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Adoptees and their adoptive parents in the 21st century

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The study background

By the end of 2018 there were 137 954 adopted persons in the Swedish population, which corresponded to approximately 13,5 persons in 1,000 inhabitants. For the past 50 years, most adoptees have been foreign-born persons with two adoptive parents, but in recent years, adoptions of Swedish-born persons and stepchildren has been the most common. Over the past 20 years, the number of couples who adopt together has decreased significantly while the number of adoptions done by one adoptive parent has increased slightly.

Objectives and/or research question(s)

The aim of the research is to describe the changed pattern and its underlying factors. In addition, the number of surrogate children is said to increase. This will be looked into more closely with the help of register data

Data and methods

The research question is answered by using data from the Swedish Total Population Register (TPR) from 2000 and forward for adoptees and their biological and adoptive parents.

The data that have been used for the adoptee is country of birth, day of adoption, age at adoption, personal identification number (PIN) for adoptive parents and PIN for biological parents.

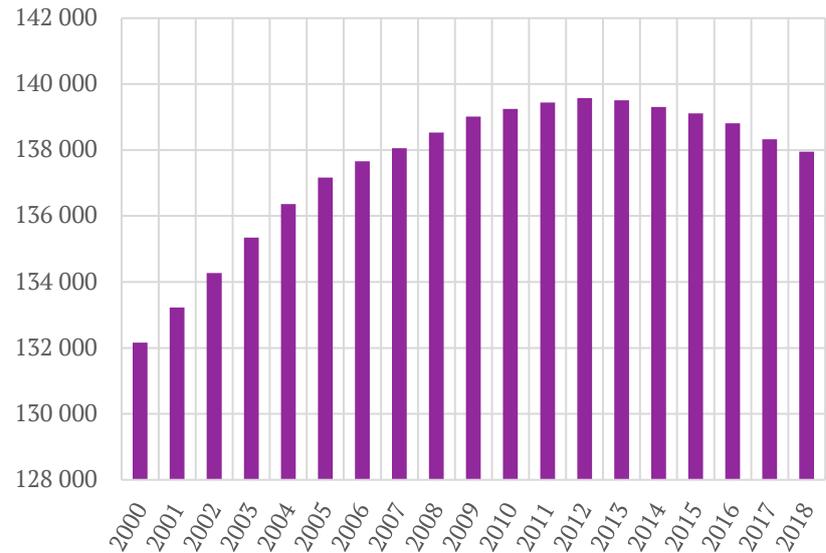
The information about the total number of adoptees is based on the Swedish population by December 31 2018. The information about adoptees by year from 2000 is based on TPR by December 31 each year.



The total number of adoptees are decreasing

By December 31st 2000 there were about 132 162 adoptees in the Swedish population. The number of adoptees increased until 2012 when there were 139 578 adoptees. After that has the adoptees decreased. By December 31st 2018 was 137 954 persons adopted.

Figure 1: The total number of adoptees by December 31st 2000 - 2018

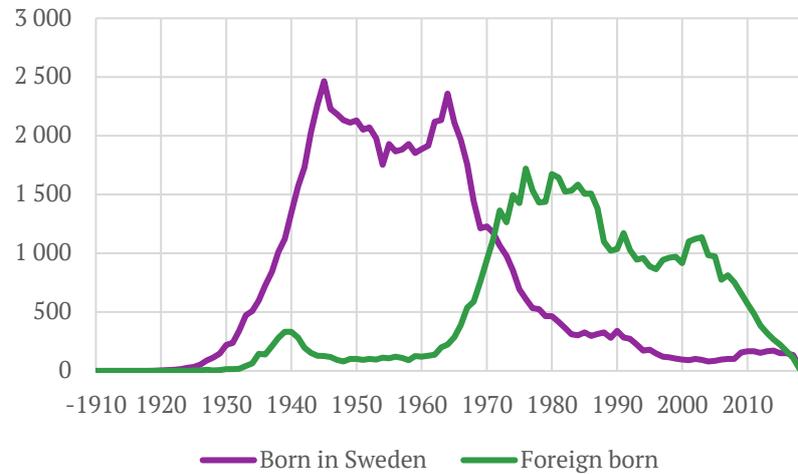


Most adoptees are Swedish born

International adoption is a rather new phenomenon. Going further back in time, mainly Swedish persons were adopted. This pattern is clearly visible in a study of the whole group of adopted persons. Most persons adopted are born in Sweden, and at the end of 2018 was their average age 60 years. Foreign-born adopted persons are considerably younger and were nearly 30 years younger on average compared with those born in Sweden.

