive families. (B3.1-3.6)

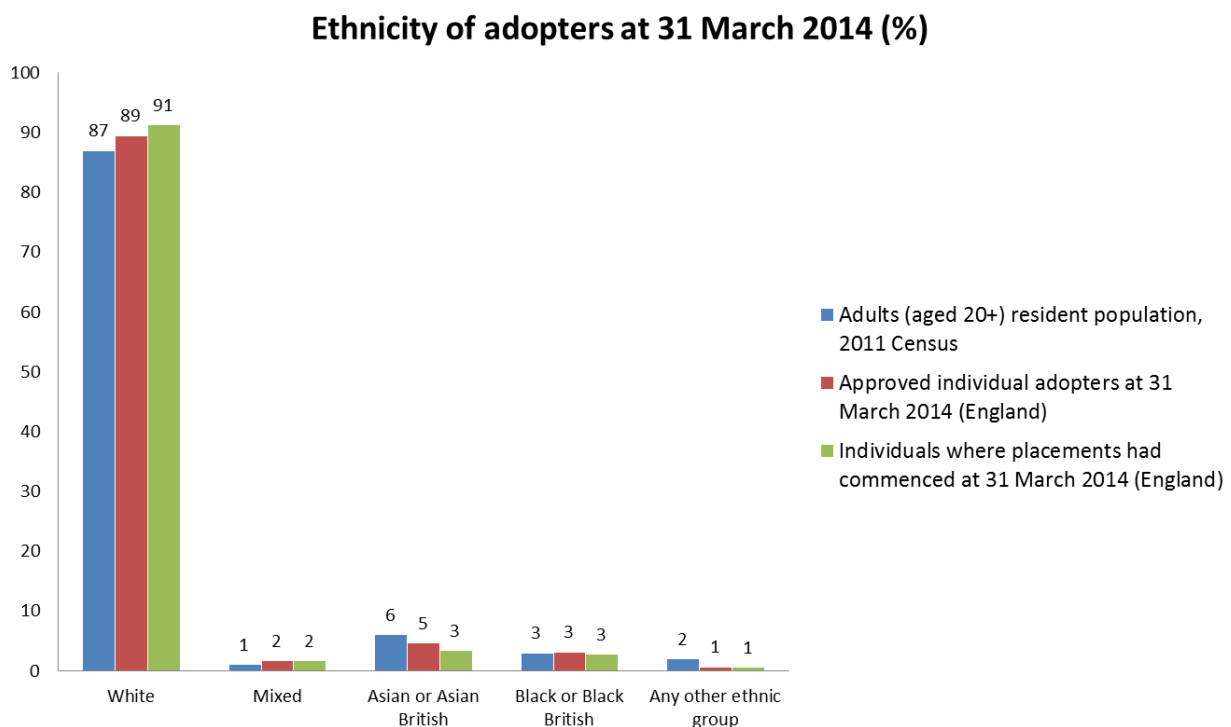
- Of the 4,275 adoptive families matched in 2013-14, 11% waited longer than nine months to be matched to a child. This was an improvement on the previous year when 16% had waited longer than nine months. (B3.1-3.6)

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOPTERS

Ethnicity

- Ethnicity data were collected for the 10,975 individuals who were approved to adopt, as at 31 March 2014.²² A very large majority of those approved to adopt were White (89%, 9,820). Other ethnic groups were represented as follows: two per cent (190) Mixed; five per cent (510) Asian or Asian British; three per cent (345) Black or Black British; one per cent (75) other ethnic groups; and less than one per cent (45) refused or unknown. (C1.1-1.18)
- The ethnic profile of adopters was similar to the profile found among the resident adult population in England at the last census, in 2011. However, the Asian and Asian British population were slightly underrepresented in the group of approved adopters, and more so in the group of individuals for whom placements had commenced at 31 March 2014.²³ (C1.1-1.20)

