



DAVE THOMAS  
FOUNDATION  
FOR ADOPTION®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

# NATIONAL FOSTER CARE ADOPTION ATTITUDES SURVEY



## 2013 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & DETAILED FINDINGS

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# NATIONAL FOSTER CARE **ADOPTION ATTITUDES SURVEY**

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## **2013 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & DETAILED FINDINGS**

Commissioned by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

Conducted by Harris Interactive



DAVE THOMAS  
FOUNDATION  
FOR ADOPTION®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

July 2013

Dear Friend,

It has been more than 20 years since Dave Thomas first charged us with finding forever families for children waiting in foster care. In those two decades, we've seen significant growth — of our programs, our footprint, our awareness initiatives, and most importantly, the number of finalized adoptions.

But even through this exponential growth, we find that the myths and misperceptions that are sometimes linked to adoption from foster care continue to linger in the minds of Americans.

We cannot rest. As our political, economic and technological environments change at rapid rates, we must ensure that the more than 100,000 children waiting in foster care do not slip through the cracks. We have to move even faster, be bolder. We have much more to say, and even more to do.

Accomplishing these goals will take a clear and very detailed understanding of current American attitudes and beliefs about foster care adoption. That's why every five years we commission a survey to find out what Americans think about foster care adoption, and how we should address those beliefs. The results are the *2013 National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey*, conducted by Harris Interactive.

So, what did the findings show, and has there been any positive movement since our last survey in 2007? Actually, not much. That's a problem. And an opportunity. What it means to us is that our work is far from winding down. It means that our mission — to find forever families for children in foster care — is more important than ever. We must continue to dispel the myths that surround the children who, through no fault of their own, and because of extreme abuse and neglect at the hands of their birth parents, are in the foster care system.

The survey is a clear call to action. We need to disseminate a steady stream of positive communication about adoption from foster care, and share the thousands of amazing success stories that we have collected over time. We need to talk more about the advocates that work on behalf of the longest-waiting children in care, and how their actions have proven that no child is unadoptable.

Thank you for taking the time to review the survey findings. If you need any further information, please contact us at 1-800-ASK-DTFA or [davethomasfoundation.org](http://davethomasfoundation.org). We look forward to hearing from you.

All good wishes,

Rita L. Soronen  
President and CEO

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# 1. Executive summary

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More than 100,000 children. That's the number of children in foster care currently available for adoption in the United States. These children wait for years — sometimes for their entire childhoods — until they age out of foster care and enter into an uncertain future.

Last year, nearly 30,000 children turned 18 and were emancipated from care, with nowhere to go, and no one to provide them with support and encouragement. The door to foster care was forever closed behind them, yet they had no families to call their own.

Instead of making changes, too often we make excuses — this child is too old; that child is better off not moving again; our budget has been slashed and we just cannot do any more. But when it comes to a child's life, there is no time for excuses. *Every* child deserves a home. *Every* child is adoptable.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption views the urgency of this issue through the eyes of a child in foster care. We believe that everyone has a responsibility to be the voice of foster care adoption so that every child finds a family. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption exists to find homes for children in North America who are waiting to be adopted from foster care.

In the process, the Foundation works to inform people who may have misperceptions about foster care adoption that keep them from getting involved. Through the money raised, the Foundation provides free educational resources, promotes awareness, assists policy makers and employers, and supports adoption professionals and agencies throughout the United States and Canada to ensure that every child finds a forever home.

The Foundation is dedicated to these critical core beliefs:

- Every child deserves to live in a safe, loving and permanent family.
- No child should linger in foster care or leave the system at age 18 or 21 without a permanent family of his or her own.
- Every child is adoptable.

In order to ensure that all children in foster care have families, the Foundation commissioned Harris Interactive to survey more than 1,400 American adults to determine their attitudes, behaviors and beliefs about adoption. The results of the 2013 *National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey*, a follow-up to the 2007 *National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey*, offer hope, opportunity and validation. But the results are also a clear indication that the Foundation's mission is essential, and the work is far from over.

With this in mind, the Foundation will continue to:

- Drive the notion that every child is adoptable and that unadoptable is unacceptable.
- Advocate for better adoption policies and practices, from government offices to the workplace, to make the process easier and more supportive to families formed through adoption.
- Continue to dispel myths and misperceptions about foster care adoption.
- Remind communities what Dave Thomas once said: "These children are not someone else's responsibility. They are our responsibility."

## **SURVEY OBJECTIVES**

The results of the Harris Interactive research help the Foundation better understand Americans' attitudes about foster care adoption, their beliefs about the children waiting to be adopted and their perceptions of the foster care system. By highlighting perceptions or misperceptions in these areas, the Foundation will more effectively move children from foster care to the permanent and nurturing families we promised them.





Survey objectives:

- Understand why Americans do or do not adopt from foster care.
- Learn about the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors that create barriers to foster care adoption.
- Understand the beliefs Americans have about foster care adoption, the children waiting to be adopted and the foster care system.
- Highlight Americans' perceptions about who can, or should be, an adoptive parent.
- Provide research-based information about Americans' perceptions to those charged with action on behalf of children — child advocates, adoption professionals and practitioners, policy makers and the media.

The 2013 *National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey* tracks the attitudes and beliefs uncovered in the 2007 *National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey*.

## METHODOLOGY

The 2013 *National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey* was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption between July 9, 2012 and July 18, 2012, among 1,428 adults (ages 18 or older). Results were weighted as needed for demographic targets: age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error, which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100 percent response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

In some cases, the data in the charts may not total 100 percent. This is due to rounding issues. An online methodology was used rather than a phone methodology. This was done to connect with a broader sample of U.S. consumers via the Harris Poll multimillion online consumer panel. This allows us to reach a broader sample and the most representative sample. Our panel members selected us by deciding to go online, join our panel, respond to our invitations and complete our surveys.

It is also important to understand that online surveys typically elicit information with greater depth and validity on sensitive topics than what could be achieved by any other methodology. In telephone interviewing, for example, it is not uncommon to see more positive scores on sensitive topics, due to difficulty in expressing unpopular opinions to a live interviewer. This difference in scoring between online and telephone methodology is called a “mode effect.” Mode effect is less obvious in straightforward and factual questions; however, on questions that are more impacted by social desirability, we find more mode effect.

## TYPES OF ADOPTION DISCUSSED

The survey discusses three types of adoption:

- Private infant adoption — the adoption of a U.S. infant through a licensed adoption agency or adoption attorney.
- Foster care adoption — the adoption of a child in foster care who has been freed for adoption when the birth parents' rights were terminated.
- International adoption — the adoption of a child who is a citizen of one country by adoptive parents who are citizens of a different country.



