THE DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

Adoption Perceptions Study
Introduction

In September of 2015, DAI completed a first-of-its-kind, national survey of public opinion on the landscape of adoption in the 21st century. This groundbreaking research has helped us gain a modern understanding of how the American people, including the adoption community, perceive and respond to adoption, foster care adoption and the policies surrounding both. It has provided insight into which topics needed to be addressed at our town hall events and will serve as a baseline measure to changes in perception over time.

The research was fielded by a new, nonprofit partner named Research In Kind, founded by the Global Head of Brand Intelligence at J. Walter Thompson. Research In Kind helped develop the questionnaire, define the sample set, recruit the participants, execute the survey and provide a report on the results.

The below represents a snapshot of some of the key findings from our public opinion survey. DAI plans to release a more detailed analysis of the full results in the new year. The reality is public perception has great influence over how experiences are contextualized. Adoption is an experience that many people have a difficult time understanding for a variety of reasons; further, many hold a variety of misperceptions about adoption that serve to fuel stereotypes and make it even harder to influence needed changes in policy and practice.

In today’s modern world, family dynamics are ever-changing. The diversity of family experiences today is far richer than ever before and we must make sure society is keeping up with the transformation in family. There is beauty in this diversity, yet there is also complexity. Ensuring realistic perceptions and combatting stereotypes that are often stigmatizing will support families, keep them healthy and strong, and keep the needs and interests of children at the heart of family building.
Methodology

**WHAT:** Quantitative study conducted using SONAR™ – JWT’s proprietary online research tool – in partnership with Research In Kind™

**WHO:**

General Sample*:
- n = 2,000 U.S. adults age 18 and older, including an oversample in the following cities:
  - New York, San Francisco, Dallas, Chicago, and Washington, D.C.

Key Stakeholder Sample:
- n = 233 Adopted People
- n = 219 Adoptive Parents
- n = 197 First/Birth Parents
- N = 97 Foster Parents
- N = 89 Foster Alumni

*Data is weighted to census to be representative of all U.S. adults across gender, age, and income.

**WHEN:** August/September 2015
Adoption Community Segment Overlap

Note that key stakeholders are not mutually exclusive. There is some overlap – especially among the foster care segments.
Key Findings

- **Lasso Support Through Education**: Adoption regulation and reform is among the most supported issues across all those we tested – despite Americans readily admitting to not knowing much, if anything, about adoption. In fact, understanding and knowledge within the adoption community itself is fairly low – pointing to a clear opportunity to educate people on adoption overall and why reform is needed.

- **Ignite a Political-Like Passion**: People tend to place more importance and urgency on more politicalized issues (such as equal pay, abortion, and gun control) than the issue of adoption. Relative to these more newsworthy issues, adoption reform tends to fall in the middle of the pack. Communications that educate and ignite passionate support for adoption reform will likely drive the adoption issue further up that list.

- **Leverage Two Degrees of Separation**: While very few have any direct, first-hand connection with adoption, the majority of Americans do have a friend or family member who has been impacted by adoption. Emphasizing these relationships in communications and lobbying efforts may drive relevance and desire for reform among the public at large.

- **Strategically Tackle Hallmark Movie (Mis)Perception**: Americans are a bit Pollyanna when it comes to adoption, generally feeling quite “warm and fuzzy” about adoption overall and believing that the system is in relatively good shape. Communications that strike a balance between leveraging this positivity while calling attention to the reality of the problems the community faces may help stimulate support for reform.
Key Findings (cont.)

- **CHAMPION RIGOROUS NATIONAL STANDARDS**: There is demand for a rigorous, standardized and regulated evaluation process to make sure adopted children are placed in safe homes. This is especially prevalent among those with first-hand experience. The adoption community is calling for national standards for access to records, support services and the home study, among several others. Still, manufacturing a process that does not become a barrier to processing worthy adoptions will be important as citizens already feel it’s becoming more difficult for deserving people to adopt.

- **PROMOTE INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY**: Americans overall and the community alike agree that people from all walks of life should be able to adopt so long as they can provide a loving home – including interracial and LGBT couples. Still, there is a growing perception that only wealthy families can afford to adopt these days. Therefore, advocating for fair evaluation standards that safeguard against discrimination and prejudice will likely be well-received.

