



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN  
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

# The Lived Experience of Intercountry Adopted Adults in Ireland

Technical Report  
June 2025



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# 1. Introduction

## i. Background to the present study

Over 5,000 children have been adopted into Ireland since the introduction of the Adoption Act (1991), which provided for intercountry adoption. Greene and colleagues' (2007) report on intercountry adoption outcomes in Ireland is the largest and most systematic investigation into the impact of intercountry adoption in Ireland to date. The study had a particular focus on young children's outcomes, which was reflective of the mean age of the intercountry adopted population at that time.

While that report was conducted at the peak of Irish intercountry adoption, the number of children being adopted into Ireland has declined sharply since the Adoption Act 2010. As the average age of the Irish intercountry adopted population approaches adulthood, it is now timely to explore the experiences of the Irish intercountry adopted population as adults, to contribute to an evidence base for the development of post-adoption services.

## ii. Aims and objectives

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of a small sample of adults who were adopted into Ireland via intercountry adoption. The study's objective was to try and capture nuanced, individual experience to contribute to an evidence base to help inform the development of policies and services for intercountry adopted people.

The study sought to answer three broad research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of intercountry adopted people growing up in Ireland?
2. How do Irish intercountry adopted adults perceive their adoptive identity?
3. What supports do Irish intercountry adopted people need?

# 2. Method

## i. Study design

As the focus of this study was exploratory in nature, and targeted a very under-researched, relatively small population, a qualitative methodology was selected by the research team to maximise the opportunity for the collection of rich, nuanced data about individual lived experience. The study was grounded in social constructionism, which posits that people construct meaning about phenomena – such as adoption – from a dynamic interaction with the world and environment in which they live (Burr, 2021). The analysis was informed by ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2000) which suggests that people both shape and are shaped

by their environments – nested systems, such as their family, friends, schools, workplaces, the wider society and culture in which they live, and the historical and political system in place at the time.

A semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix vii) was created for focus groups and interviews with people who had been adopted into Ireland via its intercountry adoption programme. This interview schedule was grounded in the research literature about intercountry adoption and designed to explore the three research questions. All questions were open-ended to allow participants to direct the conversation and raise any issues that they felt were of note.

### i. Sampling

The intercountry adopted population in Ireland is small. Two types of sampling were thus engaged: purposeful, where known stakeholders were invited to share the link with specific individuals who were eligible; and snowball, where participants themselves were invited to share the link with anyone else they knew who was eligible, following their own participation in the study.

To be eligible to take part, participants were required to be:

- Adopted via intercountry adoption into Ireland
- Classified as an Irish resident
- Over 18 years of age
- Able to provide clear and free consent to participate
- Able to speak and understand English
- Willing to take part in an online focus group with peers or interview about the topic of adoption experience and the adoption process

Participants were considered ineligible to participate if:

- They had not been living in Ireland within the past five years
- They were domestically adopted or adopted through intercountry adoption in another jurisdiction
- Their adoption was not recognised by the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) as an intercountry adoption at the time of recruitment into the study
- They were, at the time of the study, employed by a post-adoption service operating in Ireland

### iii. Recruitment

The research team developed a PDF poster (Appendix i) to advertise the study. This poster was advertised directly on the AAI's website homepage, on LinkedIn, and sent to various country-specific support group representatives, alongside stakeholders in Barnardos Post-Adoption Service, Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency, the Adoption Research Network of Ireland, the Research Managers' Network, Tusla and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

In addition to email, printed versions of the poster were sent to public-facing offices to be displayed in waiting rooms, etc. It was circulated to all AAI staff for onward sharing with their contacts. It was also advertised on Activelink and Practicelinks – two Irish bulletins with a large reach in the NGO and social work sectors. The research team posted the posters on various adoption support groups on social media (with the permission and agreement from the group administrators).

An online application process was designed, via a link on the AAI's website, through which participants could provide informed consent, by reading a detailed information sheet (Appendix ii) and completing a consent form (Appendix iii). This enabled the researchers to recruit nationwide, and limited the travel required for both researchers and participants, thus maximising the potential for participants to take part. Unfortunately, sharing the poster on social media led to a high number of fraudulent applications (90% of initial applications to participate in the study were discovered to be fraudulent in follow-up). This delayed the recruitment process. It also removed the possibility, for the research team, of advertising the study on social media, due to the perceived increased risk it brought to the AAI's cybersecurity, given the online application process.