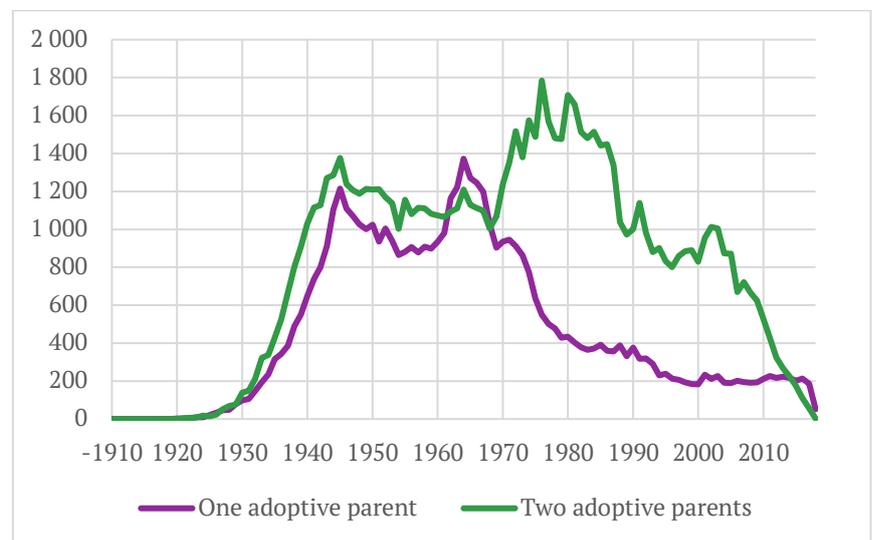
The majority of adoptees born in the 1960s and earlier are born in Sweden. Adoptees born från 1970s and forward is mainly foreign born.

Figure 2: Adoptees by region of birth and year of birth, December 31st 2018



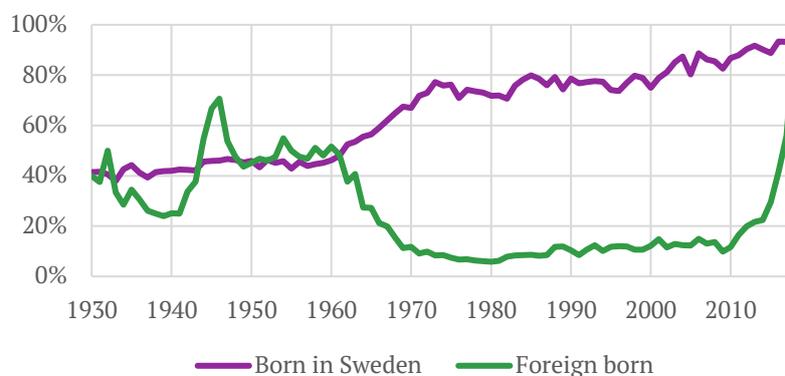
For Adoptees born in the 1960s and earlier it is almost as common to have one adoptive parent as having two adoptive parents. For adoptees born in the 1970s and later has a big majority two adoptive parents.

Figure 3: Adoptees by number of adoptive parents and year of birth, December 31st 2018



However, for the most recent years has the pattern changed. For adoptees born after 2010 has the share of adoptees with one adoptive parent increased. This is most noticeable for foreign-born adoptees. For adoptees born in Sweden has the majority of the adoptees been adopted by one adoptive parent. Often is it because Sweden borns are adopted as adults by a step parent.

Figure 4: Adoptees with one adoptive parents by region and year of birth, December 31st 2018, %



Most adoptees since 2000 are foreign-born

Between 2000 and 2018 has 26 060 persons been adopted. About 56 per cent of them were foreign-born. There are a big difference between adoptees born in Sweden and foreign-born adoptees. The majority of the adoptees born in Sweden since 2000 have been adopted as adults. About 72 per cent were adopted after their 18th birthday. Foreign-borns in the other hand are mostly adopted at young ages. Only seven per cent have been adopted as adults and as many as 80 per cent were adopted before the age of five. The average age at adoption for Swedish borns were almost 26 years and for foreign-borns 4.6 years during the period 2000 - 2018.

