

## **Foreign adoptees in Sweden according to statistics**

### ***Total population***

Foreign adoptions 1969-2000: 41 026 individuals

Main countries 1963-99: Korea 8272 (20%), India 6611 (16%), Colombia 4761 (12%), Sri Lanka 3465 (8%), Chile 2230 (5%), Thailand 1725 (4%), Vietnam 1138 (3%), Ethiopia 920 (2%), Brazil 803 (2%), Indonesia 783 (2%), Iran 611 (1%)

### ***Age and sex***

0-17 years 1999: 18 856 individuals (52% girls and 48% boys)

16-40 years 1998: 20 904 individuals (59% women and 41% men)

### ***Social background***

3859 adoptive parents who adopted between 1973-75: 45% social group 1 compared to generally (=among a Swedish-born control group) 9%, 10% social group 2 compared to generally 35% och 14% social group 3 compared to generally 56% (*Bresky 1976*)

### ***Education***

1897 adoptees 23-34 years 1996: 4,4% with university education three years or more compared to generally 8,7% (*Björklund & Richardson 2000*)

3119 adopted men 20-35 years 1998: 4% with 16 years or more of total education compared to generally 9% (*Rooth 2001*)

### ***Work***

1897 adoptees 23-34 years 1996: 93 300 SKR in annual income compared to generally 137 300 SKR (*Björklund & Richardson 2000*)

3119 adopted men 20-35 years 1998: 81,2% working full-time compared to generally 91% (*Rooth 2001*)

### ***Civil status***

1897 adoptees 23-34 years 1996: 13,3% married compared to generally 25% and 15,9% co-habiting compared to generally 31,1% (*Björklund & Richardson 2000*)

3119 adopted men 20-35 years 1998: 6% married compared to generally 18% (*Rooth 2001*)

### ***Child psychiatry***

171 adoptees 0-20 years registred at child psychiatry centers 1980-82: 100% overrepresentation (*Déry-Alfredsson & Kats 1986*)

### ***Closed internment***

114 adoptees 11-18 years interred at mental health institutions 1980-85: 400% overrepresentation (*Cederblad 1989*)

2600 adoptees 0-18 years 1990-94: 200% overrepresentation for abuse of alcohol (boys) and narcotics (girls), 200% overrepresentation for anorectic behaviour (girls), 200% overrepresentation as perpetrators of violent crimes (boys) and as victims of violent crimes (girls) and 300% overrepresentation for suicide attempts (boys) (200% for girls) (*Hjern 1998*)

### ***Foster homes and youth homes***

44 adoptees 13-16 years placed in foster homes 1991: 240% overrepresentation (*Vinnerljung 1999*)

68 adoptees 10-20 years placed in youth homes 1995-96: 260% overrepresentation (*Eriksson & Sundqvist 1999*)

### ***Criminality, suicide och destructive sexuality***

372 adopted Koreans registred for crime 1985-89: 0,87% compared to generally 0,58% and 200% overrepresentation for thefts, robberies and traffic crimes, 250% overrepresentation for material damages, 300% overrepresentation for shop liftings and 400% overrepresentation for thefts from vehicles (*Ahlberg 1996*)

10 adopted Koreans who committed suicide 1987-91: 111% overrepresentation compared to Swedish-borns and 300% overrepresentation compared to Koreans in Korea (*Ferrada-Noli 1997*)

86 adopted girls 13-18 years 1990-91: 21,21% had had unpleasant sexual experiences compared to generally 6% (*Berg-Kelly & Eriksson 1997*)

### ***Comparative studies***

497 adoptees 23-34 years 1996 compared to their 559 Swedish-born biological siblings (*Björklund & Richardson 2000*):

21,3% with university education two years or more compared to 34,9%

6,6% with university education three years or more compared to 20%

97 000 SKR in annual income compared to 136 200 SKR

13,3% married compared to 29,3% and 15,1% co-habiting compared to 32,4%

525 adoptees compared to their adoptive 1050 adoptive parents 1993-97/1978-82 (Österberg 2000):

141 000 SKR in annual income for adopted men compared to 168 900 SKR

105 600 SKR in annual income for adopted women compared to 114 000 SKR

223 600 SKR in annual income for adoptive fathers compared to 127 400 SKR

95 000 SKR in annual income for adoptive mothers compared to 63 700 SKR

21,30% unemployed adopted men compared to 14,94%

22,76% unemployed adopted women compared to 18,88%

5,15% unemployed adoptive fathers compared to 8,3%

6,14% unemployed adoptive mothers compared to 7,7%

## **Referemces**

Jan Ahlberg: *Invandrares och invandrares barns brottslighet. En statistisk analys* (Brottsförebyggande rådet, 1996)