Recruitment thereafter was slow and challenging. A small number of participants agreed to take part but then did not attend at the allotted time, and did not engage with any attempts by the research team to follow-up. This is a known risk with qualitative research and had been anticipated to some extent.

One focus group was held and was attended by two participants. There was no further interest in focus groups from potential participants, so the research team changed the design to include an option to take part in an individual interview, as an alternative to a focus group. The poster was changed to advertise either a focus group or an individual interview, and all stakeholders were re-contacted and updated on the new design. This led to a marked increase in recruitment. The focus group interview schedule (Appendix vii) was amended very minimally for use in individual interviews, rather than with a group.

### iv. Participant Profile

Once they had provided informed consent to participate, all participants were sent a welcome email, with a link to a pre-focus group/interview demographic questionnaire (Appendix iv). The link brought each participant to a form in a secure section of the AAI's website, to be completed at least 24 hours in advance of their interview. Participants also received guidelines for participation (Appendix v) and a topic guide (Appendix vi) so that they could prepare for the focus group/interview.

Eleven participants took part in this study: nine female and two male. They ranged in age from 20 – 38, with a mean age of 27. They had been adopted from a variety of countries including Romania, Vietnam, Belarus, China, India and Thailand. Their age at adoption ranged from 6 weeks to 3 years, with a mean age at adoption across all participants of 1 year and 2 months. At the time of interview, eight were living in the East of Ireland, two in the South and one in the West.

### v. Data collection

The focus group and interviews were all held online and guided by the interview schedule (Appendix vii). The focus group and five of the individual interviews were facilitated by a team of two experienced interviewers with a background in psychology, both of whom were members of the AAI's research team. However, due to resourcing issues, the remaining four interviews were conducted by one interviewer only. This interviewer had been part of the original team of two, and used the same interview schedule, so the impact of this change on participants was considered to be relatively low.

Each participant received a debriefing sheet (Appendix viii) at the end of the interview, and a post-interview questionnaire (Appendix ix) a couple of days after the interview had taken place. Participants were asked to take time to reflect before returning the questionnaire. Upon returning the questionnaire, all participants received a €20 digital One4All gift voucher as compensation for their time.

### vi. Data management

This study generated digital and audio files.

Form input data were stored temporarily with secure software on the AAI website before being exported to Excel. All digital files containing participant or research data were password protected and saved in a limited-permissions folder on the secure, encrypted shared drive.

The focus groups and interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. The audio files were routinely saved to a limited access folder on the AAI's shared drive immediately after the focus group/interview ended, and deleted from the device. The research team manually created transcripts from the audio files in password-protected Microsoft Word format, and deleted the audio files from the shared drive shortly thereafter.

### vii. Data retention and disposal

Each participant was assigned a unique identifier code. This code was linked to their personal data in a password-protected Excel file. This enabled the research team to track the ages and countries of origins of each participant, and provided the team with a record, should any participant wish to withdraw their data after they had taken part.

Participants were informed that they could withdraw their data from the study if they so wished for up to six months after the focus groups/interviews. Personal data will be destroyed 6 months after the study's report has been published.

De-identified research data including transcripts will be retained for up to 5 years, at which point they will be destroyed. However, participants were asked permission for de-identified transcripts to be archived, in which case they may be held indefinitely. Participants were informed of these data retention/disposal measures via the informed consent process.

### viii. Anonymisation procedures

All participants were offered the opportunity to choose a pseudonym in advance of taking part. In addition, research data were de-identified. Personal identifiers such as names were replaced with artificial identifiers such as numbers in the transcript. In the report, all quotes were de-identified.

### 3. Data Analysis and Write-up

The data were analysed thematically in accordance with the process set out by Braun and Clarke (2021). The research team used both an inductive and deductive approach, utilising the existing literature as a basis for understanding some of the key issues raised, while also allowing space for new ideas or suggestions to develop.

Once the transcripts were complete, they were coded manually by a team of two researchers. When coding of all transcripts was complete, the research team reviewed the codes and developed a coding frame. The lead researcher then used this frame to develop a draft set of themes. These

themes were discussed in detail by the research team to tease out their meaning and were adjusted and refined until three clear themes were agreed upon. Both members of the research team were confident that the final set of themes fit the data, as presented in the raw interview transcripts.