Table 1: Adoptees and average age at adoption by region of birth and sex, 2000 - 2018

Region of birth	Total	Sex		Mean age at adoption Total
		Girls/Women	Boys/Men	
All Adoptees	26 060	14 017	12 043	13,8
Sweden	11 411	6 192	5 219	25,7
Foreign-born	14 649	7 825	6 824	4,6
China	3 684	2 925	759	1,9
South Korea	1 350	390	960	1,3
Colombia	1 043	446	597	1,8
India	803	560	243	2,8
Russia	709	281	428	5,5
Thailand	633	278	355	9,8
South Africa	604	268	336	1,3
Vietnam	510	220	290	2,3
Taiwan	455	230	225	2,6
Poland	438	197	241	9,3
Other countries	4 420	2 030	2 390	8,3

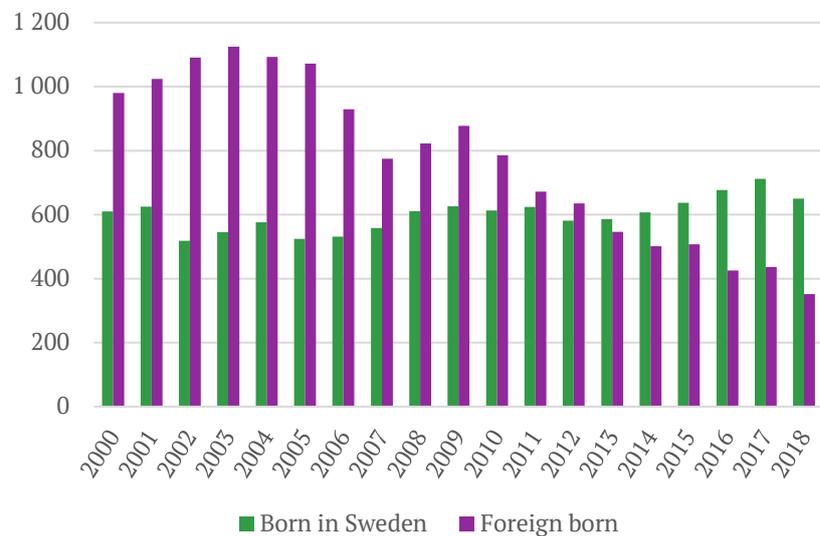
The most common country of birth for adoptees were Sweden followed by China.

Adoptions of foreign born has decreased during the 2000s

International adoption was most common in the 1970s and the number of adoptions has slowly decreased since then. Over time has the origin countries for adoptees changed. In the 1970s was adoption of children born in South Korea most common and in the 1980s was most adoptees born in India. In the 1990s was Colombia the most common country of birth and since 2000 has China been the most common country of birth for adoptees¹.

In 2000 were more than 60 per cent of the adoptees foreign-born. During the 2000s where the share of foreign-born highest year 2002 with 68 per cent of the adoptees. Since then has the foreign-born share of the adoptees decreased and since 2013 is adoptees born in Sweden in majority.

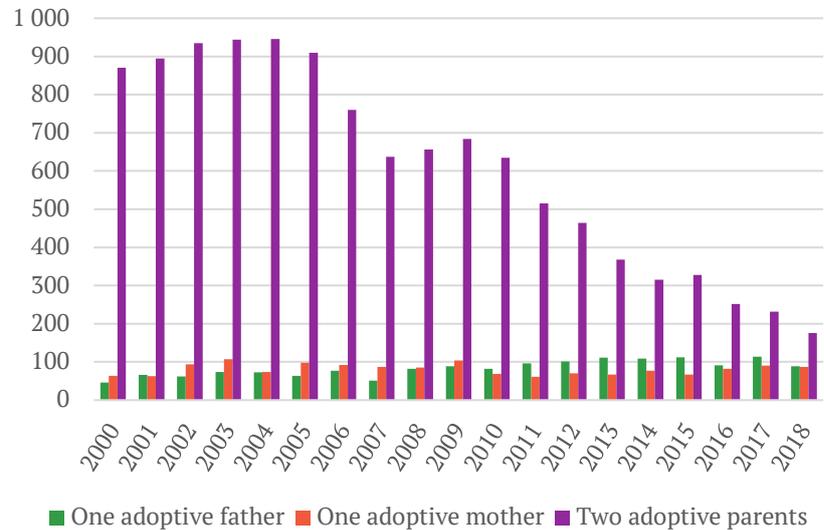
Figure 5: Adoptees by region of birth, 2000 - 2018



The decrease of adoptions of foreign-born is mainly a decrease of adoptions made by two adoptive parents. Adoption of foreign-born by one adoptive parents has increased little over time and then mostly for adoptions by one father.