Kristina Berg-Kelly & Jan Eriksson: *Adaptation of adopted foreign children at mid-adolescence as indicated by aspects of health and risk taking – a population study* (European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry 6/1997)

Anders Björklund & Katarina Richardson: *How Adopted Children born abroad fare as Young Adults in the Swedish Labor Market* (Stockholms universitet: Sociala forskningsinstitutet, 2000)

Lillemor Bresky: *Utländska adoptivbarns föräldrar. En kartläggning av sökanden av utländska adoptivbarn 1973-75* (Statens nämnd för internationella adoptioner, 1976)

Marianne Cederblad: *Utländsfödda adoptivbarn – anpassningsproblem i tonåren* (Lunds universitet: Institutionen för barn- och ungdomspsykiatri, 1989)

Ilona Déry-Alfredsson & Madeleine Kats: *Utländska adoptivbarn på PBU* (Stockholms universitet: Psykologiska institutionen, 1986)

Jan-Åke Eriksson & Inger Sundqvist: *Behandling av adopterade barn på särskilt ungdomshem. Förslag till en behandlingsmodell* (Statens institutionsstyrelse, 1999)

Marcello Ferrada-Noli: *A cross-cultural breakdown of Swedish suicide* (Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 1997)

Anders Hjern: *Migration till segregation. En folkhälsorapport om barn med utländskt ursprung i Stockholm* (Centrum för barn och ungdomshälsa, 1998)

Dan-Olof Rooth: *Adopted Children in the Labour Market – Discrimination or Unobserved Characteristics?* (Högskolan i Kalmar: Nationalekonomiska institutionen, 2001)

Bo Vinnerljung: *Förekomst av adoptivbarn och långtidsvårdande fosterbarn bland placeringar av tonåringar i dygnsvård* (Socialstyrelsen, 1999)

Torun Österberg: *Children with immigrant backgrounds – Ethnic externalities in their labour market performance* (Handelshögskolan vid Göteborgs universitet: Nationalekonomiska institutionen, 2000)

Torun Österberg: *Intergenerational income mobility among individuals with different ethnic origins* (Handelshögskolan vid Göteborgs universitet: Nationalekonomiska institutionen, 2000)

### **A summary of research on intercountry adoptees in Sweden**

On the 6th of November 2001 three researchers presented their results from the project Life situation and health of young intercountry adoptees at the Old Parliament in Stockholm, Sweden. The three researchers are all associate professors, medical doctors Anders Hjern and Frank Lindblad and the sociologist Bo Vinnerljung. This is a summary of the results in relation to earlier research on intercountry adoptees in Sweden.

While using data from different Swedish population registers the researchers have examined the adoptive parents and the adoptees' civil status, settlement, education, status on the labour market, addiction, criminality, mental illness and suicide. Two groups of intercountry adoptees born outside Europe are included in the study: an older group of 5942 individuals born between 1968-75 in the ages of 23-30 who were checked up on in 1997-99, and a younger group of 11 320 individuals born between 1970-79 in the ages of 8-24 who were checked up on in 1986-95. Dominant countries are South Korea and India, and 60 percent are female. Adoptees who came to Sweden after the age of seven and who grew up with single adoptive mothers are for statistical reasons not included in the study. Control groups are an average of the majority population (ethnic Swedes), an adoptive sibling group (ethnic Swedes born to the adoptive parents), a group of immigrants from other Western countries (white immigrants) and a group of immigrants from non-Western countries (non-white immigrants).

The adoptive parents were found to have high incomes and high education levels. They are older than the average parents, less often single, less often divorced, and they are less often addicted to drugs or alcohol, registered for criminality or suffering from mental illness than the average population of Sweden.

This is in accordance with earlier studies which found that adoptive parents more often belong to social group 1/upper class (half of the adoptive parents compared to ten percent of the average population) and less often to social group/working class (15 percent of the adoptive parents compared to half of the average population) (Bresky 1976).

The old group of adoptees was compared to the sibling group considering civil status and settlement. The adoptee group was less often married (12 percent against 16), had less often children (20 percent against 22) and was more often still living together with their adoptive parents (15 percent against 12).