- **BREAK DOWN LATENT STEREOTYPES**: Whether people like to admit it or not, there are latent stereotypes against people in the adoption community. This is especially true for first/birth parents who still face a more recognizable stigma – that these people are young, poor, single, troubled and desperate. Those who lose custody are seen in an especially negative light, being described as drug addicts and abusive. Opportunity exists to challenge these misperceptions and educate the public on the true reality.

- **SUPPORT OPENNESS, TRANSPARENCY & ACCESS**: There is overwhelming support for more transparency when it comes to access to medical records and original birth certificates. “Open” adoptions also garner a significant amount of support, with adopted people who are in an open adoption being more satisfied with the current state of their adoption compared with those in a closed adoption. Still, efforts must be highly strategic as this remains a polarizing issue, with a small, yet vocal cohort vehemently opposing open adoptions.
Key Findings (cont.)

- **TACKLE “REHOMING” HEAD ON:** While few have ever heard of “rehoming,” after learning about it, there is near universal support for making it illegal across the nation and for increased funding for enforcement of laws. Communications and lobbying efforts for policies against “rehoming” may be an easy way to gain momentum for the movement for reform.

- **CAPITALIZE ON WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR MORE SERVICES:** Both citizens and members of the adoption community overwhelmingly favor increased support services for adopted people, adoptive parents and first/birth parents – both before and after an adoption has taken place. There might be a particular opportunity to provide first/birth parents a greater level of support as many are left feeling regretful and coerced after an adoption has taken place. Efforts to grow support services may be strengthened by highlighting people’s belief that these type of services not only benefit those directly impacted, but society at large. When we build stronger families, everyone wins.

- **BUILD A STRONGER COMMUNITY:** There is a desire among key adoption stakeholders to feel a stronger sense of community across the spectrum of adopted people, adoptive parents and first/birth parents. Opportunity exists to help create and foster this community by bringing together different stakeholders from across the community and helping them feel more united.

- **HELP ADOPTED PEOPLE HAVE A LOUDER VOICE:** Within the adoption community, there is belief that the adopted child should have a greater say in the adoption process and in the decision about openness. Champion adopted peoples’ right to advocate and decide for themselves what’s best for them.
Key Findings (cont.)

- **EDUCATE ELECTED OFFICIALS:** There is a clear sense among stakeholders that their elected officials do not understand them nor their unique needs. Stakeholders also feel elected officials should be doing more for the community. Capitalize on these beliefs by empowering stakeholders to join you in lobbying efforts for reform. Efforts should also serve to educate elected officials on why reform is needed.

- **CAREFULLY ADDRESS THE DIGITAL SPACE:** People have mixed feelings about adoption in the digital age, especially when it comes to advertising yourself as an adoptive family, using social media to find first/birth parents, advertising for professional adoption services and crowdfunding to pay for adoptions. Wade into these issues carefully.

- **AMPLIFY AND CULTIVATE ADVOCATES:** At the end of the day, adopted people and parents alike overwhelmingly say that they are better off because of their experience with adoption. Cultivate this tremendous positivity to create a stronger community of advocates that will work with you to begin to break down stereotypes and tackle issues head on.
Selected Key Findings
There is a considerable amount of support for adoption/foster care regulation — with citizens placing it high on the list compared to other social issues...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal Pay for Women</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescuing Pets from Shelters</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Bullying Regulation</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption/Foster Care Regulation</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageism/Age Discrimination Regulation</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Minimum Wage</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation Against Excessive Force by Law Enforcement</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention To Stop Global Warming</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embryonic Stem Cell Research</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abortion Rights/Right To Choose Policies</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Control</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right To Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policies to Reduce Obesity</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Same-Sex Marriage</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legalization of Marijuana</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affirmative Action</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obamacare (Affordable Care Act)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. Listed below are a number of social issues and topics. For each issue, please indicate your support or opposition of that issue. Click closer to the right the more you oppose the issue and click closer to the left the more you support that issue. There are no right or wrong answers. We’re only interested in your opinions.
...with those in the adoption community, not surprisingly, showing even higher levels of support.

Support of Adoption/Foster Care Regulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First/Birth Parents</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Parents</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted People</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Parents</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Alumni</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. Listed below are a number of social issues and topics. For each issue, please indicate your support or opposition of that issue. Click closer to the right the more you oppose the issue and click closer to the left the more you support that issue. There are no right or wrong answers. We're only interested in your opinions.
When it comes to knowledge about adoption/foster care regulation, however, people readily admit to not knowing much – in fact, they know less about adoption than any other social issue we measured.