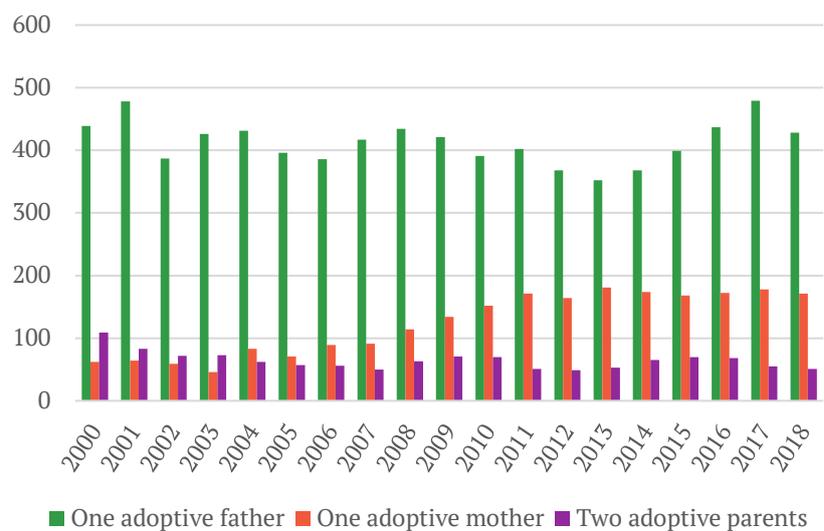
¹ Source: Article Två av tre adoptioner 2017 var styvbarnsadoptioner (SCB, in Swedish), <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/artiklar/2018/allt-fler-adopterar-styvbarn/>

Figure 6: Foreign-born adoptees by the number of adoptive parents, 2000 - 2018



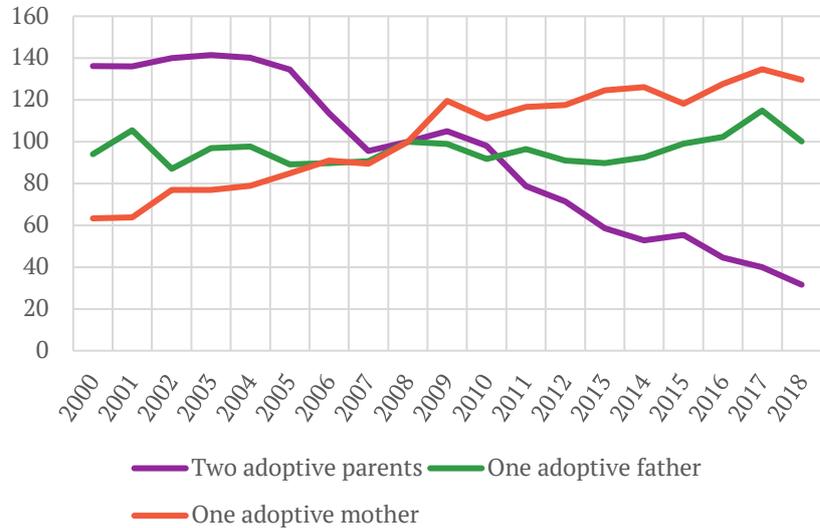
For Swedish born adoptees is the most common adoption an adoption by one adoptive father. The number of adoptions by one father has been rather stable over time but as a share of all adoptions of Swedish born is a decrease noticeable. Adoptions by one adoptive mother has increased over time and in 2018 were more than one third of all adoptions of persons born in Sweden done by one adoptive mother.

Figure 7: Swedish born adoptees by the number of adoptive parents, 2000 - 2018



Regardless of region of birth has adoptions by one adoptive mother increased and adoptions by two adoptive parents decreased since 2000.

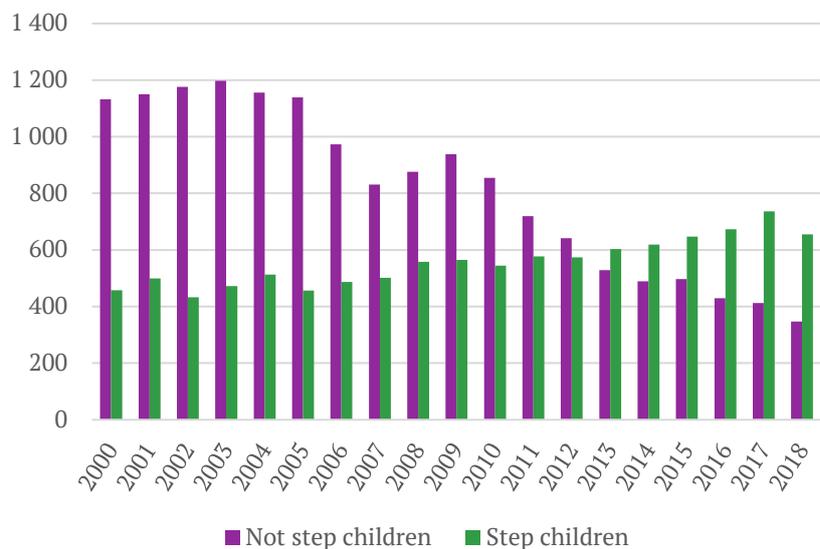
Figure 8: Adoptions by the number of adoptive parents, 2000 – 2018, Index 2008 = 100



Adoptions of step children has increased during the 2000s

In 2018, two thirds of all adoptions were adoptions of stepchildren, that is, the adoptive parent’s husband/wife is the biological parent of the adoptive child. That is an increase during the 2000s. Since 2013 is adoptions by stepchildren the most common type of adoption.