Chart 10



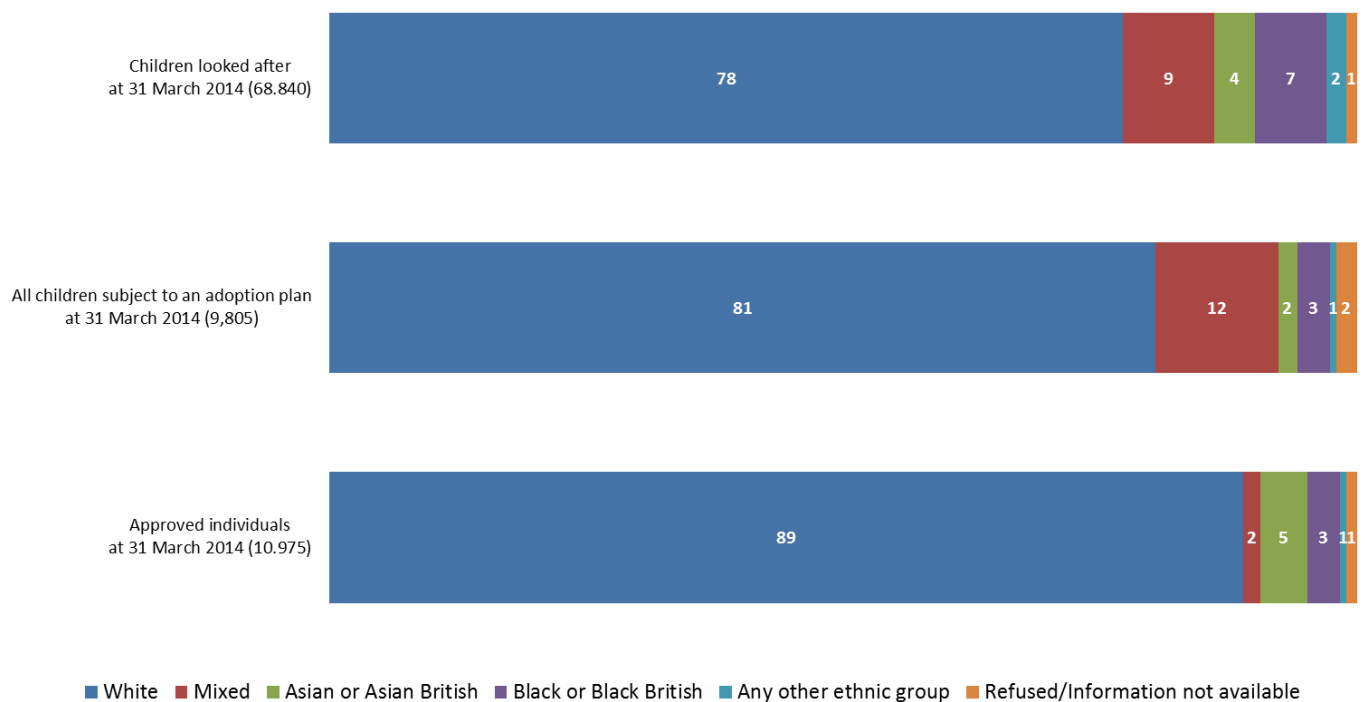
²² The total number of individual adopters, for whom ethnicity was reported, does not match the total number of individual adopters cited in relation to their religion or sexual orientation. This is the result of known errors in Buckinghamshire's dataset submission.