### Issue Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Somewhat Knowledgeable</th>
<th>Very Knowledgeable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same-Sex Marriage</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Minimum Wage</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Pay for Women</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obamacare (Affordable Care Act)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Abortion Rights/Right To Choose Policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right To Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative Action</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention To Stop Global Warming</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-Bullying Regulation</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regulation Against Excessive Force By Law Enforcement</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageism/Age Discrimination Regulation</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embryonic Stem Cell Research</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies to Reduce Obesity</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Adoption/Foster Care Regulation            | 34%                    | 12%                | 46%}

Q. People have told us that they are able to form a point of view on certain issues even though they are not completely knowledgeable about the issue – but based on what they see or hear through the media. How knowledgeable would you say you are on each of the following issues?

---

“I must admit, I don’t know much about adoption and how it works.”

61%
Those with first-hand adoption experience say they are more knowledgeable...

Knowledge of Adoption/Foster Care Regulation

Q. People have told us that they are able to form a point of view on certain issues even though they are not completely knowledgeable about the issue – but based on what they see or hear through the media. How knowledgeable would you say you are on each of the following issues?
Adoption IQ Test

Q. Listed below are a number of things about adoption. Some of these are true and some of these are false. To the best of your knowledge, please select the statements you believe to be true.

- Children who age out of the foster care system without legal family ties are much more likely to end up homeless than those who have them
- It is up to each state to determine whether or not people can see their birth certificates
- 95% of adoptions today are open to some degree
- Most children adopted in America come from foreign countries
- The federal government regulates all aspects of adoption in the U.S.
- Birth records should not be opened because for as long as there has been adoption, birth mothers were promised anonymity
- Children are always placed with families of the same race, religion and ethnic group as their birth parents

Q. Listed below are a number of things about adoption. Some of these are true and some of these are false. To the best of your knowledge, please select the statements you believe to be true.

...although this may be overstated...
...as even those with personal experience do not score well on our adoption IQ test.

**Adoption IQ Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL U.S. ADULTS</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First/Birth Parents</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoptive Parents</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted People</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Parents</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Alumni</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite strongly supporting reform, compared to other issues, citizens place adoption regulation in the middle of the pack when it comes to importance in our country today—placing greater importance (and potentially urgency) on many other issues.

### Issue Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>9%</strong></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Q. People have also told us that some of these issues are more important to our country than others. How important do you think each of these issues is in America today?
Adoption regulation is particularly important to those in the community—especially foster alumni.

Importance of Adoption/Foster Care Regulation

Q. People have also told us that some of these issues are more important to our country than others. How important do you think each of these issues is in America today?
Just 4% of all U.S. adults are adopted, have adopted a child or have placed a child for adoption...

Incidence Of Adoption Segments

Q. Are you, personally, an adopted person?
Q. Are you, personally, an adoptive parent, either on your own or with your spouse/partner?
Q. Are you a first/birth parent, that is, have you ever given birth to a child who was then adopted by another person or family?
Q. Are you a first/birth parent, that is, have you ever fathered a child who was then adopted or fostered by another person or family?
Q. Did you relinquish your parenting rights?

80% relinquished parental rights voluntarily
...with even lower levels having any direct relationship with foster care...

**Incidence Of Foster Care Segments**

- **Any Direct Relationship (NET)**
  - Yes: 4%
  - No: 96%

- **Foster Parents**
  - Yes: 3%
  - No: 97%

- **Foster Alumni**
  - Yes: 2%
  - No: 98%

Q. Which of the following, if any, describe you personally?
...although most do have some relationship to the adoption community through their family and friends. Two in five know someone who has adopted a child, while a third have a friend or family member who is an adopted person.

Friend or Family Relationship with Adoption Community

- Any Indirect Relationship (NET) [37% (NET: Family & Friends) to 42%]
  - Adopted a child/person themselves [19% to 25%]
  - Were adopted by a family [14% to 21%]
  - Were adopted by another person [14% to 12%]
  - Voluntarily or involuntarily had their biological child raised by another person(s) [11% to 16%]
  - Were adopted by a step-parent [11% to 13%]

Q. Besides yourself, do you have any friends or family members who...?
Adults and the adoption community agree that people from all walks of life should be able to adopt so long as they can provide a loving home...

