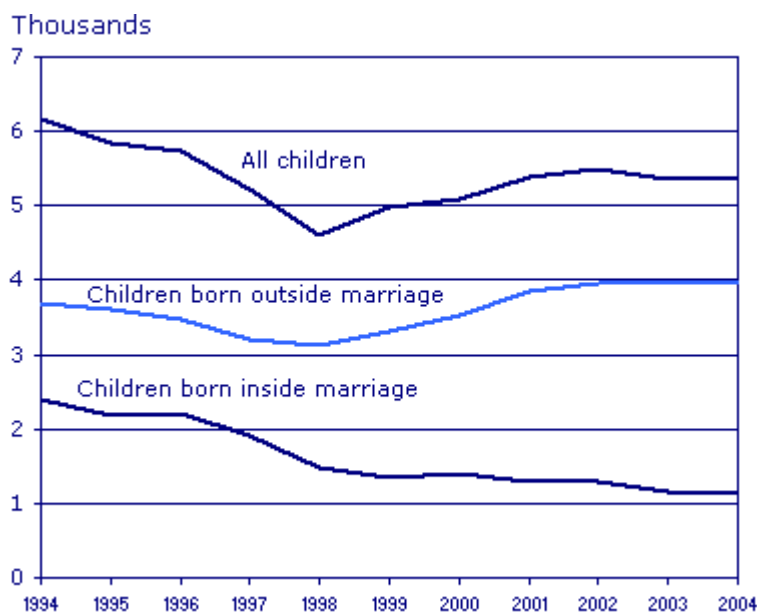


Adoptions

Adoptions remain the same in 2004



Adoption Orders in England and Wales

There were 5,360 children adopted through courts in England and Wales in 2004, two fewer than in 2003. This is 13 per cent less than in 1994, but 16 per cent more than the low of 4,617 in 1998. The number of adoptions increased gradually each year from 1998 to reach 5,486 in 2002, before falling for the next two years.

Between 1994 to 2004 there were steady decreases in the proportions of children who were aged 5 to 14 who were adopted, and a significant increase in the proportion adopted who were aged 1 to 4. In 2004, 49 per cent of children adopted were in this age group compared with 26 per cent in 1994, while 13 per cent of adopted children in 2004 were aged 10 to 14 compared with 23 per cent ten years earlier.

The proportion of adopted children who were born outside marriage increased fairly steadily. Nearly three quarters of children (74 per cent) adopted in 2004 were born outside marriage, compared with 60 per cent in 1993. Some of these adoptions may be step-children adoptions following the marriage of the natural mother.

A longer-term trend is available from the number of entries in the Adopted Children Register. Based on date of entry in the Register, there were 21,495 adoptions in England and Wales in 1971. The number fell rapidly during the 1970s and steadily over the 1980s and 1990s.

The rapid decline in the number of children available for adoption followed the introduction of legal abortion in the Abortion Act 1967 and the implementation of the Children Act 1975. This latter act required courts dealing with adoption applications for children of divorced parents to dismiss applications for adoption where a legal custody order was in the child's best interests.

The increased use of contraception and change in attitudes to lone parents has also contributed to the long-term fall.

Source: Table 6.1a, FM2 no. 31 Marriage, divorce and adoption statistics 2003.

Notes:

Children are defined as being 17 years or younger.

Adoption figures are produced on two definitions: date of entry into Adopted Children Register and date of court order. The chart uses data on the date of court order, which are only available from 1991. These data are preferable to the date of entry into the Adopted Children Register as there is a possible time lag between the date of court order and the subsequent entry into the register.

In the chart 'all children' includes records where marital status was not stated.

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