Figure 9: Adoptions by type of relationship between adoptive parent and biological parent, 2000 – 2018

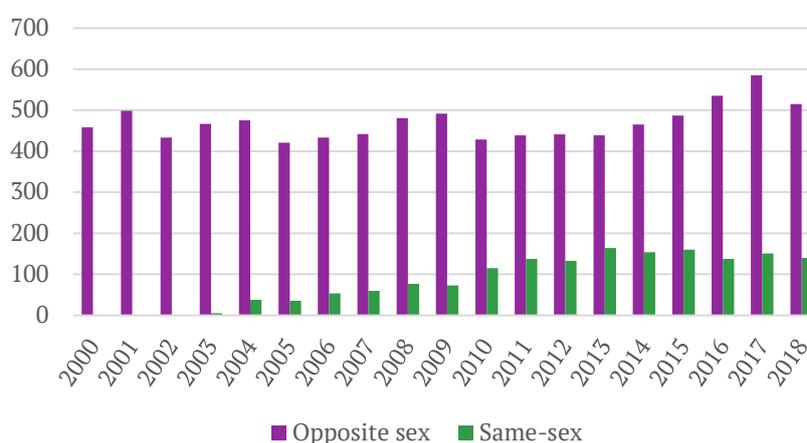


As can be seen in figure 9 is the pattern almost identical to the pattern of adoptions by region of birth in figure 5. Adoptions of stepchildren has increased and adoptions of other adoptees has decreased.

Same-sex adoptions increases

Most adoptions of stepchildren has been made by adoptive parent in an opposite sex relationship but the big increase during the 2000s can be explained by the increase of adoptions by persons in same sex relationships.

Figure 10: Adoptions of stepchildren by adoptive parent's civil status, 2000 - 2018



Among the couples, both opposite sex and same-sex, were only one in the couple have adopted, were about 97 per cent an adoption of his or her partners biological child during the period 2000-2018. Most common is for women in same sex couples to adopt their partner's child. During the period 2000 – 2018 was 1 512 adoptions registered by one woman in female same-sex couples, and only in four adoptions wasn't the other woman in the couple registered as the biological mother.

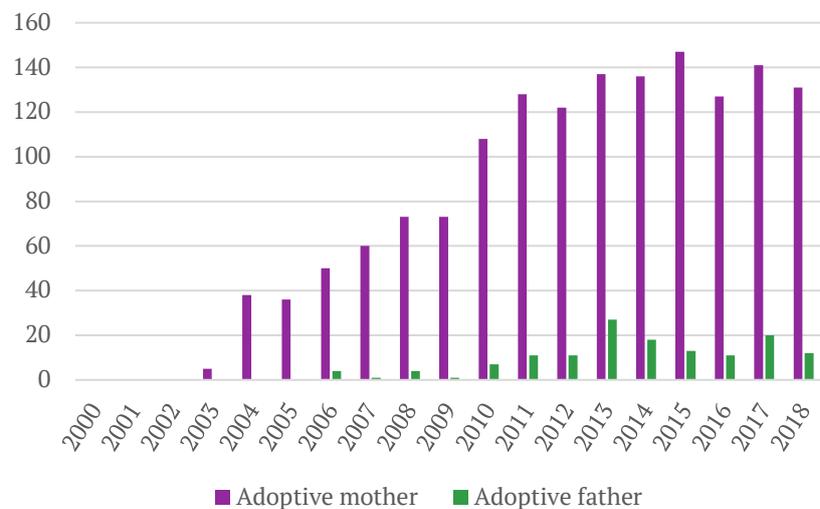
The big difference between couples with opposite sex and same sex when it comes to adoptions of stepchildren is the ages of the adoptees. Adoptions within couples of opposite sex often done when the adoptee is adult. For adoptions of stepchildren in same-sex couples is mostly done when the adoptee is young.