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?

- TOTAL: 73%
- First/Birth Parents: 74%
- Adoptive Parents: 70%
- Adopted People: 72%
- Foster Parents: 79%
- Foster Alumni: 78%

Gay, lesbian, black, white, single, married: who cares who adopts as long as they can provide a loving and safe environment for a child?
...although there is a perception that only wealthy people can afford to adopt these days...

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

These days, it seems like only wealthy people can afford to adopt a child

- TOTAL: 65% agree
- First/Birth Parents: 62%
- Adoptive Parents: 69%
- Adopted People: 75%
- Foster Parents: 75%
- Foster Alumni: 80%

Money and privilege distort adoption*

- TOTAL: 77% agree
- First/Birth Parents: 77%
- Adoptive Parents: 77%
- Adopted People: 75%
- Foster Parents: 75%
- Foster Alumni: 80%

*Only asked to adoption community

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?
Q. Earlier you mentioned that you have a personal experience with adoption. Based on your experience, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following questions?
...which is, at least in part, fueled by celebrity culture.

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

When celebrities like Madonna and Angelina Jolie adopt children, it suggests that adopting is primarily for the wealthy.
Still, adults generally feel it’s a good thing when celebrities adopt children. While few feel film and TV accurately reflect the realities of adoption, those with foster care experience are more apt to say it is an accurate depiction—perhaps because foster care is portrayed differently?

### Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>First/Birth Parents</th>
<th>Adoptive Parents</th>
<th>Adopted People</th>
<th>Foster Parents</th>
<th>Foster Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s great when celebrities like Madonna and Angelina Jolie adopt children</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film and television accurately reflect the realities of adoption</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?
Less than half of U.S. adults feel first/birth parents, adoptive parents or adopted people face prejudice in society today...

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

- Whether we like to admit it or not, first/birth parents face prejudice in society today
- Whether we like to admit it or not, adopted people face prejudice in society today
- Whether we like to admit it or not, adoptive parents face prejudice in society today

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?
...and from the outside looking in, few feel adopted people nor adoptive parents have a stigma. Across the different stakeholders, first/birth parents who lose custody face the biggest stigma – although still not to the extent of transgendered, mentally ill, obese and even poor people.

Q. Listed below are a number of types of people and social groups. For each one, please indicate how much of a stigma, if any, you think there is in being one of these people or belonging to one of these groups.
Those with personal experience, however, are more apt to say they face a stigma in society today. This is especially true for first/birth parents.

Faces Stigma In Society Today - % Big/Some Stigma

Biological parents who lost legal custody of their child

First/birth parents

Adopted people

Adoptive parents

Q. Listed below are a number of types of people and social groups. For each one, please indicate how much of a stigma, if any, you think there is in being one of these people or belonging to one of these groups.
However, when we start to probe, we see clear stereotypes emerge, with U.S. adults describing parents who place children for adoption to be “young,” “poor” and “unwed.” Some have more negative perceptions, describing birth parents as “drug addicts.”

Unaided Perceptions of First/Birth Parents Who Voluntarily Place Children For Adoption

Q. When you think about first/birth parents who place their children for adoption, what types of people come to your mind first?
When prompted, first/birth parents are again described as young and poor, and also troubled and even desperate.

### Perceptions of First/Birth Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troubled</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desperate</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From broken homes</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regretful</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfless</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitter</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rueful</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. And, in your opinion, do first/birth parents who place their children for adoption, tend to be...?
Firth/birth parents themselves are more than twice as likely to describe themselves as selfless and caring, but also regretful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>First/Birth Parents</th>
<th>Adoptive Parents</th>
<th>Adopted People</th>
<th>Foster Parents</th>
<th>Foster Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troubled</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desperate</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From broken homes</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regretful</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfless</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitter</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rueful</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BLUE = significantly higher than those who do not qualify for banner point
RED = significantly lower (at the 90% confidence level)

Q. And, in your opinion, do first/birth parents who place their children for adoption, tend to be...?
There is also a latent stereotype regarding the types of children who get placed for adoption and who gets adopted — with a clear gap existing between the two.