The report on the study's findings was written by the AAI research team. It was reviewed and subsequently approved by the Research Subcommittee. It was approved for publication by the AAI Board in January 2025.

### 4. Strengths, Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study's strengths and limitations have been documented in the main report, available on the AAI website.

Following a thorough ethics review, including a Data Protection Impact Assessment which was approved by the AAI's Data Protection Officer, the Research team received written approval from the AAI's Research Ethics Committee to proceed with this study in October 2022.

Due to the nature of the study and the sensitive topic involved, there was a small possibility that participants would become upset or distressed during or after the interview. Accordingly, participants were provided with a number of supports. Every time an interview/focus group was scheduled, the Social Work team leader was briefed, and a duty social worker was assigned to be on standby at the time of the interview/focus group to provide emotional support or debriefing for participants if required. Barnardos post-adoption service were advised that this study would be carried out, in case any participant chose to contact their service for support after

taking part. Participants received contact details for the AAI's social work team, Barnardos post-adoption service and the Samaritans via a de-briefing sheet (Appendix viii) provided at the end of each interview/focus group.

A number of de-briefing questions were provided at the end of the interview schedule (Appendix vii), to ensure that each participant had been given the opportunity to reflect with the interviewer(s) on how they had been affected by the interview and the topics raised therein. A few days after the interview/focus group had taken place, participants were invited to share any further thoughts or reflections on their participation via a participant feedback form (see Appendix ix). In this form, participants were asked whether they had felt distressed during the interview, and whether they had felt supported by the research team when this happened. In cases where participants said they had felt distressed, they agreed that they had felt supported. Contact details for the above support services were also provided at the end of this form.

## References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. Sage UK

Burr, V., & Dick, P. (2017). Social constructionism (pp. 59-80). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2000). Ecological systems theory. American Psychological Association.

Greene, S., Kelly, R., Nixon, E., Kelly, G., Borska, Z., Murphy, S., Daly, A., Whyte, J., & Murphy,

C. (2007). A Study of Intercountry Adoption Outcomes in Ireland. Dublin: The Adoption Board.



# Appendices

## Appendix i: Recruitment Poster

### Research on the Lived Experiences of Intercountry Adoption



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→ Were you adopted from abroad by a family living in Ireland?

→ Are you aged between 18-40 years old?

→ Are you currently an Irish resident?

→ Do you want to share your experiences of growing up in Ireland as an adopted person?