²³ Office for National Statistics (ONS): 2011 census (<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/dc2101ew>)

- The proportion of White adopters (89%) was higher than the proportion of White children who were subject to an adoption plan (81%) and the wider looked after children cohort (78%). (C1.1-1.20)²⁴

Chart 11

Ethnicity of children and adopters at 31 March 2014

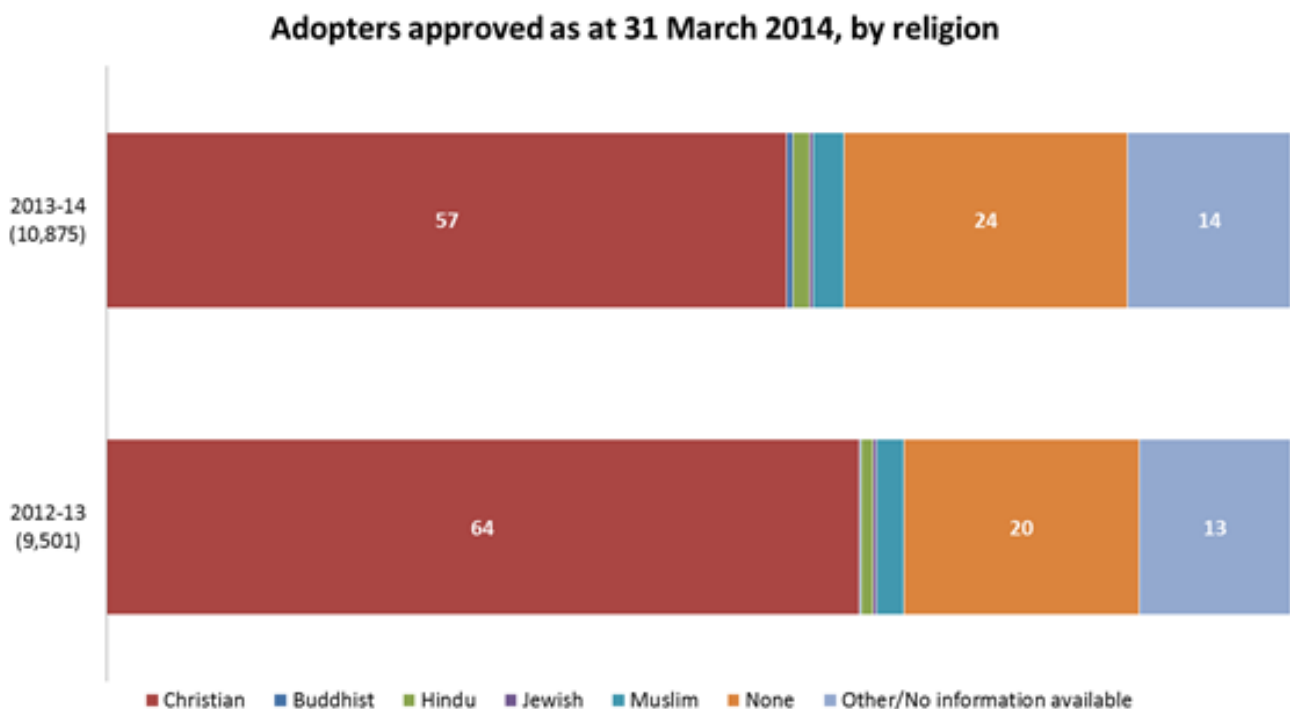


²⁴ DfE: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2014, Tables: SFR36/2013, table A1 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption>)

Religion

- As at 31 March 2014, the majority of approved individuals were reported as being Christian (57%, 6,245). This was a lower proportion than the previous year when 64% were reported as Christian (6,037 adopters as at 31 March 2013). (C2.1-2.8)
- Twenty-four per cent of individuals (2,610) had no religious affiliation, which was an increase of four percentage points on the previous year (1,885 individuals (20%) as at 31 March 2013).²⁵ (C2.1-2.8)

Chart 12: Adopters approved as at 31 March 2014, by religion



- Due to the overall increase in the number of approved adopters (by 14%), the number of adopters who reported being Buddhist (65 individuals, less than one per cent); Hindu (150 individuals, one per cent); and Muslim (285 individuals, three per cent) had all increased since the previous year. However, as an overall proportion, adopters from these religious backgrounds remained the same. There was a slight reduction in the number of adopters reported to be Jewish. (C2.1-2.8)

²⁵ The total number of individual adopters for whom religion was reported does not match the total number of individual adopters cited in relation to their ethnicity or sexual orientation. This is the result of known errors in Buckinghamshire's dataset submission.