**Children Who Get Placed For Adoption**

- A child born to a teen mother: Placed 67%, Gets Adopted 29%
- A child born to a single mother: Placed 54%, Gets Adopted 25%
- A child born to a poor family: Placed 42%, Gets Adopted 32%
- A child with physical disabilities: Placed 39%, Gets Adopted 15%
- A child with mental disabilities: Placed 31%, Gets Adopted 10%
- A child with behavioral problems: Placed 25%, Gets Adopted 13%
- A child born in a developing country: Placed 29%, Gets Adopted 15%
- A child who is in an ethnic minority (i.e. Black, Hispanic, Asian, etc.): Placed 25%, Gets Adopted 11%
- A preteen or teenage child: Placed 17%, Gets Adopted 6%
- A child born in a developed country outside of the U.S.: Placed 17%, Gets Adopted 6%
- A child who is Caucasian/White: Placed 13%, Gets Adopted 5%
- A child born in the U.S.: Placed 11%, Gets Adopted 4%
- An older child (over the age of 2): Placed 8%, Gets Adopted 6%
- A child born into a religious family: Placed 8%, Gets Adopted 5%
- A child with an above average IQ: Placed 5%, Gets Adopted 5%
- A child born to a wealthy family: Placed 3%, Gets Adopted 3%
- A child born to married parents: Placed 22%, Gets Adopted 17%
- Children with exceptional athletic skills: Placed 6%, Gets Adopted 4%

"Certain types of children are more likely to be adopted than others."
Above all, the public supports adopted people’s right to access their biological parent’s medical history and their original birth certificate.

Support of Adoption-Related Issues

Adopted people’s right to access their biological parent’s medical history

- Somewhat: 29%
- Strongly Support: 42%
- Support: 71%

Adopted people’s right to access their original birth certificate

- Somewhat: 33%
- Strongly Support: 36%
- Support: 69%

Q. Listed below are a number of different adoption issues. For each one, please tell us the degree to which you support or oppose this issue.
The majority of people support interracial (transracial) adoption as well as adoption by the LGBT community.

**Support of Adoption-Related Issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Oppose</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adopted people’s right to access their biological parent’s medical history</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted people’s right to access their original birth certificate</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interracial adoption (e.g. adopting a child of a race different than one’s own)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Open” adoptions where first/birth parents, adoptive families and the adopted person have an ongoing relationship</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International adoption (e.g. adopting a child from another country)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased public funding for pre- and post-adoption services</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT couples’ right to adopt a child</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. Listed below are a number of different adoption issues. For each one, please tell us the degree to which you support or oppose this issue.
Open adoption garners a significant amount of support, with three in five agreeing that it’s good for an adopted child to keep in communication with their first/birth parents.

Support of Adoption-Related Issues

“Open” adoptions where first/birth parents, adoptive families and the adopted person have an ongoing relationship

58%  
“It’s good for an adopted child to keep in communication with their birth parents.”

36%  
23%  
59%

Q. Listed below are a number of different adoption issues. For each one, please tell us the degree to which you support or oppose this issue.
People are torn with regards to their support for using advertising and social media when it comes to adoption...

Support of Adoption-Related Issues

- Adopted people’s right to access their biological parent’s medical history
  - Somewhat Support: 29%
  - Strongly Support: 42%
  - Total: 71%

- Adopted people’s right to access their original birth certificate
  - Somewhat Support: 33%
  - Strongly Support: 36%
  - Total: 69%

- Interracial adoption (e.g. adopting a child of a race different than one’s own)
  - Somewhat Support: 28%
  - Strongly Support: 35%
  - Total: 63%

- "Open" adoptions where first/birth parents, adoptive families and the adopted person have an ongoing relationship
  - Somewhat Support: 36%
  - Strongly Support: 23%
  - Total: 59%

- International adoption (e.g. adopting a child from another country)
  - Somewhat Support: 34%
  - Strongly Support: 24%
  - Total: 58%

- Increased public funding for pre- and post-adoption services
  - Somewhat Support: 32%
  - Strongly Support: 19%
  - Total: 52%

- LGBT couples’ right to adopt a child
  - Somewhat Support: 18%
  - Strongly Support: 33%
  - Total: 51%

- Advertising yourself as a potential adoptive family
  - Somewhat Support: 31%
  - Strongly Support: 12%
  - Total: 43%

- Use of social media to find first/birth parents
  - Somewhat Support: 29%
  - Strongly Support: 14%
  - Total: 43%