*We want to hear from you!*

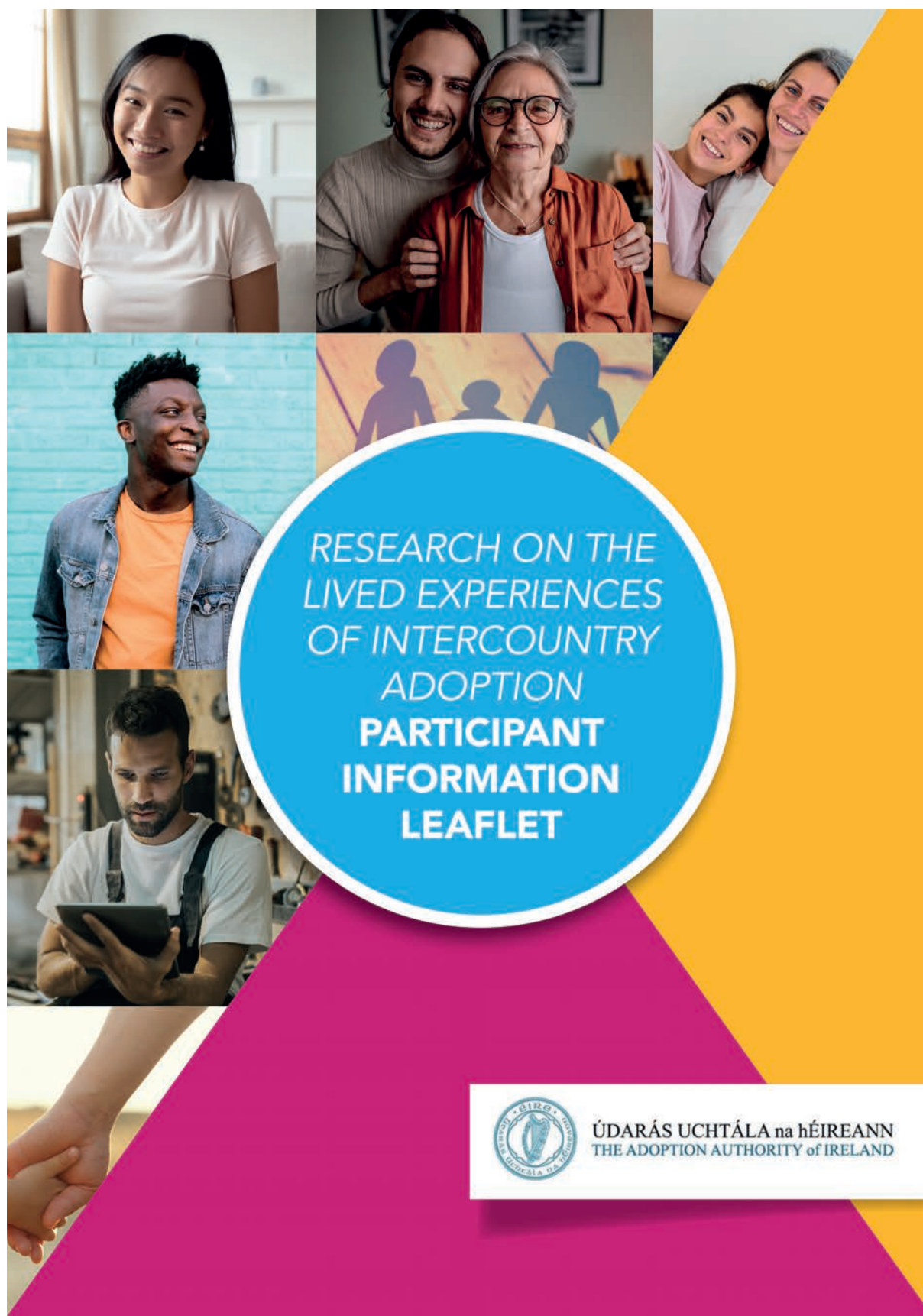
The AAI research team is inviting volunteers to participate in a study about the lived experiences of intercountry adoptees in Ireland. Participation involves either a one-off online focus group OR an individual interview at a time that works for you.

Scan the QR code below to sign up, or to learn more about the study, please contact: **[aai\\_research@aai.gov.ie](mailto:aai_research@aai.gov.ie)** or call **01 2309 317**



Visit our website **<https://aai.gov.ie/en/>** for more information

## Appendix ii: Information Leaflet (page 1 / cover)



## Appendix ii: Information Leaflet (page 2)

## INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study on internationally adopted people. The study is exploring the experiences of individuals who have been adopted into Ireland from abroad. We'd like to hear your thoughts and feelings about intercountry adoption in general. Before you make a decision about taking part in this study, please take the time to read the following information sheet carefully. You are free to contact the research team should you have any questions (contact details provided at the end of this leaflet).

### What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences and views of Irish people who were adopted from another country. We hope to understand more about individuals who were internationally adopted and are now adults. We also want to give people who were adopted a way to voice their views about adoption in Ireland and reflect on childhood experiences growing up in Ireland. We also want to find out about what, if any, support services you feel would be useful to people who have been internationally adopted.

### Who is conducting this study?

The study is designed and delivered by the research unit in the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI). The research team is made up of a research officer (Dr Judy Lovett) and a research assistant (John Regan).

### Why am I being invited to take part?

You are being invited to take part because you were adopted into Ireland from another country, and you are between the ages of 18 and 40.

### Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is your decision whether you want to take part or not. Nobody will be made aware that you are participating in this research, and all communication between you and the research team will be private and confidential. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time you wish, and withdrawal will have no consequences on you. If you decide to withdraw, you will need to notify Judy at +353 (0) 1 2309317, or email to [aai\\_research@aai.gov.ie](mailto:aai_research@aai.gov.ie).

### What are the study procedures?

If you agree to be included in this study, here are the steps that will take place:

- ▶ You will first be asked to complete a basic demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire will ask you information such as your age, your county of residence, and your gender.
- ▶ After this, you will be invited to take part in either a focus group with other intercountry adoptees, or an individual interview, depending on your preference. These sessions will be audio recorded with your consent, and will be carried out remotely by the research team via Zoom. The main topic of discussion will be your experience of adoption, your thoughts on intercountry adoption and your use of adoption related services. The sessions will take place at a time convenient to you, and will last around 90 minutes.
- ▶ The data that we will be collecting will be the recorded discussions of the session. This data will be transcribed by the research assistant in the AAI. The transcribed data will be de-identified, which means that you will not be identifiable in the transcription. The transcribed data will only be accessible to the research team. Shortly after the session has taken place, you will be asked to complete a final survey that will ask you how you found taking part in the study, and give you an opportunity to provide any additional information you wish to add.