## KEY FINDINGS

Within the data, three results emerged as particularly significant:

- Over the last five years, opinions of foster care adoption improved to be as good, if not better, than those of private domestic infant adoption or international adoption.
- More than half (51 percent) of respondents agree with the Foundation's belief that every child is adoptable.
- The percentage considering any form of adoption slightly decreased since 2007, from 28 percent to 24 percent. But, the percentage of foster care adoptions grew more than the percentage of international and private adoptions, which actually saw a decrease.

The reality behind these facts and figures is that adoptions from foster care have not increased enough over the past five years. More than 100,000 children, through no fault of their own, wait in temporary care for permanent families. More troubling is that negative perceptions of foster care adoption continue to persist, even among those who have considered foster care adoption.

## PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS CONSIDERING ADOPTION AND PERCEPTION OF FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

The survey results show a positive change in Americans' perceptions of foster care adoption. For the first time since 2002, Americans' opinion of foster care adoption is higher than international or private adoption.

There is a long-standing correlation between a high opinion of the foster care system and the consideration of adoption from foster care. The opposite is true as well. Those who are considering adoption, but who would not consider foster care adoption state an emphatically negative opinion of the foster care system. This is a change from 2007, when the two groups had nearly identical positive-negative opinions of the foster care system.

This research indicates that sharing real-life stories of successful adoptions from foster care, such as the Foundation's awareness campaigns, are important to moving more children from foster care to forever homes. The survey found the main source of information about adoption for those considering adoption were family, friends and neighbors (54 percent), and Americans with friends or family who have been adopted have the most favorable opinion of foster care adoption.

## DECLINE IN PRIVATE ADOPTION, INCREASE IN FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

The percentage of Americans who have adopted from foster care increased from the 2007 survey, showing greater increases in foster care adoption than international or private adoption, which saw a 9 percent decrease.

The positive or negative view of the foster care system held by the prospective parent is important. While those who have considered foster care adoption and those who have not may have similar views — such as concerns about potential behavior issues with children and the difficulty of the adoption process — the majority of those who have considered foster care adoption are doing so for altruistic reasons.

These findings reinforce the need for the services provided by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Its role as an advocate for families and children — before, during and after foster care adoption — and its educational mission to dispel the myriad of myths about foster care adoption, are essential to increase the number of adoptions from U.S. foster care.

## RACE, AGE, GENDER AND MARITAL STATUS WITH PROPENSITY TO ADOPT

The survey also created a more defined demographic portrait of those who have considered adoption. The more the Foundation understands about its audiences, the more it can hone messages that are unique to each group.





Americans who have considered adoption are more likely to be:

- Women
- Minorities
- Ages 18-34
- College educated (with some college or a degree)
- Single (never married) or unmarried and living with a partner
- Making an income between \$25,000 and \$50,000

### **ADOPTABILITY MISPERCEPTIONS STILL EXIST**

Unfortunately, there are still concerning misperceptions about children in foster care and the adoption process. From bonding and behavioral issues to bureaucracy and expense, adoption myths persist, even among those who have considered it.

On a more positive note, perceptions have improved since 2007 and negative feelings are less intense about children in foster care. For example, in 2007, 59 percent of respondents thought children adopted from foster care were more likely to have problems with behavior and self-control. In 2013, the number fell 13 points to 46 percent.

Americans still believe that the foster care adoption process is overwhelming and expensive. In 2007, 44 percent said it was very difficult or extremely difficult to complete the steps involved in adopting a child from foster care, based on what the individuals may have read, heard or seen. In 2013, that number was essentially the same, at 43 percent.

As for costs, in 2007, 46 percent of Americans thought foster care adoption was somewhat or very expensive. That perception has seen some improvement — down seven points to 39 percent. In reality, adoption from foster care costs \$0-\$2,500, and most families adopting from foster care are eligible for state subsidy support. Additionally, they may qualify for a state or federal adoption tax credit, or receive adoption benefits offered by their employers.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For more information, please contact the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption at 1-800-ASK-DTFA or [davethomasfoundation.org](http://davethomasfoundation.org).

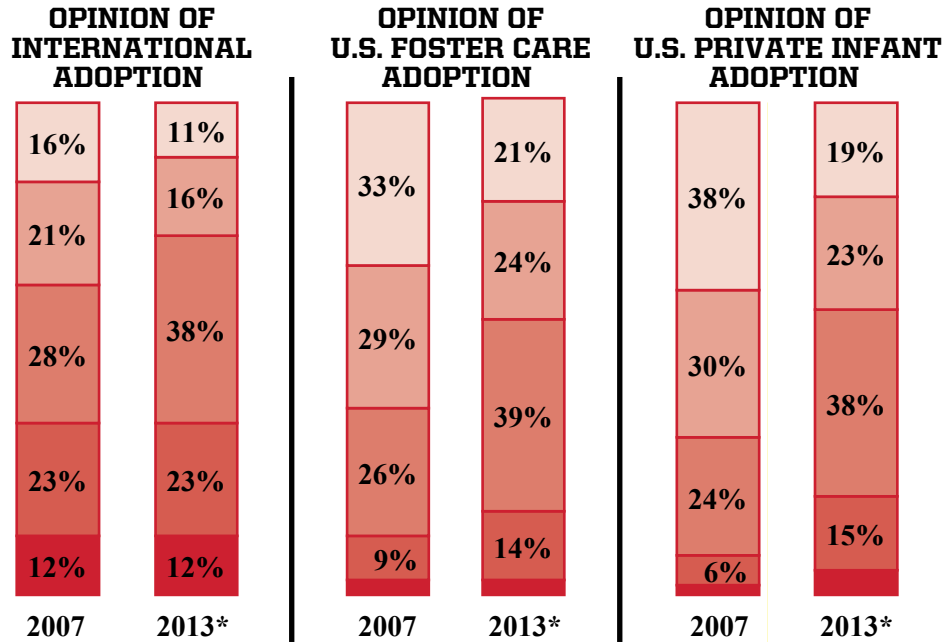


## 2. Detailed findings

### AMERICANS AND ADOPTION: PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCE AND CONSIDERATION

Many Americans consider adoption, yet more than 100,000 children still remain in foster care waiting to be adopted. Support of adoption is strong, but has not grown significantly since 2007, and the intensity of favorability toward all types of adoption has decreased.

- 65 percent of Americans have a favorable to extremely favorable opinion of international adoption.
- 80 percent of Americans have a favorable to extremely favorable opinion of private infant adoption.
- 84 percent of Americans have a favorable to extremely favorable opinion of foster care adoption.



*Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.*

- Extremely favorable
- Very favorable
- Favorable
- Somewhat favorable
- Not at all favorable

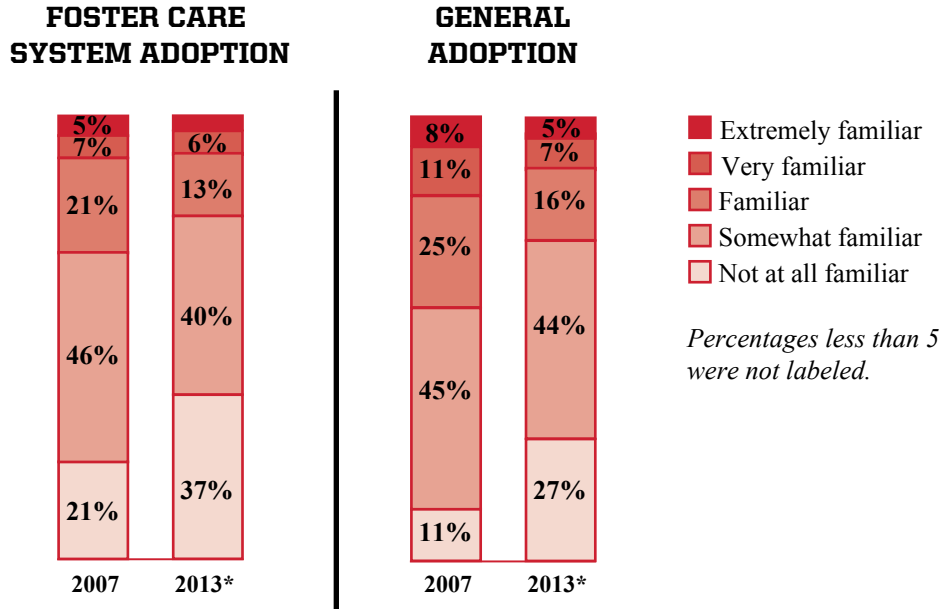
*\*Data collected in Q3 2012*



## FAMILIARITY WITH ADOPTION

The 2013 *National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey* found that nearly three-fourths of Americans are at least somewhat familiar with adoption in general, and 63 percent of Americans are familiar with foster care adoption. However, there has been a decline in familiarity with foster care adoption and adoption in general since the 2007 survey. Although foster care adoption still has less familiarity than adoption in general, the gap in familiarity between the different types of adoption has narrowed.

### FAMILIARITY WITH TOPIC OF ADOPTION



Even though 63 percent of Americans are familiar with foster care adoption, there are still more than 100,000 children waiting in the system to be adopted.

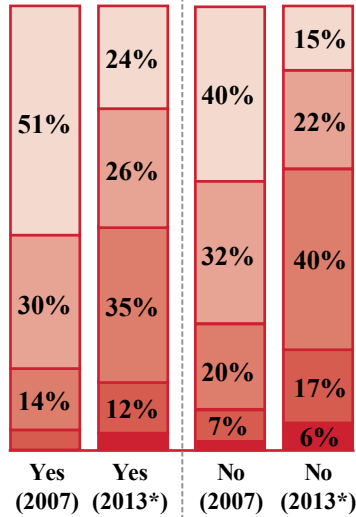
\*Data collected in Q3 2012



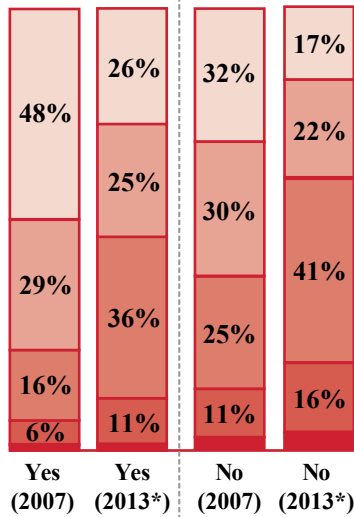
About 40 percent of Americans know someone who has been adopted, which is down from 45 percent in 2007. More encouragingly, people are more likely to report knowing someone adopted through foster care (41 percent).

## OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE FRIENDS OR FAMILY WHO HAVE BEEN ADOPTED

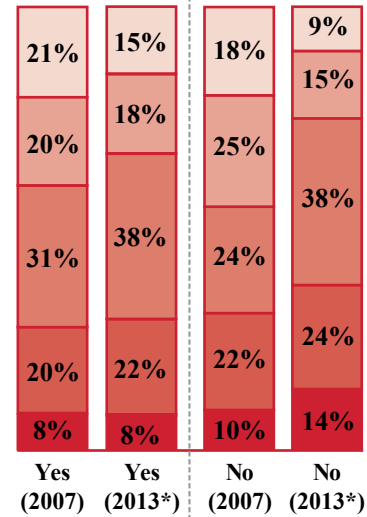
### OPINION OF U.S. PRIVATE INFANT ADOPTION



### OPINION OF U.S. FOSTER CARE SYSTEM ADOPTION



### OPINION OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION



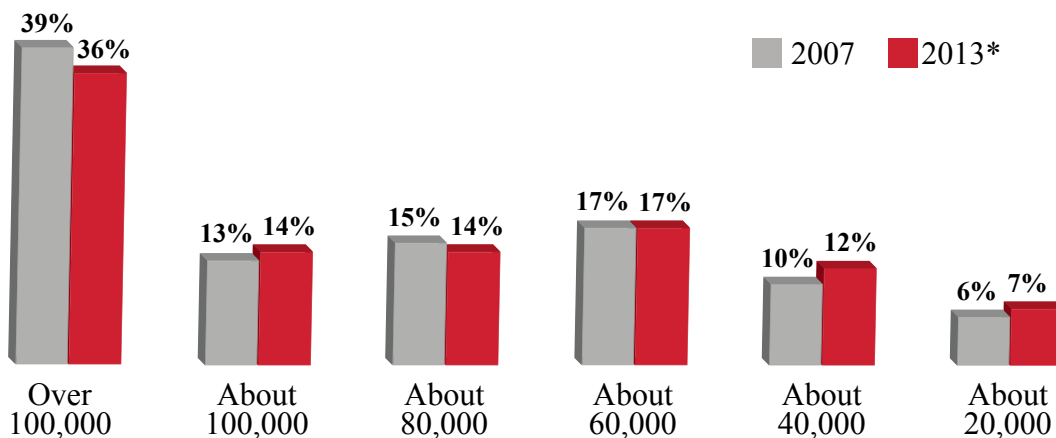
Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

- Extremely favorable
- Very favorable
- Favorable
- Somewhat favorable
- Not at all favorable

## ESTIMATIONS OF CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION

A majority of Americans (64 percent) underestimate the number of children in foster care available for adoption. But as of the date of this publication, there are more than 100,000 children available for adoption from U.S. foster care.