- Advertising for professional adoption services
  - Somewhat Support: 27%
  - Strongly Support: 11%
  - Total: 38%

- Crowdfunding to pay for an adoption (i.e. asking your social network to donate or contribute)
  - Somewhat Support: 22%
  - Strongly Support: 10%
  - Total: 32%

- Religious groups’ right to deny an adoption based on a couple’s sexual orientation
  - Somewhat Support: 14%
  - Strongly Support: 13%
  - Total: 27%

- First/birth parents’ right to change their mind after relinquishing custody of their child
  - Somewhat Support: 18%
  - Strongly Support: 7%
  - Total: 25%

- Religious groups’ right to deny adoption based on a couple’s marital status
  - Somewhat Support: 14%
  - Strongly Support: 10%
  - Total: 24%

- Allowing adoptive parents to change their mind and reverse an adoption
  - Somewhat Support: 17%
  - Strongly Support: 6%
  - Total: 23%

- Gestational carriers having future parental rights over a child they carry
  - Somewhat Support: 11%
  - Strongly Support: 4%
  - Total: 16%

- Advertising your child to be adopted by someone else
  - Somewhat Support: 9%
  - Strongly Support: 5%
  - Total: 13%

Q. Listed below are a number of different adoption issues. For each one, please tell us the degree to which you support or oppose this issue.
...although the vast majority clearly do not support advertising your child to be adopted by someone else.

Support of Adoption-Related Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Total Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>24%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased public funding for pre- and post-adoption services</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
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<td>33%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious groups’ right to deny an adoption based on a couple’s sexual orientation</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First/birth parents’ right to change their mind after relinquishing custody of their child</td>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising your child to be adopted by someone else</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. Listed below are a number of different adoption issues. For each one, please tell us the degree to which you support or oppose this issue.
Still, three in five do agree it’s a good thing when adopted people use social media to connect with their first/birth parents. First/birth parents are particularly likely to agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?
Most U.S. adults have never heard of “rehoming.” Those in the community are more familiar — especially foster parents.

Q. Are you familiar with the practice of “adoption rehoming?”

- I’ve heard of it, but don’t really know what it is
- Yes, I know what this is
- No, I’ve never heard of this before

**Familiarity with “Rehoming”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>First/Birth Parents</th>
<th>Adoptive Parents</th>
<th>Adopted People</th>
<th>Foster Parents</th>
<th>Foster Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upon learning what it is, most feel it should always be illegal...

Whether “Rehoming” Should Be Illegal

Q. As you may or may not be aware, adoption “rehoming” is an unregulated child custody transfer and is the practice of parents advertising their adopted children online for the purpose of transferring custody of them to unrelated strangers without state or court approval and oversight. Using the scale below, which of the following describe how you feel about adoption “rehoming?”
Citizens agree there should be more support services for adoptive families...

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?

There should be more focus on support offered after a child is adopted

- TOTAL: 83%
- First/Birth Parents: 81%
- Adoptive Parents: 80%
- Adopted People: 81%
- Foster Parents: 82%
- Foster Alumni: 84%

52% Support More Public Funding Pre/Post Services

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?
...with four in five indicating families should be provided support services after an adoption has taken place...

Whether Support Is Needed AFTER Adoption Takes Place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>First/Birth Parents</th>
<th>Adoptive Parents</th>
<th>Adopted People</th>
<th>Foster Parents</th>
<th>Foster Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
...as these types of services not only benefit adopted children and adoptive parents, but also society at large...

Who Benefits from Post-Adoption Services

Base: Should have support services

Q. And who do you feel benefits from support services for adopted families?
...as people agree that building stronger families benefits everyone.

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

Providing families with an adopted child post-adoption support benefits everyone in this country

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?
There are a wide variety of issues people feel need to be addressed after an adoption has taken place, including those related to openness and identity.

### Issues To Be Addressed After Adoption Has Taken Place

- **Issues with openness of adoption**
- **Identity issues of adopted people**
- **Trauma of adopted people**
- **Issues with search and reunion with a child’s biological family**
- **Race issues**
- **Trauma of adoptive families**
- **LGBT issues**

**Base: Should have support services**

Q. What issues do you think families who have adopted a child need support in addressing after an adoption has taken place?
Overall, those in the adoption community indicate a positive experience...

