

Cultural Research Center



New Research Finds Millions of Women Unaware of Adoption Process and Benefits

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The United States has an estimated 65 million women who are currently considered to be of childbearing age (15 to 44 years of age). With research showing that growing numbers of young women have little interest in having children, the choices of those women who do give birth take on increasing importance. There are three choices those women can make: give birth and raise the child; give birth and place the child for adoption; or abort the child. The forthcoming U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case has focused much attention on abortion.

But what about adoption?

A new research study conducted among women of childbearing age suggests that millions of women who might otherwise consider adoption to be an appealing alternative are unaware of how adoption works.

The study, [Adoption & Its Competitors](#), was conducted by George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University for The Opt Institute, a non-profit research foundation and think tank dedicated to improving access to and support for private infant adoption, better understanding women's decision-making in the context of expected pregnancies, and to helping mothers consider adoption as a meaningful option.

Many Potential Mothers Were Adopted

The national survey among women of childbearing age discovered that one out of eight of those women (12%) had been adopted. Of those, about four out of 10 were adopted as infants and the rest had been adopted after infancy. Asian women were twice as likely as the national average to have been adopted as an infant.

Incomplete Knowledge about Adoption

American women of childbearing age have some knowledge about how adoption works, but the research found significant gaps in their understanding of the process and its benefits.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether each of five statements describing adoption was true or false.

The statements were:

- Being able to participate in an “open” adoption allows the birth parents to remain part of the child’s life in a specified capacity.
- Birth parents can receive private counseling and other emotional support before, during, and after the adoption.
- The birth mother’s pregnancy is completely paid for by the adopting parents.
- The birth parents may choose the family that adopts the child.
- The birth mother may continue her education or job throughout the pregnancy and adoption proceedings, without losing any income or benefits.

All five of those statements are true. About half of all women of childbearing age (53%) know that four or all five of the statements are true, compared to just 15% who believe that none or just one of the statements are true. The other one-third of women of childbearing age is in the middle, believing that only two or three of those statements are accurate.

The women who are best-informed regarding adoption are those in their 40s (70% knew four or five were true); married women (63%); and upscale women (about six out of 10). The segments of women who are least well-informed about adoption are those who had been adopted as an infant (29%); Asians (28%); and teen girls (23%).

Women’s Knowledge about Adoption

<u>Statement about adoption</u>	<u>% who say statement is:</u>		
	<u>True</u>	<u>False</u>	<u>Don’t Know</u>
An “open” adoption allows the birth parents to remain part of the child’s life in a specified capacity	74%	9%	17%
Birth parents can receive private counseling and other emotional support before, during, and after the adoption	77	6	17
The birth mother’s pregnancy is completely paid for by the adopting parents	56	15	29
The birth parents may choose the family that adopts the child	64	15	21
The birth mother may continue her education or job throughout the pregnancy and adoption proceedings, without losing any income or benefits	60	13	27

Source: *Adoption and Its Competitors in American Society*, research by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, commissioned by The Opt Institute; N=1,091 women of childbearing age (15-44); 2022.

Disinterest in Motherhood

Perhaps the most shocking statistic to emerge from the research is that 45% of women currently of childbearing age said they experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse while growing up.

That background undoubtedly has influenced the interest of young women in having children.

But concerns about bringing a child into the world are not limited to the direct personal experience of potential mothers. The Opt Institute study also revealed that a plurality of women (47%) believes that life is what you make it, but there is no absolute value associated with human life. In comparison, 38% of women of childbearing age disagree with that sentiment, and one-seventh (15%) do not know. Viewing life as void of innate value was a perspective most common among college-aged women, females who identify as LGBTQ, women who were adopted, and those who have no religious faith affiliation.

Open to Adoption as an Option

Overall, about one out of seven women of childbearing age (15%) said that they would be likely to place a conceived child for adoption, whether their pregnancy was intentional or unintentional.

The study revealed there are four common motivations behind the willingness to place a child for adoption. Those included the mother's financial situation (i.e., recognizing they were financially incapable of raising the child, mentioned by 33%); the mother's desire to do what is in the best interests of the child (listed by 32%); a desire to help a family seeking to adopt a child (29%); and the mother recognizing her personal lack of preparation or maturity to raise a child (23%).

Among the more than four out of five women who indicated they are not likely to place a child they might conceive in the future for adoption, their reasoning was even more like-minded. A majority of those women (56%) said it was because they would want to keep and raise any child they conceived. About four out of 10 (39%) admitted it was because the emotional difficulty of giving up the child would be too much for them to bear. Roughly one-fourth (27%) noted that they felt an obligation to protect the child from an uncertain future if he/she were placed for adoption.

Expand Knowledge of the Options

John Knox, founder of The Opt Institute, described the research as a tool to help educate women about adoption as an option. Knox said:

“This important research helps to understand why women rarely choose adoption. Many don't know much about contemporary adoption practices and have serious misunderstandings about it. Adoption practices have improved considerably over the last few decades, but many women are unaware of those changes and do not consider adoption as a realistic option for their pregnancy.

“For women who, for whatever reason, will not be able to raise a child, adoption is a wonderful alternative, as attested by millions of adults who were placed by mothers for adoption as children. The positive experiences of those adopted children and the incredible gifts they are to society are a testimony as to why adoption should be a respected and meaningful option for women to consider.

“We can do better to provide women with accurate, complete, and non-coercive information about the loving choice of adoption, and this study is significant in showing why this is critical.”

About the Research

This research was commissioned by the Opt Institute, a national adoption research and information center, to better understand perceptions and expectations related to adoption in the United States. The research was conducted among a qualified national sample of the women who are considered to be of prime childbearing age (15 to 44). There are an estimated 65 million women currently in that age segment.

The full report, *Adoption & Its Competitors: Results of a National Survey Regarding Adoption in the U.S. in 2022* by George Barna, is [available here](#).

The interviews with qualified women were conducted in January 2022 among a national random sample of 1,091 women 15-44 years of age. Each completed interview lasted approximately 16 minutes and consisted of 64 closed-ended questions. The interviews were completed via a mixed-mode data collection process, with 505 women interviewed via telephone and 586 via online surveys. All respondents were randomly sampled, with geographic quotas established and multiple contacts per potential respondent.

About the Cultural Research Center

The Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University in Glendale, Arizona, conducts the annual *American Worldview Inventory*, other nationwide surveys regarding cultural transformation, and worldview-related surveys among the ACU student population. The groundbreaking ACU Student Worldview Inventory is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final administration is undertaken among students just prior to their graduation, enabling the University to track and address the worldview development of its students.

CRC is guided by George Barna, Director of Research, and Tracy Munsil, Executive Director. Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity, as described in the school’s statement of faith. The Center works in cooperation with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Access to the results from past surveys conducted by CRC and information about the Cultural Research Center is accessible at www.CulturalResearchCenter.com. Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at www.ArizonaChristian.edu.