Sexuality

- As at 31 March 2014, most individuals (9,710) who were approved to adopt were heterosexual (89%). Individuals who were lesbian (365) represented three per cent of approved adopters, and those who were gay (560) represented five per cent; a slight increase on the previous year when both lesbian and gay adopters represented three per cent each.²⁶ (C3.1-3.6)

Disability

- Very few adopters were disabled. Of the 10,915 individuals who were approved to adopt as at 31 March 2014, 205 (two per cent) had a disability. However, this was nearly three times the number as at 31 March 2013. (C4.1)

Status

- As at 31 March 2014, a large majority of approved adoptive families were married (71%, 4,105). The next largest relationship status was single at 11% (665 families), followed by male/female partnership at nine per cent (545 families). Civil partnerships and same sex partnerships represented four per cent each, 250 and 215 families respectively. (C5.1-5.7)

DISRUPTIONS

- Very few children (three per cent) were reported to have experienced a disruption of adoption placement prior to their final adoption order in 2013-14. In total, of the 5,365 children who were placed for adoption during 2013-14, disruptions affected 155 children.²⁷ Although the number of placements commencing increased between 2012-13 and 2013-14, the proportion of children experiencing disruptions has remained at three per cent. (A2.1-2.3, A4.1-4.3)
- There was very little difference between the proportions of disruptions within families approved 'in house' by LAs, by other LAs and by VAAs. Of 3,630 children who were placed by LAs using their own approved adoptive families, disruptions affected 95 children (three per cent). Of 905 children who were placed by LAs using families approved by other LAs, disruptions affected 35 children (four per cent). Of 835 children who were placed with VAAs, 30 children (four per cent) experienced a disruption. (A2.1-2.3, A4.1-4.3)

²⁶ The total number of individual adopters for whom sexual orientation was reported does not match the total number of individual adopters cited in relation to their ethnicity or religion. This is the result of known errors in Buckinghamshire's dataset submission.

²⁷ Disruptions, in this context, are strictly limited to those which take place prior to a child's final adoption order. For further research on disruptions more generally, and in particular those that occur after final adoption orders have been granted, see Selwyn, J., Wijedasa, D., and Meakings, S. (April 2014) "Beyond the adoption order: challenges, interventions and adoption disruption", Department for Education ([here](#)).

ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

- Local authorities reported that, during 2013-14, they received 4,420 requests for assessments for post-adoption support.
- A large majority of the requests resulted in the provision of support (76%, 3,370); 13% did not result in the provision of support (575 requests); and 405 assessments were still being carried out on 31 March 2014.²⁸ (D3)

INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTIONS

- Data on children's ages at the time they entered the United Kingdom was supplied for 100 children who were placed for inter-country adoption during 2013-14; this was a decrease of 28% on the previous year (138 children). (G4)
- The largest number of children were aged 12-23 months, at 35 children placed. A fifth of the children placed (20) were aged 0 to 11 months. Nearly a third of children (30%) were aged two to five years old with 30 children placed. This was a substantially younger age profile of children compared to domestic adoptions, where 47% were aged two to five years old, and four per cent of children (182) were 0 to 11 months. (G4.1-4.4, A6.1-6.4)
- During 2013-14, 49 adoption agencies reported that they offered assessment and approval of prospective inter-country adopters. Of these, six were VAAs and 43 were local authority-run agencies. (G1.1)
- Just over two thirds (67%) of the children placed for inter-country adoption during 2012-13 were female; 70 females and 35 males. (G5)
- Local authorities placed 45 children for inter-country adoption during 2012-13 and VAAs placed 60 children. (G5)
- The three countries with the highest number of children who were placed for inter-country adoption were: Russia (25); China (20) and India (15). (G5)

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

- There were 450 complaints against adoption agencies received during 2013-14; 91% (410) were made to LAs and 9% (40) were made to VAAs. There were approximately 35 more complaints received during 2013-14 than 2012-13 (an increase of 8%). Comparatively, there were more complaints (approximately