## ESTIMATIONS OF NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AVAILABLE TO BE ADOPTED

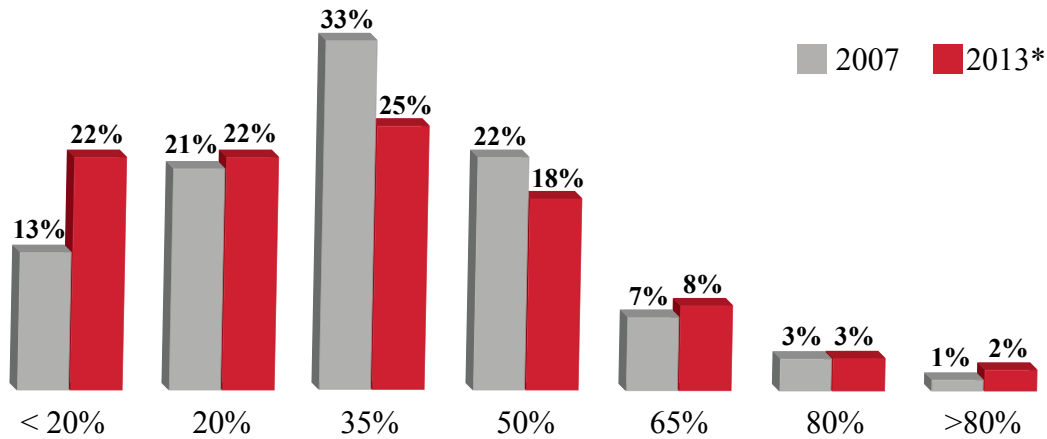


\*Data collected in Q3 2012

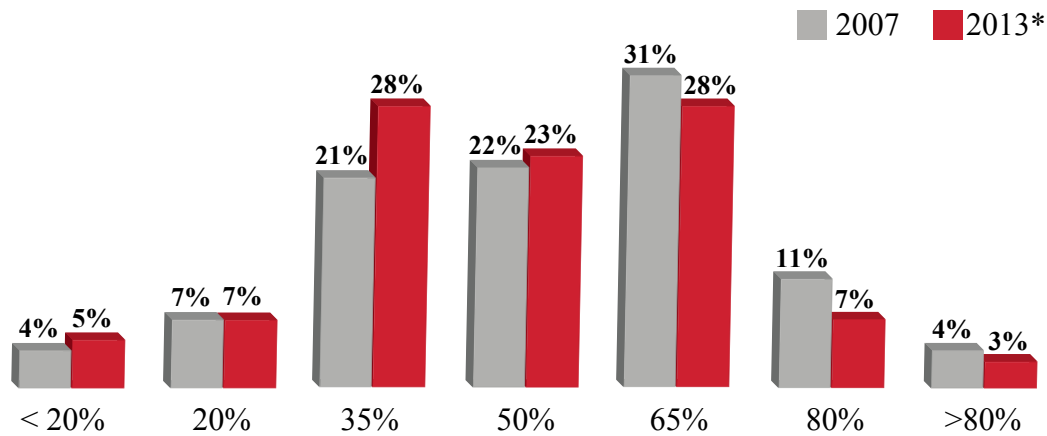


Compared to 2007, Americans are more likely to correctly guess the percentage of African-American and Hispanic children in foster care available for adoption (see the following three charts), though they do grossly underestimate the number of Caucasian children in the system. Moreover, results in Section 2 illustrate that race is a secondary factor in considering adoption from foster care.

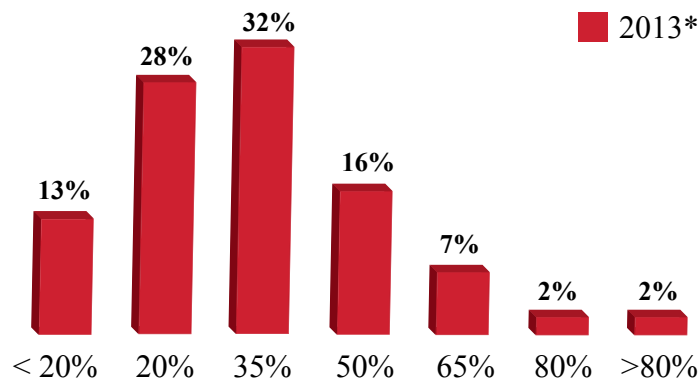
### ESTIMATIONS OF CAUCASIAN CHILDREN IN U.S. FOSTER CARE AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION



### ESTIMATIONS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN IN U.S. FOSTER CARE AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION



### ESTIMATIONS OF HISPANIC CHILDREN IN U.S. FOSTER CARE AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION



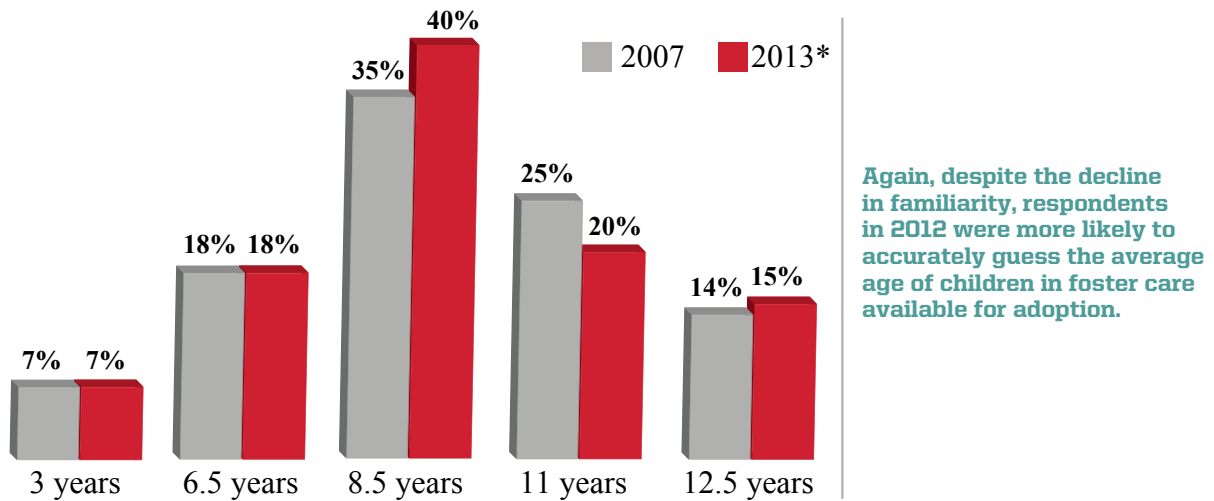
Respondents demonstrate a good degree of accuracy in guessing the percentage of Hispanics available for adoption from foster care.