Table 2: Adoptions by adoptive parent's civil status and type of adoption, 2000 - 2018

Type of registered relationship	Type of adoption	Total Number of adoptees	Whereof Stepchildren		Average age		
			Number	Per cent	Total	Not step-children	Step-children
Adoptive parents							
Total		26 060	10 572	40,6	13,8	7,2	23,6
Opposite sex couple	Two adoptive parents	12 686			4,2	4,2	.
	One adoptive mother	900	798	88,7	19,1	13,8	19,8
	One adoptive father	8 336	8 138	97,6	28,2	18,7	28,5
Same sex couple	One adoptive mother	1 512	1 508	99,7	1,1	2,8	1,1
	One adoptive father	140	128	91,4	1,5	3,1	1,3
Not Married/single	Two adoptive parents	64			14,2	14,2	.
	One adoptive mother	1 470			13,0	13,0	.
	One adoptive father	952			34,8	34,8	.

Since 2003, adoptions by persons in a same-sex relationship have been listed in the Swedish Population Register. During the initial years, only women adopted children, but since 2006, men in same-sex relationships have also adopted children. However, adoption is considerably more common among women than among men. In 2018, 755 persons were adopted by one or two parents married to a person of the opposite sex, while 104 persons were adopted by a parent who did not have a registered partner. A man or a woman in a same-sex relationship adopted the remaining 143 persons. This corresponds to 14 percent of all persons adopted in 2018.

Figure 11: Adoptions by persons in same-sex couples by type of adoption, 2000 - 2018



Surrogacy

There are two kinds of Surrogate Mother:

Traditional surrogate is when a woman gets inseminated with the father's sperm. The surrogate mother carries the baby and delivers it to the couple to raise.

Gestational surrogates is a technique called "in vitro fertilization" (IVF) which makes it possible to gather eggs from the mother, fertilize them with sperm from the father, and place the embryo into the uterus of a gestational surrogate. The surrogate mother then carries the baby until birth. The surrogate doesn't have any genetic ties to the child because it wasn't her egg that was used.²

Surrogate arrangements are not allowed in the Swedish healthcare system but it is not forbidden to go abroad and hire a surrogate mother in countries where it is allowed. For Swedish citizens surrogate arrangements are only possible for heterosexual couples, male same-sex couples and single men. This is because in Sweden it is always the birth mother who counts as the child's legal mother which means that a man is required to be established as the child's biological father. If the father has a partner, a woman or a man, it is possible to make a step child adoption after the birth woman has renounced her parenthood. Since

² Source <https://www.webmd.com/infertility-and-reproduction/guide/using-surrogate-mother#1>

surrogate motherhood is unregulated in Sweden, legislation for surrogate cases is lacking and there is currently no supervisory authority on the issue. This means that there is no information in the population register if a child has been born by a surrogate mother.

International adoptions to Sweden have fallen in recent decades. At the same time, organizations that support surrogate motherhood states that the number of children born through surrogate increases significantly.

Since surrogacy arrangements is not allowed in the Swedish healthcare system it is possible to exclude adoptees born in Sweden. One can also exclude adoptions where the adoptive parent is the partner to the biological mother (birth mother). If a child is born through a surrogate arrangement could one assume that the surrogate child should be adopted in a young age. In this extended abstract is adoptions after the adoptees second birthday excluded. For assumptions that the adoptee is a surrogate child must the biological father be partner to the adoptive parent. This means that adoptions made by an adoptive parent without a registered partner will not be included, although it is possible that such adoptions may also be a surrogate arrangement.

Assumptions:

The child is adopted

The child is not born in Sweden

Biological father is partner to the adoptive parent

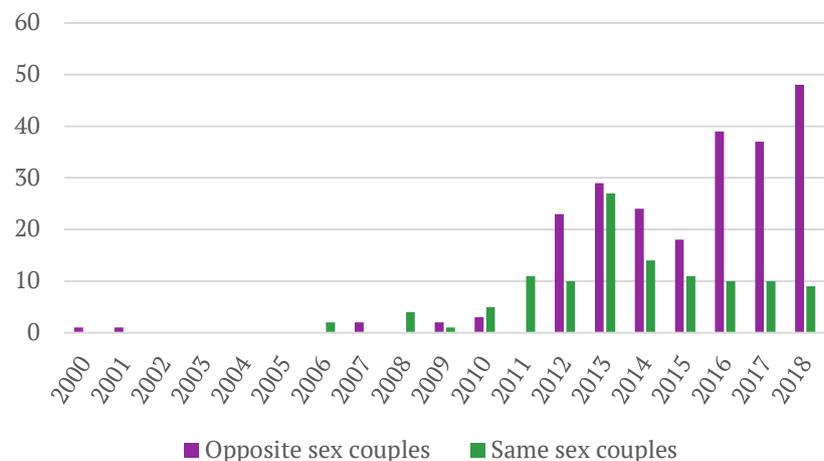
-Biological father is partner to adoptive mother (opposite sex couples)

-Biological father is partner to adoptive father (male same-sex couples)

The adoption is made before the adoptees second birthday

By combining information in the population registers with the assumptions listed above one can find 341 adoptions during the period 2000 - 2018 that are likely to be a part of a surrogate arrangement. Up to and including 2013, it seems to be about as common with same-sex couples as two-sex couples, but since 2014, it is more common for two-sex couples to have been included in a surrogate arrangement.