²⁸ This is a breakdown of adoption support services requested in the year, it does not include those adoption support packages that are on-going and in place prior to 1 April 2013. According to the DfE, in September 2013, "Eighty-one per cent of adoptive parents said their support needs were identified, yet only 56% were given the support they needed; and over half of the adoptive parents surveyed needed therapeutic services, but only 28% of adoptive parents reported that their adoption agency provided this". In response, the Adoption Support Fund was launched, which included a budget of £19.3 million for adoptive families. See DfE September 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-193-million-support-fund-for-adoptive-parents>

40) made to VAAs in 2013-14 than in the previous year (18 complaints in 2012-13); nine per cent of complaints were made to VAAs compared to four per cent in 2012-13. (E1.1)

- There were 85 allegations relating to child protection made against adopters, or prospective adopters, made between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014; 71% (60) for LAs and 29% (25) for VAAs. The number of allegations made increased by more than a quarter between 2012-13 and 2013-14 (from 67 to 85 allegations during the year). (E1.3)

METHODOLOGY

1. The data in this publication are taken from returns made to Ofsted by local authority and voluntary adoption agencies. Most of the data relate to the period between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014.
2. For data protection and disclosure purposes, figures have been rounded up to the nearest five (one to four have all been rounded up to five). This methodology has been applied following the recent Assessment of these statistics and in light of the updated Government Statistical Society (GSS) standards. The purpose of the rounding is to ensure non-disclosure of sensitive data whilst maintaining its usefulness. In light of the supplementary data at agency level that will be released in the new year, totals have been rounded up to five to allow maximum use of agency level data with the minimum risk of disclosure. This means that some totals do not match exactly with secondary breakdowns, however, the impact on percentages has been minimal.
3. The DfE collects data about all children looked after through their annual SSDA903 return, which requires local authorities to report on only those children for whom they are responsible. Ofsted's data is collected primarily for the purposes of inspecting and evaluating the effectiveness of adoption agencies. As a result, some questions in the dataset ask the agency to report on all children living with adopters approved by their agency, which may include children who have been placed by other LAs. While agencies should be able to provide these data, as they are responsible for these children, there are in some cases small discrepancies between the data sent to the DfE and the data sent to Ofsted. Where this is the case, there are explanatory footnotes in the text.
4. Trend data from previous datasets where applicable, however it should be noted that data from the first collection in 2011-12 have a limited use. These data were experimental as there were issues with the quality of the data supplied. Furthermore, the collection has developed over time and the questions have changed. Where data have been compared, these factors have been taken into consideration to ensure comparisons are valid.
5. On 1 July 2014 changes to the application process for adopters and adoptive families came into force. The new two stage process was designed with the intention that applications to adopt be decided within six months (two months to complete stage 1, and four months to complete stage 2), although prospective adopters have the option to have a break between the stages.²⁹ The data collected about the recruitment timescales of adopters that was specific to this new two stage process will be used on an individual basis for inspection purposes but is not suitable for aggregation on a national level. The explanatory notes from adoption agencies in the returns indicated that some had not implemented the two stage process by 1 July 2014 and therefore, the data submitted did not reflect the time periods specified in the question. Other data collected about volumes of recruitment of all applications in the year was unaffected by the implementation of the two stage process. Therefore, the following data on recruitment and timescales includes all applications and Registrations of Interest reported during the period 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014.