\*Data collected in Q3 2012

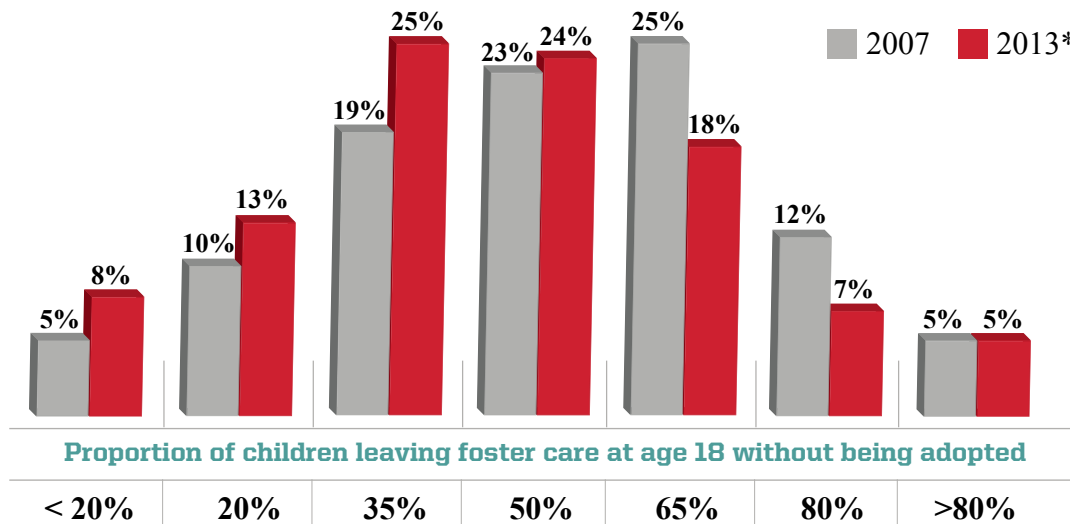


Despite the decline in familiarity with adoption, since 2007, slightly more Americans (40 percent) were more likely to accurately guess the average age of children in foster care available for adoption (35 percent) in 2012. The average age of a child waiting in foster care for his or her family is 9 years old.

### ESTIMATIONS OF AVERAGE AGE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



### ESTIMATIONS OF THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE AT 18 WITHOUT HAVING BEEN ADOPTED



Like the profile of individuals who are most likely to consider adoption, this information provides the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption with valuable tools to break down barriers and dispel myths that may discourage adoption from foster care. Continuous education about the facts of foster care adoption, such as the accurate number of children who age out of foster care each year, promotes more positive feelings about children in foster care and reinforces that these children are worth the process it takes to adopt.

\*Data collected in Q3 2012

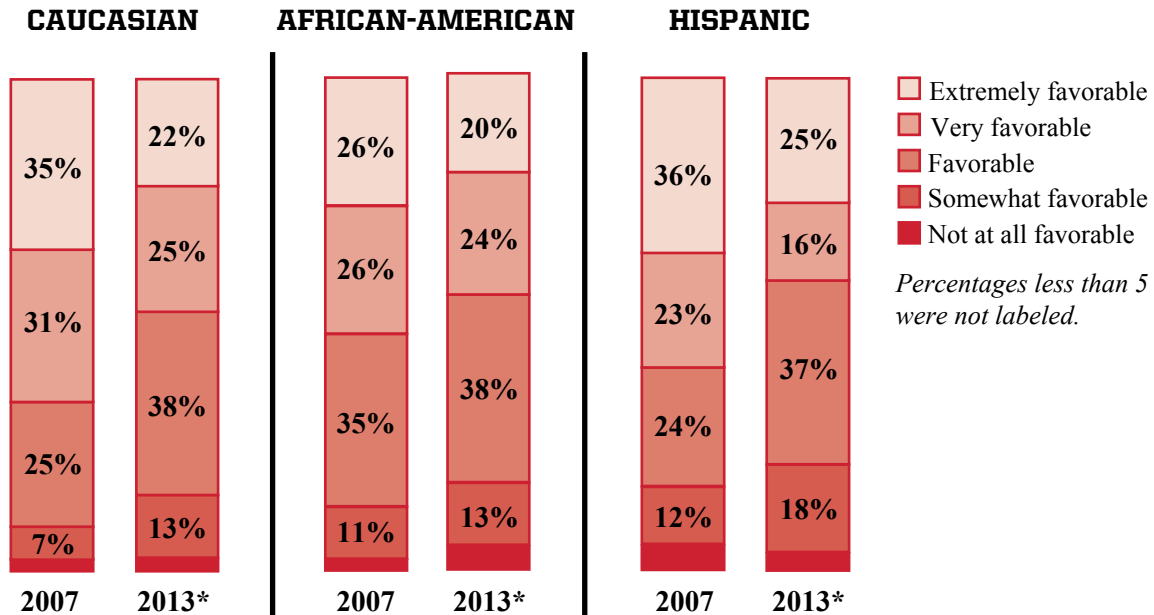




## OPINION OF ADOPTION, TYPES OF ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

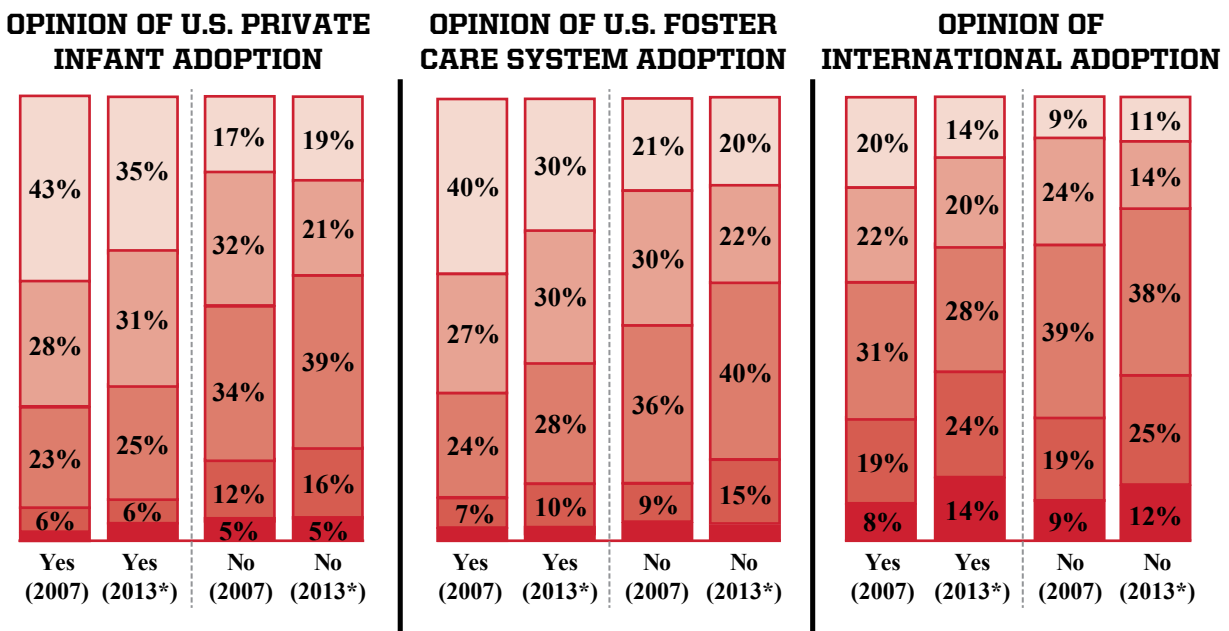
For the first time in more than 10 years, Americans are more favorable toward foster care adoption than private infant adoption or international adoption.