Adoptees who are parents are more often living without their children if they are male (31 percent against 18) and are more often single if they are female (29 percent against 18).

Generally male adoptees have much more problems to find a spouse and have children than female adoptees.

This is in accordance with another study which found that 51 percent of the female adoptees were married or co-habitants compared to 25 percent of the male adoptees (Moser 1997). Another study of male adoptees in the ages of 20-35 found that just six percent were married compared to 18 percent of the average population (Rooth 2001). Divided continent by continent, the male adoptees from Asia (South Korea) had more problems to find a spouse than the male adoptees from Latin America (Colombia).

Yet another study found that 72,17 percent of the male adoptees with an average age of 34 were without children compared to 61,67 percent of the average population, while the same comparison for female adoptees was 57,09 percent against 47,09 percent (Österberg 2000). The same study indicated that adult adoptees more often than the average population tend to move to big cities and especially Stockholm where 27,83 percent of the male adoptees have settled compared to 18,9 percent of the average population and 33,58 percent of the female adoptees compared to 19,2 percent.

The adoptees' level of education is almost the same as the average population: 32 percent have post-secondary education and 11 percent nine-year compulsory school as the highest education in both groups. But in relation to their adoptive siblings whom they grew up together with, the differences are huge. Of these much more (51 percent) have post-secondary education and much less (six percent) nine-year compulsory school as the highest education. Adoptees from Asia (South Korea) tend to have higher education levels than adoptees from Latin America (Colombia), as adoptees who came to Sweden at a younger age compared to adoptees who came at a higher age.

The adoptees' have severe problems to establish themselves on the labour market. Only 66 percent had an employment compared to 74 percent of the average population. Ten percent received social allowance during more than six months compared to seven percent of the average population. However in comparison with the group of immigrants from non-Western countries a pattern emerges: non-white adoptees and immigrants reach the same low level compared to both the sibling group and the average population.

Earlier studies have found that adoptees' income is much lower than their Swedish-born adoptive siblings': 97 000 SEK in annual income compared to 136 200 (Björklund & Richardson 2000). The same study found that only 6,6 percent of the adoptees had a post-secondary education longer than three years compared to 20 percent of the sibling group.

Both adoptee groups have higher risks for addiction to alcohol or drugs than both among the sibling group and the average population. The risk is doubled for addiction to alcohol and even a little bit more for addiction to drugs.

Criminality is also more common among adoptees than both among the sibling group and the average population. Nine percent of the young group of adoptees have been sentenced to a crime compared to 5,9 percent of the sibling group and 6,4 percent of the average population. Also sentences which led to imprisonment were more common among adoptees than among the average population.

An older study found that male adoptees dominates treatment for addiction to alcohol (two times more) while female adoptees dominates treatment for addiction to drugs (also two times more) (Hjern 1998), The same study found that male adoptees are more often perpetrators of violent crimes (two times more) while female adoptees are more often victims of violent crimes (two times more). A study of female adoptees in the ages of 13-18 found that 29,29 percent drank alcohol alone compared to 14 percent of the equivalent ethnic Swedish girls, while 24,13 percent used drugs compared to five percent (Berg-Kelly & Eriksson 1997).

Another study found that people born in South Korea more often committed theft, robbery and traffic crimes (all two times more), damage to property (two and a half times more) and shoplifting (three times more) than the average population (Ahlberg 1996).

2,1 percent of the old group of adoptees and 3,7 percent of the young group were hospitalized for mental illness, something which is almost three times more common than among the average population. The same overrepresentation was shown for treatment for suicide attempt, and for committed suicide the overrepresentation was almost four times more.

Earlier studies have found a double overrepresentation for contact with child psychiatry (Déry-Alfredsson & Kats 1986), a four times more overrepresentation for treatment in child psychiatry hospitals (Cederblad 1989), a three times more overrepresentation for attending special schools (Moser 1997) a two times more overrepresentation for treatment of anorexia for female adoptees (Hjern 1998), a two and a half times overrepresentation for placement in foster homes (Vinnerljung 1999) and a two and a half times overrepresentation for placement in youth incarceration centres (Eriksson & Sundqvist 1999).

Earlier studies on suicide have shown that both suicide attempt and committed suicide are more common among adoptees than among the average population. Treatment for suicide attempt is more common both for male adoptees (three times more) and female adoptees (two times more) than among the average population (Hjern 1998), while committed suicide is more common among Koreans in Sweden (three times more) than among Koreans in South Korea (Ferrada-Noli 1997). Female adoptees have also more suicide thoughts than the average population (40,4 percent compared to 33 percent) (Berg-Kelly & Eriksson 1997).