²⁹ See DfE (July 2013) *Statutory Guidance on Adoption: For local authorities, voluntary adoption agencies and adoption support agencies* available: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270100/adoption_statutory_guidance_2013.pdf

For more information on how Ofsted regulates and inspects voluntary adoption agencies, please go to the Ofsted website: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/adoption-2013-14-first-statistical-release>

RESPONSE RATES

	Local authority adoption agencies	Voluntary adoption agencies	Total
Number of providers eligible to return (as at 31 March 2014)	152	37	189
Returns in analysis	152	37	189
Percentage of returns	100%	100%	100%

Ofsted received data returns from all local authority and voluntary agencies eligible to return data. However, the return from Buckinghamshire local authority contained small inaccuracies around the number of individual adopters where placements had commenced (sections C1-3 and C5). Despite requests to do so, Buckinghamshire did not offer corrections to these errors within the required timeframe. Their data have been included in the national and local authority datasets and in this report, with an acknowledgement where necessary.

Responses were received from all 152 LAs in England. A total of 10 LAs have four joint arrangements³⁰, whereby adoptive families were shared across member authorities and as such it was not possible to distinguish the families across individual authorities. However, all activity has been captured representing a 100% return rate from LAs.

Of the 45 VAAs, eight were not eligible to submit data. Of these eight; six provided adoption support functions only, one resigned after the start of the collection, and one was registered but not actually operational until 1 April 2014. Furthermore, the analysis and statistical release exclude data collected which related to three VAAs, which Ofsted inspects, but are based in Wales. The 37 returns in this dataset, therefore, represented a 100% response rate of eligible VAAs in England.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The aggregated data at England, total local authority adoption agencies and total voluntary adoption agencies levels, are available in Excel format on the Ofsted website in the same location as this document:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/adoption-2013-14-first-statistical-release>

³⁰ Adoption services which were provided under joint arrangements involved the following LAs: Telford & Wrekin, Shropshire, Rutland, Leicestershire, St. Helen's, Warrington, Wigan, Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea, and Westminster.

GLOSSARY

Adoption agencies

The focus of all adoption agencies is on placing children successfully into adoptive families who the agency recruits, assesses, prepares and supports, so they will meet the children's needs and enable them to develop and achieve throughout their lives. The services maintained by local authorities are described in section 3(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. Local authorities place children with adoptive families recruited and approved by themselves, by other local authorities or by voluntary adoption agencies who must register with Ofsted. Adoption agencies may also provide birth records, counselling and intermediary services to adoptees and birth relatives. There are three branches of voluntary adoption agencies in Wales which are inspected by Ofsted because their head offices are in England. These are not included in this publication.

Adoption plan

This means that the decision has been made by the agency decision maker that the child 'should be placed for adoption' (SBPFA). Also known as the 'best interest decision'. Children are counted as subject to an adoption plan at all stages until the final adoption order is granted.

Adoptive family

For the purposes of these data, one 'adoptive family' includes: a couple (married, civil partnership male/female partnership or same sex partnership) who have been approved as adoptive parents; or a single person (including divorced or widowed) who has been approved as an adoptive parent.

Approved

The definition of approved is 'people who have been approved as adopters by the adoption agency decision maker'.

Disability

Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Examples include cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and heart conditions; hearing or sight impairments, or a significant mobility difficulty; and mental health conditions or learning difficulties.

Final adoption order

This is when the courts grant the adoption order.

Final adoption order (inter-country adoptions)

This is the final adoption order issued by the state of origin (for a convention or designated country) or the final adoption order issued by a UK court (for a non-convention country).

Misconduct

Where a formal investigation into the conduct of a member of staff or a prospective adopter is undertaken which follows a voluntary adoption agency's procedures for investigating such allegations. The use of the term allegation is used for employment as well as safeguarding.

Placed for adoption

This is where a child is placed (i.e. living with) the adoptive family that they have been matched to.

Requests for assessment

Formal requests for assessment for adoption support services, rather than on-going informal assistance or initial enquiries.

Sibling groups

The definition of siblings includes children who are: full siblings; half siblings; step siblings who have usually been living together or where there is a connection; children of a partner or former partner of a child's parent where the children have grown up together and consider themselves to be siblings.

Disruptions

Adoption placements that end before the final adoption order is made by the courts.

Withdrawn

The definition of withdrawn is 'those applications that were stopped by the applicant'.

Acknowledgements

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