Regardless of race, many Americans — 98 percent of Caucasians, 95 percent of African-Americans and 96 percent of Hispanics — are supportive of adoption from foster care. The survey found that higher opinions of foster care correlate to a higher likelihood of considering foster care adoption. The charts below take a closer look at those who have or have not considered adopting a child.



Whether or not Americans have considered adopting a child, most favor foster care adoption vs. private infant adoption or international adoption.

## OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTING A CHILD



Extremely favorable Very favorable Favorable Somewhat favorable Not at all favorable

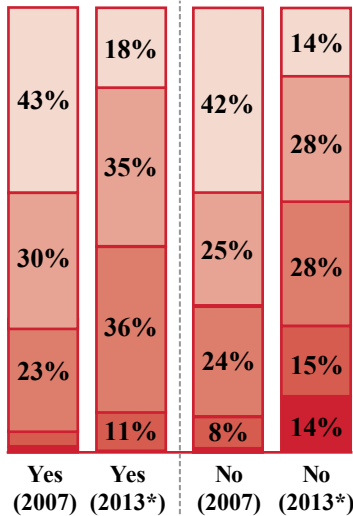
\*Data collected in Q3 2012



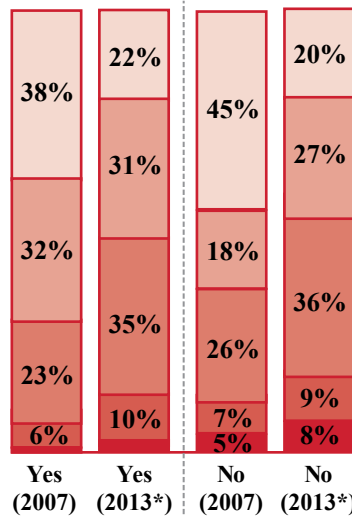
Of Americans who have considered private infant adoption, 97 percent are in favor of foster care adoption, while 92 percent of those who have not considered private infant adoption are in favor of foster care adoption.

### OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTING THROUGH PRIVATE INFANT U.S. ADOPTION

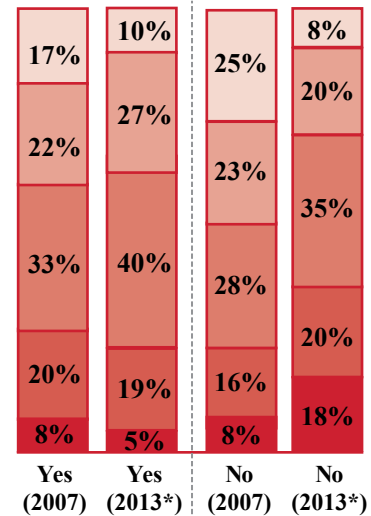
#### OPINION OF U.S. PRIVATE INFANT ADOPTION



#### OPINION OF U.S. FOSTER CARE SYSTEM ADOPTION



#### OPINION OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION



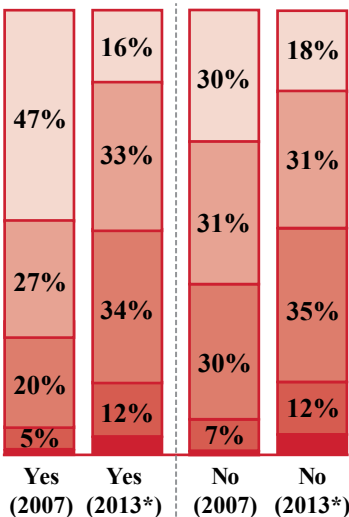
Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

Extremely favorable Very favorable Favorable Somewhat favorable Not at all favorable

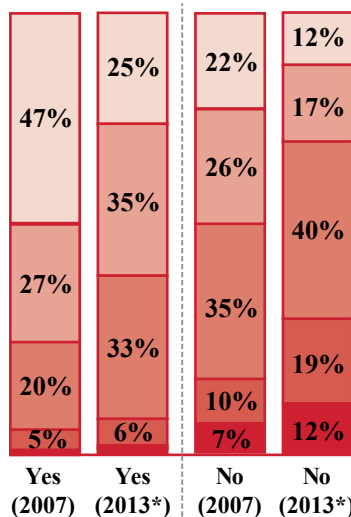
The survey revealed that 25 percent of those considering foster care adoption are extremely favorable of foster care adoption, while not as favorable of private infant adoption (16 percent) or international adoption (7 percent).

### OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTING THROUGH THE U.S. FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

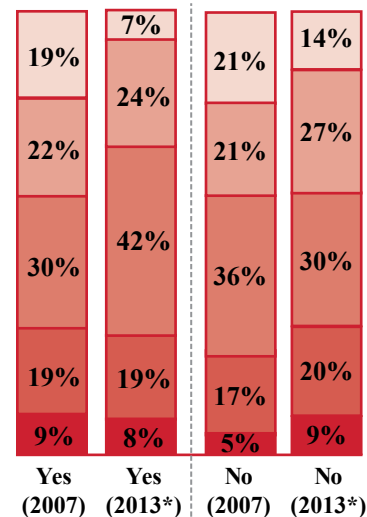
#### OPINION OF U.S. PRIVATE INFANT ADOPTION



#### OPINION OF U.S. FOSTER CARE SYSTEM ADOPTION



#### OPINION OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

Extremely favorable Very favorable Favorable Somewhat favorable Not at all favorable