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

- Overall, I would say my experience with adoption was a positive one
  - Total Adoption Community: 79%
  - First/Birth Parents: 65%
  - Adoptive Parents: 79%
  - Adopted People: 91%

- I am better off because of my experience with adoption
  - Total Adoption Community: 79%
  - First/Birth Parents: 66%
  - Adoptive Parents: 79%
  - Adopted People: 89%

- My experience with adoption has changed me for the better
  - Total Adoption Community: 77%
  - First/Birth Parents: 65%
  - Adoptive Parents: 79%
  - Adopted People: 87%

Q. Earlier you mentioned that you have a personal experience with adoption. Based on your experience, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following questions?
Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

- **I felt well supported throughout the adoption process***
  - Total Adoption Community: 75%
  - Adopted People: 70%

*Not asked to First/Birth Parents

---

Q. Earlier you mentioned that you have a personal experience with adoption. Based on your experience, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following questions?
...although first/birth parents report a somewhat more negative overall experience.

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

- I feel regret for placing my child for adoption*: 55%
- I felt coerced into placing my child for adoption*: 53%

*Not asked to Adoptive Parents or Adopted People
There is a need to transform the adoption process to be less transactional and more focused on better outcomes.

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

- I wish the process of adoption was more focused on the outcome of building a stronger family:
  - Total Adoption Community: 88%
  - First/Birth Parents: 89%
  - Adoptive Parents: 90%
  - Adopted People: 85%

- The process of adoption feels too transactional these days:
  - Total Adoption Community: 59%
  - First/Birth Parents: 61%
  - Adoptive Parents: 59%
  - Adopted People: 64%

Q. Earlier you mentioned that you have a personal experience with adoption. Based on your experience, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following questions?
There may also be an opportunity to help build a stronger community among stakeholders.

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

The different members of the adoption community (First/Birth Parents, Adopted People, Adoptive Parents) don’t interact as much as they could when it comes to better serving the overall adoption community.

Q. Earlier you mentioned that you have a personal experience with adoption. Based on your experience, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following questions?
Those in the adoption community do not feel understood nor well-represented by their elected officials.

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

I feel like elected officials don’t understand the issues the adoption community faces

- Total Adoption Community: 80%
- First/Birth Parents: 83%
- Adoptive Parents: 80%
- Adopted People: 78%

Elected officials should do more for the adoption community

- Total Adoption Community: 66%
- First/Birth Parents: 71%
- Adoptive Parents: 66%
- Adopted People: 68%

Q. Earlier you mentioned that you have a personal experience with adoption. Based on your experience, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following questions?
Stakeholders feel adopted people should have more of a say in the process.

Adoption Attitudes - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

- Adopted people should play a role in deciding how “open” an adoption should or shouldn’t be:
  - Total Adoption Community: 76%
  - First/Birth Parents: 81%
  - Adoptive Parents: 74%
  - Adopted People: 78%

- The child being adopted should have a greater say in their adoption process:
  - Total Adoption Community: 68%
  - First/Birth Parents: 76%
  - Adoptive Parents: 60%
  - Adopted People: 73%

Q. Earlier you mentioned that you have a personal experience with adoption. Based on your experience, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following questions?
The adoption community feels there needs to be national standards for access to records and pre- and post-adoption services...

## Issues Need National Standards For

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Total Adoption Community</th>
<th>First/Birth Parents</th>
<th>Adoptive Parents</th>
<th>Adopted People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to records</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and post-adoption services for all families</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home study</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custody transfer (“rehoming”)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT rights</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious exemptions</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>None of these</td>
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...and that access to records is the most important issue facing the adoption community today. This is especially true of adopted people.

Most Important Issue Facing Adoption Community

Access to records
"Rehoming"
LGBT rights
Religious exemptions
Diversity
Race
Impact of the Internet
Crowdfunding of adoptions
Other

Q. Listed below are some issues people have told us the adoption community faces today. From the list below, please indicate which issues you feel are the top 3 most important.
About The Donaldson Adoption Institute

Since 1996, The Donaldson Adoption Institute has been on a mission to improve the lives of children and families through research, education and advocacy. We investigate the issues of greatest concern to first/birth parents, adopted people, adoptive/foster families, the people who love them, and the professionals who serve them. We educate and train professionals, enlighten parents and engage members of the community to make a positive impact on laws, policies, practices and perceptions. To learn more, please visit www.adoptioninstitute.org.