## Appendix ii: Information Leaflet (page 3)



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### How long will this study take?

Your contribution to this study will consist of a focus group or individual interview that will run for approximately 1 hour – 1 hour and 30 minutes, in addition to a short demographic questionnaire and a post-focus group/ interview survey.

### Is my data protected and confidential?

All information that you give during the course of the focus group or individual interview will be treated with the highest level of confidence. The researchers will take notes during the session about any important topics that might come up, but any information that you give will not be linked to you in any way and will be fully de-identified. If you are taking part in a focus group, you will have the option to use a pseudonym if you do not wish to be named. Please note that your name will not be mentioned in the transcribed data, and instead will be replaced with a unique identifier code. This will be linked to your personal data by the research team in the event that you wish to withdraw your participation from the study. However, if you choose to disclose information that would indicate a serious cause for concern (e.g. criminal offence, a risk to children, or a risk to life), it is the duty of the research team to inform a senior member of the social work team in the AAI and report any issue concerning a child/children to Tusla. This is called the duty of care. We would never do this without informing you first.

### What are the risks of participating?

As researchers, we are obliged to consider any risks to you from participating. We are aware that participating in a focus group or interview can be inconvenient for some participants. For this reason, we have decided to do the sessions entirely on Zoom, rather than in person. This will eliminate commuting time. We will provide a guide for accessing Zoom, and further assistance will be provided should it be required on the day. One potential emotional risk is that the topics discussed might upset you. If you are upset by any of the topics discussed in the session, you are free to take a break from the discussion at any time, stop taking part in the session completely, or withdraw from the study entirely, meaning you won't have any further communication with us, and any of your data will be removed.

We will also have a support plan in place, should you need emotional support as a result of any of the topics discussed. If you get upset by any of the content, a social worker will be on standby to talk to you on your mobile phone, and will advise you on what next steps you can take for your mental health and safety. You are under no obligation to complete the full study, and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. There is minimal risk of physical harm through participation in the study.



## Appendix ii: Information Leaflet (page 4, end)

**How will I benefit from this study?**

We hope that having the ability and opportunity to provide your unique insight into intercountry adoption and your intercountry adoption experience would be of interest to you. We hope to gather views and opinions on intercountry adoption from those who have experienced it, to highlight policies or interventions that may need improvement or alteration in the future, and to assess the needs of internationally adopted people as they grow and develop from adolescence to adulthood. You will be contributing to a field of research that does not currently have much Irish-specific information available. Your input will provide much-needed context for intercountry adopted people in Ireland.

**Will I be compensated for participating in this study?**

You will be compensated for your time spent participating in the study. You will be given a €20 OneforAll voucher upon completion of all elements of the study, which includes the session itself and the post-focus group/interview survey. If you do not finish the study to completion, we will not be able to compensate you for your time.

**What will happen to my data?**

All results of your assessments (e.g. all of the responses to the demographic questionnaire, transcripts of the session, and your responses to the post-focus group/interview survey) will be identified only by a unique participant code that contains no information about your identity. Only the members of the research team will have the information that matches the anonymous code to identifying information about yourself such as your name, your age, and your email. We will keep all your identifying information in a password protected file on our secure folders in the Adoption Authority, and this will be stored on a password protected laptop that is kept in a locked filing cabinet overnight. The reason we keep your identifying information is in the event that you wish to withdraw from the study, making it easier to find and erase your contributions. After the data are collected and analysed, all personal identifiers will be removed and your data will be completely anonymised. At this point, you will not be able to withdraw your participation from the study. The research team will then produce a report that will be reviewed by other researchers in the field of adoption. After the review,

“

*We hope that having the ability and opportunity to provide your unique insight into intercountry adoption and your intercountry adoption experience would be of interest to you.*

the report will be published and will be made available to the general public. You will not be identifiable in this published report. We hope that this study will be used to inform policy makers on the experiences of intercountry adoption in Ireland.