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#### Literature:

Jan Ahlberg: Invandrares och invandrares barns brottslighet. En statistisk analys (Brottsförebyggande rådet, 1996)

Kristina Berg-Kelly & Jan Eriksson: Adaptation of adopted foreign children at mid-adolescence as indicated by aspects of health and risk taking – a population study (European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry 6/1997)

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Marcello Ferrada-Noli: A cross-cultural breakdown of Swedish suicide (Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 1997)

Anders Hjern: Migration till segregation. En folkhälsorapport om barn med utländskt ursprung i Stockholm (Centrum för barn och ungdomshälsa, 1998)

Gunn Moser: "Ett perfekt svenskt uttal lugnar de flesta arbetsgivare." En studie av unga internationellt adopterades utbildning och arbete (Högskolan för lärarutbildning i Stockholm: Institutionen för pedagogik, 1997)

Dan-Olof Rooth: Adopted Children in the Labour Market – Discrimination or Unobserved Characteristics? (Högskolan i Kalmar: Nationalekonomiska institutionen, 2001)

Bo Vinnerljung: Förekomst av adoptivbarn och långtidsvårdande fosterbarn bland placeringar av tonåringar i dygnsvård (Socialstyrelsen, 1999)

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**The following study has been compiled by the Swedish national board of health and welfare and Statistics Sweden on behalf of Nordic Film & TV and Swedish Television.**

Study 1, Socioeconomic factors as of 1999 (no adjustment)

A1 = Adoptees born outside Europe (birth years 1960-79): 16 352 individuals (62% female, 73% born in Asia)

C1 = Immigrants born outside Europe, non-adopted (birth years 1960-79): 19 705 individuals (49,8% female, 82,9% born in Asia)

A2 = Adoptees born in Sweden (birth years 1960-79): 25 552 individuals

C2 = Ethnic Swedes or the majority population, non-adopted (birth years 1960-79): 1 028 745 individuals

OR = odds ratio (crude)

% = cumulated incidence

AF = adoption factor

EF = ethnic factor

GF = gender factor

### **Lower compulsory education**

Senior level school leaving certificate missing for two subjects or more: A1 2,1% (C1 11,6%), A2 0,5% (C2 0,5%)

Commentary: Adoptees born outside Europe have more often a complete senior level school leaving certificate than immigrants born outside Europe (5,5 OR), but less often than both adoptees born in Sweden and the majority population (4,2 OR), explained by the double effect of AF and EF for the first group.

### **Higher voluntary education**

College or university education: A1 24,5% (K1 17,9%), A2 24,1% (K2 31,7%)

Commentary: Adoptees born outside Europe have more often a college or university education than immigrants born outside Europe, while both adoptees born outside Europe and in Sweden have less often a college or university education than the majority population (1,3 OR), explained by AF.

*Place of living*

**Big city: A1 25,2% (K1 32,3%), A2 17,3% (K2 18,5%)**

Commentary: Both adoptees and immigrants born outside Europe tend to settle more often in big cities than adoptees born in Sweden and the majority population, explained by EF.

### **Civil status**

Married + divorced: A1 9,9%+2%=11,9% (K1 22,4%+3%=25,4%), A2 32%+8,5%=40,5% (K2 24,4%+3,4%=27,8%)

Commentary: Adoptees born outside Europe are less often married or divorced than both immigrants born outside Europe (2,1 OR), adoptees born in Sweden (3,4 OR) and the majority population (2,3 OR). On the other hand are adoptees born in Sweden more often married (1,3 OR) or divorced (2,5 OR) than the majority population. The first may be explained by EF (problems to find a spouse), and the second by AF (relation problems).

### **Occupation**

Gainfully employed: A1 60,2% (K1 42%), A2 77,6% (K2 77,1%)

Commentary: Adoptees born outside Europe have more often an employment than immigrants born outside Europe (1,4 OR), but less often than both adoptees born in Sweden and the majority population (1,3 OR), explained by EF.

### **Income**

0-79 999 SEK: A1 50% (K1 69,1%), A2 27,4% (K2 28,6%)

80 000-199 999 SEK: A1 35,4% (K1 23,1%), A2 36,7% (K2 35,6%)

200 000-319 999 SEK: A1 12,9% (K1 6,9%), A2 29,4% (K2 29,2%)

320 000 SEK-: A1 1,7% (K1 0,9%), A2 6,5% (K2 6,6%)

Commentary: Adoptees born outside Europe have more often higher incomes than immigrants born outside Europe, but less often than both adoptees born in Sweden and the majority population, explained by EF.