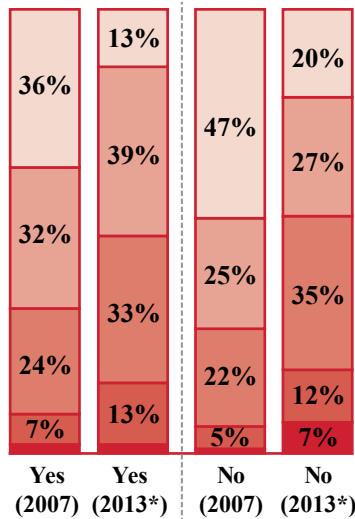
\*Data collected in Q3 2012



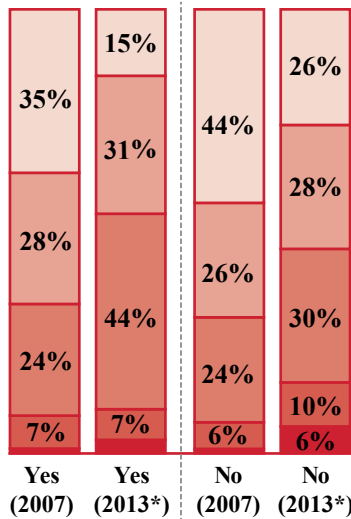
Americans considering international adoption were more favorable to foster care adoption (97 percent).

### OPINIONS OF EACH TYPE OF ADOPTION BY THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTING INTERNATIONALLY

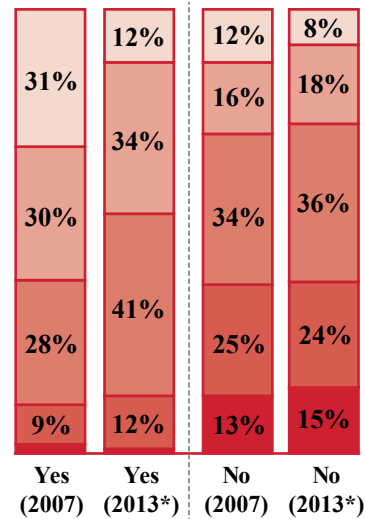
#### OPINION OF U.S. PRIVATE INFANT ADOPTION



#### OPINION OF U.S. FOSTER CARE SYSTEM ADOPTION



#### OPINION OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

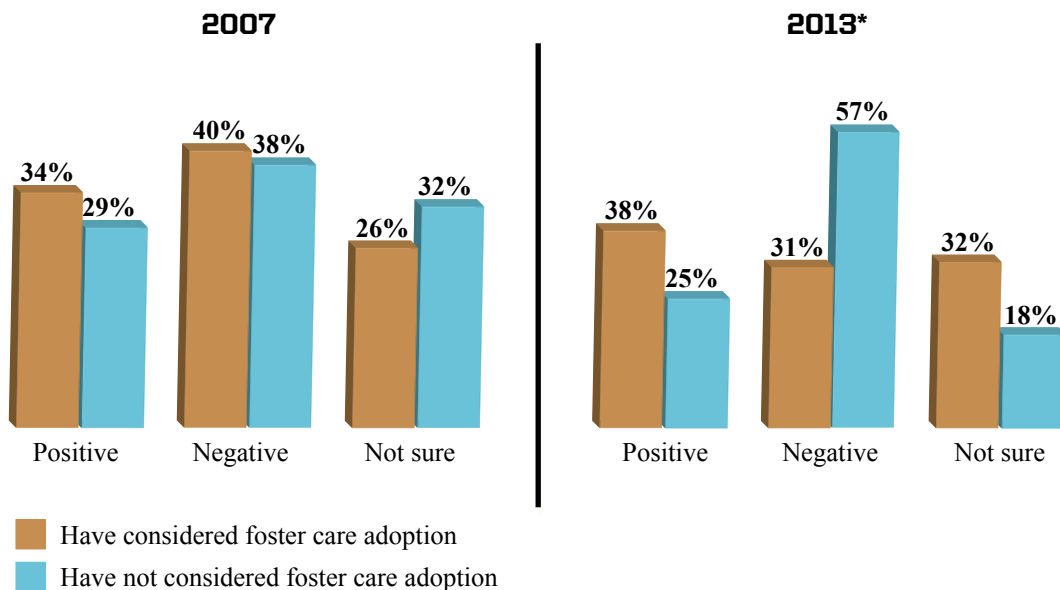


Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

■ Extremely favorable 
 ■ Very favorable 
 ■ Favorable 
 ■ Somewhat favorable 
 ■ Not at all favorable

A correlation exists between a high opinion of the foster care system and consideration of foster care adoption. However, 57 percent of those who say they would consider adoption, but not from foster care, state an emphatically negative opinion of the foster care system — when compared to those who have considered foster care (31 percent). And many Americans are confused or unsure about the process and what it entails (see Section 2).

### POSITIVE/NEGATIVE OPINION OF FOSTER CARE SYSTEM AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE CONSIDERED FOSTER CARE ADOPTION VS. THOSE WHO HAVE NOT



\*Data collected in Q3 2012



## **SOCIAL BASES OF SUPPORT, EXPERIENCE AND CONSIDERATION**

Support for adoption is prevalent among all social groups in the United States. However:

- The percentage of those with post-graduate educations and married couples who have considered adoption is down 10 percent.
- The percentage of individuals earning \$100,000 or more a year who have considered adoption is down 11 percent.

### **AMERICANS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED ADOPTION ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE:**

- Minorities
- Younger (consideration progressively decreases as age increases)
- Single/never married
- Those with incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000

When weighing information about who is considering adoption, it is important to determine how real those considerations are in order to more effectively motivate individuals to act. The survey found that individuals who are seriously considering foster care adoption are doing so at higher levels than those contemplating private infant or international adoption.

In 2012:

- 69 percent are somewhat or very seriously considering foster care adoption.
- 64 percent are somewhat or very seriously considering private infant adoption.
- 53 percent are somewhat or very seriously considering international adoption.



### 3. Adopting children: Considerations and concerns

Fortunately, more than half of Americans feel that every child is adoptable, however, major misperceptions continue to exist about foster care adoption. The sections below highlight where opportunities exist to dispel myths.