**Who can I contact if I have questions?**

This form explains the research study. You can ask questions about anything that you do not understand. You can ask questions at any time during the research process, and a member of our research team would be happy to help.

You may contact **Dr Judy Lovett**

if you have any further questions about the study. Alternatively, you can contact the research team at [aai\\_research@aai.gov.ie](mailto:aai_research@aai.gov.ie) and a member of our team will get back to you. A description of this study will be available on [www.aai.gov.ie/en/](http://www.aai.gov.ie/en/). You can view this web page at any time.

**How to take part:**

If you want to take part, please visit <https://aai.gov.ie/en/intercountry-adoption-focus-group-recruitment>. Here, there will be a button that you can click. This will bring you to our application process, where you can give your consent to take part. We will also ask for your name and email so we can get back to you. You will receive an email from [aai\\_research@aai.gov.ie](mailto:aai_research@aai.gov.ie), which will provide you with further instructions.



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## Appendix iii: Consent Sheet

If you want to take part in this study, you need to give consent. If you consent, you are agreeing to take part and for us to contact you with more information about the study. If you do not consent, that means that you do not agree to take part, and we will not contact you in relation to the study.

1	<p>Have you had the opportunity to read the enclosed information sheet in full?</p> <p>Before providing consent, it is important that you are fully aware of the procedures involved in this study. We encourage you to read the information sheet that is available on the project homepage.</p>
2	<p>Have you been given the chance to ask questions or talk about the study with the research team via phone or email?</p> <p>The research team is available to contact at any time. If you wish to ask us any questions, we will be happy to answer you. Please contact us at [email address], or you can call us at –[direct line for Research team].</p>
3	<p>Are you satisfied that you have received enough information about this study?</p> <p>If you are not satisfied with the information you have received about this study, you are invited to read the information sheet on the project homepage, or contact us with further questions (contact details provided above).</p>
4	<p>Do you understand what participation involves for you (i.e. completion of a brief demographic questionnaire, an audio recorded group discussion or interview on intercountry adoption experiences and post adoption support, and a post-focus group/interview survey)?</p> <p>You need to be aware of all parts of this study before you can provide consent. Please be aware that you are able to withdraw your participation at any time for whatever reason. Participation is entirely voluntary and up to you.</p>
5	<p>Do you understand that you can withdraw from the study at any time before, during, or up to six months after the focus group has taken place, without affecting any repercussion or risk to yourself?</p> <p>You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. You do not have to complete this study if you do not want to.</p>
6	<p>Do you understand that your data will be <b>de-identified</b> on any transcription of the focus group/ interview, and you will not be named in the study? Any name that is mentioned in the course of the focus group/interview will be replaced with a pseudonym by the research team, and any identifying information will be changed.</p> <p>(Remember that you can change your mind and withdraw your participation up to six months after the focus group/interview)</p> <p>De-identification means that you will only be identifiable by members of the research team during the analysis stage. The research team must be able to identify you at this stage so that we will be able to remove your data in the event that you wish to withdraw your participation. After analysis has been completed, your data will be anonymised, and you will not be able to remove your participation.</p>

7	<p>Do you understand that there are limitations to confidentiality and anonymity in respect of the researchers' Duty of Care towards children, in line with the Children First recommendations?</p> <p>We will do our utmost to protect you and your privacy. Our limitations refer to the scenario where we feel that an individual (child or adult) is in danger, and we need to pass information on to somebody who may be able to get them help.</p>
8	<p>Do you consent to the focus group/interview being audio recorded?</p> <p>This audio recording is required to ensure that we can look at and analyse the data that you provide.</p>
9	<p>Do you consent to your focus group being transcribed by a professional transcription agency (who are subject to GDPR and will have signed the AAI's non-disclosure agreement)?</p> <p>If you do not consent to your focus group/interview being transcribed by a professional third party, the research assistant will do the transcription instead.</p>
10	<p>Do you consent to the archiving of the anonymised focus group/interview transcripts after this study is completed?</p> <p>Archiving means that we store the anonymised transcripts of this focus group/interview. Anonymised means that you will not be identifiable by anyone. This data can be accessed in the future for further research. If you do not consent to the archiving of the focus group transcripts, they will be deleted within 6 months.</p>
11	<b>Do you consent to taking part in this study?</b>

## Appendix iv: Demographic Questionnaire

Please fill out the below demographic information sheet. Please note that any information that you provide will be treated with the strictest privacy and security, and is purely for demographical data purposes.