### **Allowance**

Housing allowance: A1 14,7% (K1 39,8%), A2 13,4% (K2 9,6%)

Social allowance: A1 11,6% (K1 39,2%), A2 7,9% (K2 5%)

Unemployment benefit: A1 22,9% (K1 17%), A2 20,2% (K2 17,4%)

Commentary: Adoptees born outside Europe have less often allowance than immigrants born outside Europe, while both adoptees born outside Europe and in Sweden have more often allowance than the majority population, explained by AF.

## **Study 2, Epidemiological factors as between 1987-99 (no adjustment)**

A1 = Adoptees born outside Europe (age 5-39): 17 172 individuals

C1 = Immigrants born outside Europe, non-adopted (age 10-39): 11 400 individuals

A2 = Adoptees born in Sweden (age 10-44): 25 661 individuals

C2 = The majority population or the majority population, non-adopted (age 5-44): 1 033 199 745 individuals

OR =odds ratio (crude)  
%=cumulated incidence  
AF = adoption factor  
EF = ethnic factor  
GF = gender factor

### ***Institutional care for addiction***

Alcohol addiction: A1 292 individuals=1,7% (K1 72=0,6%), A2 339=1,3% (K2 7466=0,7%)  
Drug addiction: A1 112=0,7% (K1 84=0,7%), A2 206=0,8% (K2 3141=0,3%)

Commentary: Adoptees born outside Europe are more often institutionalised for alcohol addiction than both immigrants born outside Europe (2,8 OR), adoptees born in Sweden (2,4 OR) and the majority population (1,3 OR), explained by the double effect of AF and EF for the first group.

Adoptees born outside Europe are institutionalised for drug addiction as often as both immigrants born outside Europe and adoptees born in Sweden, but more often than the majority population (2,2 OR), explained by both AF and EF.

Female adoptees born outside Europe are more often institutionalised for both alcohol (3,6 OR) and drug addiction (3,1 OR) than females of the majority population, explained by the triple effect of GF, AF and EF.

### **Institutional care for psychiatric illness**

Psychosis: A1 133=0,8% (K1 57=0,5%), A2 201=0,8% (K2 5201=0,5%)  
Neurosis: A1 97=0,6% (K1 35=0,3%), A2 150=0,6% (K2 2927=0,3%)

Commentary: Both adoptees born outside Europe and in Sweden are more often institutionalised for psychosis than immigrants born outside Europe (1,6 OR) and the majority population (1,5 OR). Female adoptees born outside Europe are more often institutionalised for psychosis than male adoptees born outside Europe (1% versus 0,5% = 2 OR).

Both adoptees born outside Europe and in Sweden are more often institutionalised for neurosis than immigrants born outside Europe (2 OR) and the majority population (2 OR). Female adoptees born outside Europe are more often institutionalised for neurosis than male adoptees born outside Europe (0,9% versus 0,3% = 3 OR).

Female adoptees born outside Europe are more often institutionalised for both psychosis (2,3 OR) and neurosis (2,7 OR) than females of the majority population, explained by the triple effect of GF, AF and EF.

### **Suicide**

Institutional care for suicide attempt: A1 519=3% (K1 249=2,2%), A2 438=1,7% (K2 8588=0,8%)  
Death because of suicide: A1 56=0,3%, A2 82=0,3% (K2 1222=0,1%)

Commentary: Adoptees born outside Europe are more often institutionalised for suicide attempt than both immigrants born outside Europe (1,4 OR), adoptees born in Sweden (1,8 OR) and the majority population (3,6 OR) as is also adoptees born in Sweden compared to the last group (2,1 OR). This is explained by the double effect of AF and EF for the first group

and AF for the second. Female adoptees born outside Europe are more often institutionalised for suicide attempt than male adoptees born outside Europe (4,7% versus 1,4% = 3,4 OR), explained by GF.

Both adoptees born outside Europe and in Sweden have more deaths because of suicide than the majority population (2,8 OR).

Female adoptees born outside Europe are both more often institutionalised for suicide attempt (4,6 OR) and have more deaths because of suicide (4,5 OR) than females of the majority population, explained by the triple effect of GF, AF and EF.