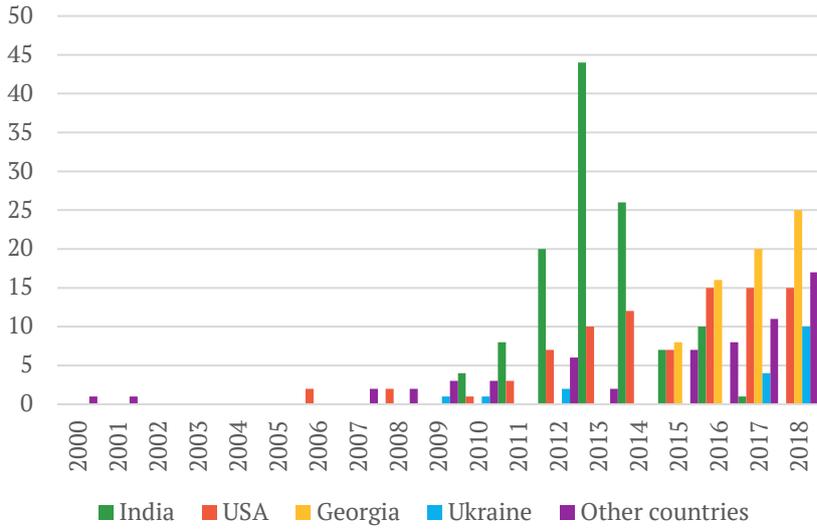
Figure 12: Adoptions of probable surrogate children by type of couple, 2000 - 2018



Three countries stand out

Three countries stand for 82 per cent of all adoptions of children that are likely to be surrogate children. During the years 2010 – 2014 were more than half of all probable surrogate children born in India. Since then have India dropped significant. Children born in USA and especially in Georgia have increased. From 2017, have also Ukraine a big increase.

Figure 13: Adoptions of probable surrogate children by country of birth, 2000 - 2018



A same-sex couple makes one out of three adoptions of probable surrogate children. Of those is 80 per cent of the children born in India or USA. But since 2015, there are no probable surrogate children born in India. There are no surrogate children born in Georgia and Ukraine that are adopted by a man in a same-sex couple.

Figure 14: Adoptions of probable surrogate children born in India, 2000 - 2018

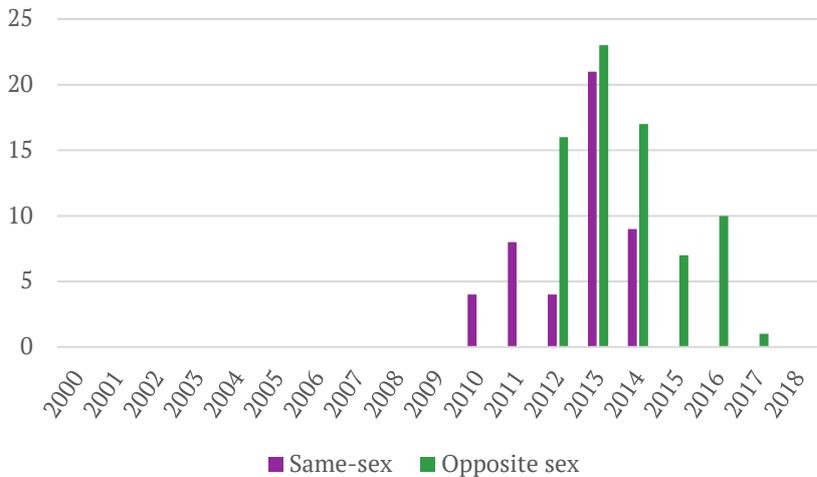
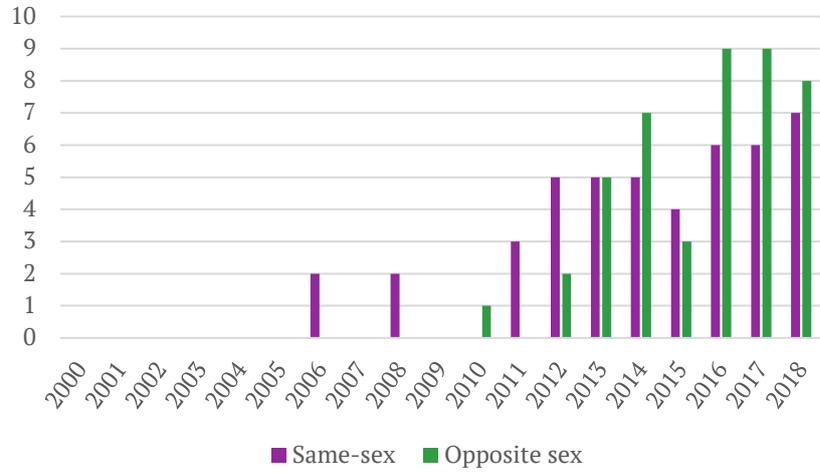