1. What gender do you identify as?

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-binary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What are your contact details:

Mobile Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you know the age at which you were adopted (can be in months or years)? If not, please insert "No"

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What country were you adopted from?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. How would you describe your nationality?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What county do you live in?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Would you consider yourself to be living in urban or rural Ireland?

Urban	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Are you aware of post-adoption services in Ireland?

YES ☐ NO ☐

10. Have you attended any post-adoption services in Ireland?

YES ☐ NO ☐



## Appendix v: Guidelines for Participation



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### Adoption Authority of Ireland Intercountry Adoption Focus Groups Guidelines for Participation

We have created guidelines for participation in our intercountry adoption discussion. This is to help us provide a safe environment, where everyone can share their experiences, feelings, attitudes, and opinions about adoption in an open, non-judgemental space.

- Participation is voluntary. You are under no obligation to finish the full discussion, and you are free to leave whenever you want.
- There are no right or wrong answers- all responses are welcomed. You can choose not to answer any of the questions during the discussion.
- Please respect the opinion of others in the discussion, even if you do not agree with them. Everyone has the right to their voice and opinions.
- Please listen respectfully to all participants and do not interrupt if someone is speaking.
- This focus group is private and confidential. Please help protect others' privacy by not discussing details of the focus group outside of the discussion space. Please do not subsequently share personal or identifying information about other participants who are taking part in the discussion.
- You can choose a pseudonym if you do not want your real name to be mentioned – just let us know before the focus group commences, and we will assign you a pseudonym.
- Disruptive, abusive or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated, and will result in a participant being removed from the online discussion. Any participant who engages in such behaviour will not receive the €20 voucher as compensation for their time.
- Participants will be invited to verbally agree to these guidelines at the start of the focus group.

We look forward to meeting you!

## Appendix vi: Topic Guide



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### Adoption Authority of Ireland ICA Focus Groups and Interviews Topic Guide

Our intercountry adoption discussion will be divided up into 3 distinct sections, as outlined below. Remember that you are under no obligation to answer all or any of the questions put to you. You are free to be as active/inactive in the discussion as you wish.

The topics covered by the interview schedule include the following:

**1. Experiences of adoption through the eyes of adopted people:**

In this section, we will ask you what it was like for you being adopted into Ireland. We will explore your thoughts and feelings, what you have experienced, and how you view your experiences. We want to see how your experiences have been shaped by those around you (e.g. talking with adopted/non adopted friends and peers). The topics we will talk about in this section will include physical and mental health, sense of belonging, your close relationships, and your environment.

**2. Adoptive Identity:**

In this section, we will ask you about your adoptive identity. Adoptive identity is your personal understanding of your adoption, and what it means to you to be adopted. We will ask you how you see yourself as an adopted person in relation to your friends, your adoptive family, and your birth family. We will ask if/how you discuss adoption with those around you, and how you feel about adoption overall.

**3. Post-adoption supports and services:**

In this section, we will talk about the supports you feel that you need or have needed in the past. This will be your opportunity to tell us what supports and/or services you would like to see in Ireland for people who have been adopted via intercountry adoption.

## Appendix vii: Interview Schedule

### Individual Interview Schedule February 2023

Section 1: (10 mins)	Introduction
	Welcome and introduction: researcher positionality and ground rules
Section 2: Growing up in Ireland as an adopted person: (20 mins)	
Interviewer 1	1. People often find out about their adoption in different ways. Would you like to share any stories about <i>when and how</i> you found out that you were adopted?
Interviewer 2	2. We want to know about the positive sides of growing up as an adopted person in Ireland. If you needed to teach someone your age about being adopted from another country into this one, what could you tell them about the good things, if any, about being (for example) an adopted child, an adopted teenager, an adopted young adult?
Interviewer 1	3. Then to reflect on the more difficult side of things. What would you warn an adopted person about? What kind of challenges or negative things do you think adopted people face growing up in Ireland? Would you like to tell us a bit about them, or share their own experiences? (Discrimination? Bullying?)
Interviewer 1	4. Do you think being adopted has ever impacted your friendships and/or romantic relationships? How?
Interviewer 2	5. We're interested to know if you think being adopted has ever impacted, or could ever impact your health - physical or mental.
Section 3: Now we'd like to talk about what adoption means to you: (25 mins)	
Interviewer 2	6. How do you feel about being a part of your adoptive family?
Interviewer 1	7. Do you ever think about your birth family? a. Would you like to make contact with your birth family?
Interviewer 2	8. Do you think much about your adoption? a. Do you talk about adoption much with your friends, or with people you might be less close to, like colleagues/classmates? b. How do you feel when you talk about your adoption?
Interviewer 1	9. Are you often asked about your adoption? How does that make you feel? a. If you meet someone new, do you tell them you're adopted? Why/why not?