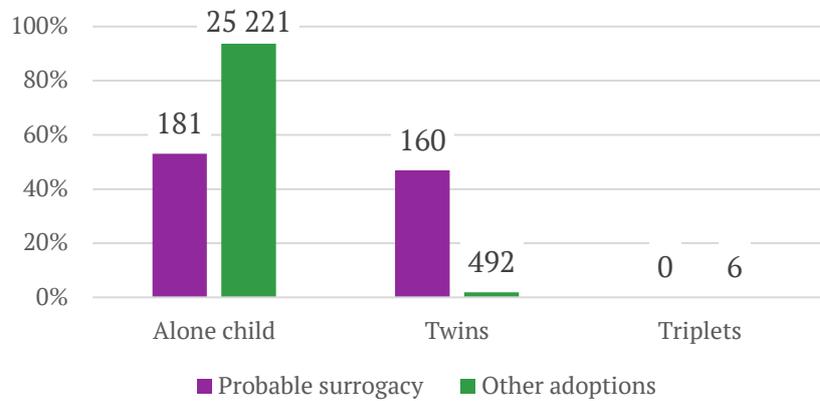
Figure 15: Adoptions of probable surrogate children born in USA, 2000 - 2018



Probable surrogates is often twins which indicates insemination

Based on date of adoption, PIN for Biological father and the child’s date of birth is it possible to see if the adopted child were alone in the birth mother’s womb or not. Almost half of the probable surrogates were a twin. For the rest of the adoptees were only 2 per cent of the adoptees a twin or triplet. This indicates that the birth mother often have been fertilized by insemination.

Figure 16: Alone, twins or triplets for surrogates and other adoptees, 2000 – 2018, %



Results

The number of adoptions has decreased under 2000s and it’s adoptions of foreign-borns that account for the reduction. Adoptions of persons born in Sweden, on the other hand, have increased slightly.

The decrease for adopted people born outside Sweden can mainly be explained by a decrease in adoptions made by two adoptive parents. The small increase of adoptions of person born in Sweden can mainly be explained by an increase of adoptions done by an adoptive mother and almost 100 per cent were a stepchild adoption.

Looking closer at the increase in adoptions of Swedish-born people, one can see that it's mainly adoptions made by women in the same sex couples that are behind the increase. Since 2010, about three out of four adoptions have been made by an adoptive mother in the same relationship.

Since 2000 has 26,060 persons been adopted in Sweden. Of these, has nearly 12,700 persons, or 49 percent, been adopted jointly by a couple. Nearly 10,900 adoptees have been adopted by one person in a married couple. In most cases, was it an adoption of their partner's biological child. In total, 97 percent of these adoptions were a stepchild adoption.

Information about children born in a surrogate arrangement does not exist in the Swedish population register. By making some assumptions, however, one can assume that an adopted child has a surrogate mother. Since 2000 is 341 adoptees probably a surrogate child. However, it is mainly after 2010 that one can see an increase in these children. In the beginning, it was almost as common for same-sex couples as for opposite sex couples to adopt a child that probably is a surrogate child. But since 2014, most surrogate children have been adopted by a two-sex couple.

Around 2011 - 2014, it was most common that the probable surrogate children were born in India, but after 2014, these children have fallen sharply. The decrease has been compensated by an increase in children born in Georgia, USA and Ukraine.

About one-third of all probable surrogate children have been adopted by a man in a same-sex couple. Of these adoptions does children born in India or USA account for 80 per cent. However, since 2015 have no adoptions been made by surrogate children born in India.

For surrogate children born in Georgia and Ukraine, there is no child adopted by a same-sex couple. In every case has a woman adopted her husband's biological child.

Main conclusions

Register data about adoptees is a valuable source of information when studying adoptees and their adoptive parents.

When examining surrogate children, it is problematic that there is no information in the population register. It is possible to make certain estimates as long it is adoptions of stepchildren's born outside Sweden. However, when comparing the number of probable surrogate children based on information in the population register, it is significantly fewer cases than the numbers stated by organizations that support surrogacy. For example, it is very difficult to detect surrogate children adopted by a person who is not in a registered relationship.

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