**Section 4: We are nearly finished, and would like to end by really considering how things could change if you were in charge. (20 mins)**

Interviewer 1	<b>10.</b> Did you ever feel that you needed supports or services to help you deal with any elements of being adopted? How did you deal with this?
Interviewer 2	<b>11.</b> If you had a magic wand, and were in charge of designing supports or services to help adopted people in Ireland, what would you do? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would the services differ as people got older?</li> <li>• Would children or teenagers need something different to adults?</li> </ul>

**Section 5: Debrief (10 mins)**

Interviewer 2	<b>12.</b> We're ready to wrap up now, but before we do, is there anything you would like to add?
Interviewer 1	<b>13.</b> How do you feel now, having done the interview?

**Sign off and close**

## Appendix viii: Debriefing Sheet



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN  
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

### Participant Debriefing Sheet

Thank you for taking part in the focus group/interview for our study “The Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland”.

The aim of this study is to capture the experiences and opinions of those who have been adopted into Ireland through intercountry adoption, and their ideas about post-adoption services in Ireland. The focus group/interview you took part in will be transcribed and analysed. The findings will be written up in a report which will be made publicly available, and may also be used in conference presentations, journal articles and media briefings.

Your participation and time are very much appreciated by the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

#### Feedback?

Should you have any reflections on the study or wish to discuss any aspect of your involvement further, you are invited to contact the research officer at XX / XX / XX

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the research team, or the way in which the interview was carried out, you are invited to report these in confidence to:

- The AAI’s duty social worker: 01-2309300 (see below)
- The Research officer’s line manager, the CEO, who can be contacted via the main reception number: 01-2309300 or directly via email to XX

This is standard procedure and will in no way affect your relationship with the AAI. All calls/emails will be treated in strictest confidence.

#### Support:

If you feel that you have been affected by any of the issues raised in today’s study, and that you might require emotional support as a result, you are strongly encouraged to contact the following resources:

AAI duty social worker: Contact the AAI’s main switchboard: 01-2309300, and ask to be put through to the duty social worker (Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)

Barnardos post-adoption service: 01-4546388 (operational 10am-1pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays) or [adoption@barnardos.ie](mailto:adoption@barnardos.ie)

The Samaritans: 116-123 or [atjo@samaritans.ie](mailto:atjo@samaritans.ie)

#### Changed your mind?

You can withdraw your interview data from the analysis at any time up to 6 months after the focus group date. Doing so will not affect your relationship with the AAI. Please contact the research officer at email/ phone number if you wish to change the status of your involvement.

## Appendix ix: Post-interview Feedback Form

Thank you for taking you the time out of your day to take part in our online interview. We really appreciate your contribution to the study and we hope that we were able to provide a warm and encouraging environment for you to share your experiences of being an intercountry adoptee in Ireland.

Below is one final survey that we would like you to fill out. This should only take between 1-2 minutes to complete.

1. Please insert your full name:
2. Did you feel distressed in any way during the interview?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. If YES, did you feel supported by the research team? YES ☐ NO ☐

b. Please explain why:

3. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to add about your experiences of Intercountry Adoption that you feel you did not get a chance to say in the interview?
4. Would you like to be notified when this study is published and made available to the public?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. If YES, please provide your email address:

### Support:

If you feel that you have been affected by any of the issues raised in today's study, and that you might require emotional support as a result, you are strongly encouraged to contact the following resources:

AAI duty social worker: Contact the AAI's main switchboard: 01-2309300, and press 4 to be put through to the social work team (Monday – Friday, 9:30am – 4:30pm)

Barnardos post-adoption service: 01-4546388 (operational 10am-1pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays) or [adoption@barnardos.ie](mailto:adoption@barnardos.ie)

The Samaritans: 116-123 or at [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie)





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