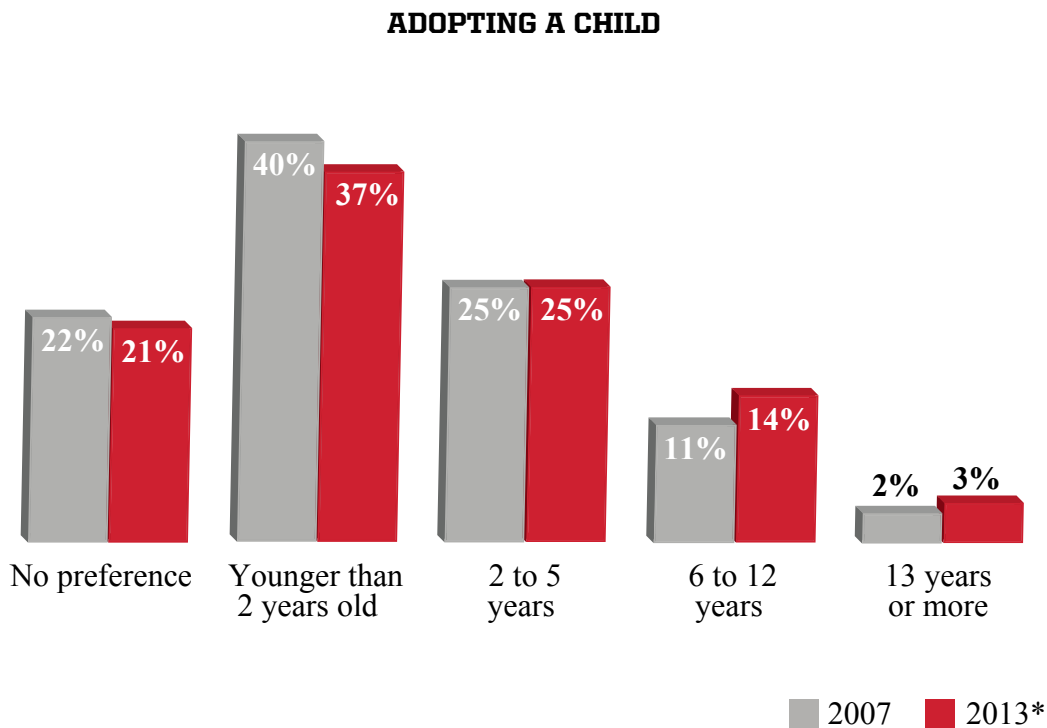
The results of the survey highlight what Americans do and do not understand about waiting children and the foster care adoption process. While many Americans know the average age of waiting children (40 percent of respondents come close to estimating the actual average age of 9), they are clearly unaware of other important facts.

#### CHARACTERISTICS AFFECTING THE CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION

The survey explored whether a variety of characteristics — age, race, length of time spent in foster care, health status and other factors — affected people's consideration of adoption. The survey probed the willingness of Americans to adopt children with different characteristics to gain insight into the child-related characteristics that influence adoption.

- Americans are most likely to consider adopting a child younger than 2 (37 percent), while only 27 percent of Americans would consider a child age 12 or older.
- Those interested in adopting are much more willing to state a gender preference than in 2007, with girls slightly outpacing boys in preferred gender.
- African-Americans and Caucasians show the strongest degree of parochial preference regarding the race of a child, while Hispanics show the lowest degree of parochial preference.

#### AGE PREFERENCE AMONG THOSE CONSIDERING ADOPTION

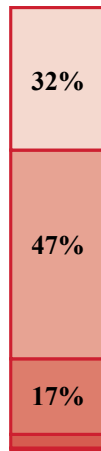


*\*Data collected in Q3 2012*

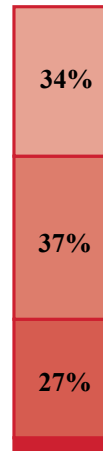


## AGE PREFERENCE AMONG THOSE CONSIDERING ADOPTION WHO STATED AN INITIAL PREFERENCE FOR A CHILD AGES 2 YEARS AND UP

### PREFER A CHILD AT LEAST 2 YEARS OLD



### PREFER A CHILD 12 YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER



- Younger than 2 years old
- 2 to 5 years old
- 6 to 12 years old
- 13 years or older
- Decline to answer

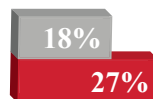
*Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.*

## GENDER PREFERENCES AMONG THOSE CONSIDERING ADOPTION

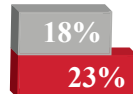
### NO PREFERENCE



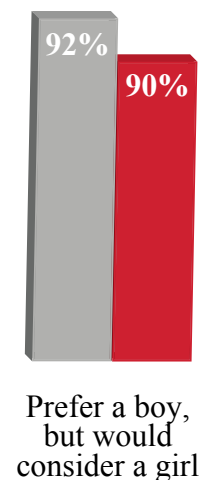
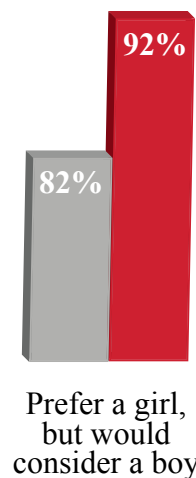
### GIRL



### BOY

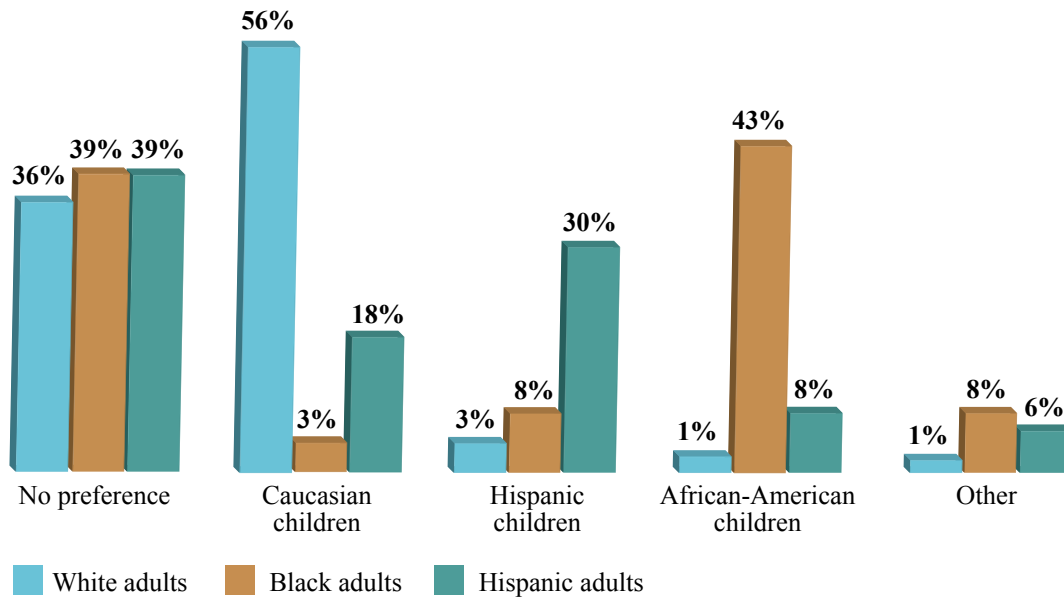


■ 2007 ■ 2013\*





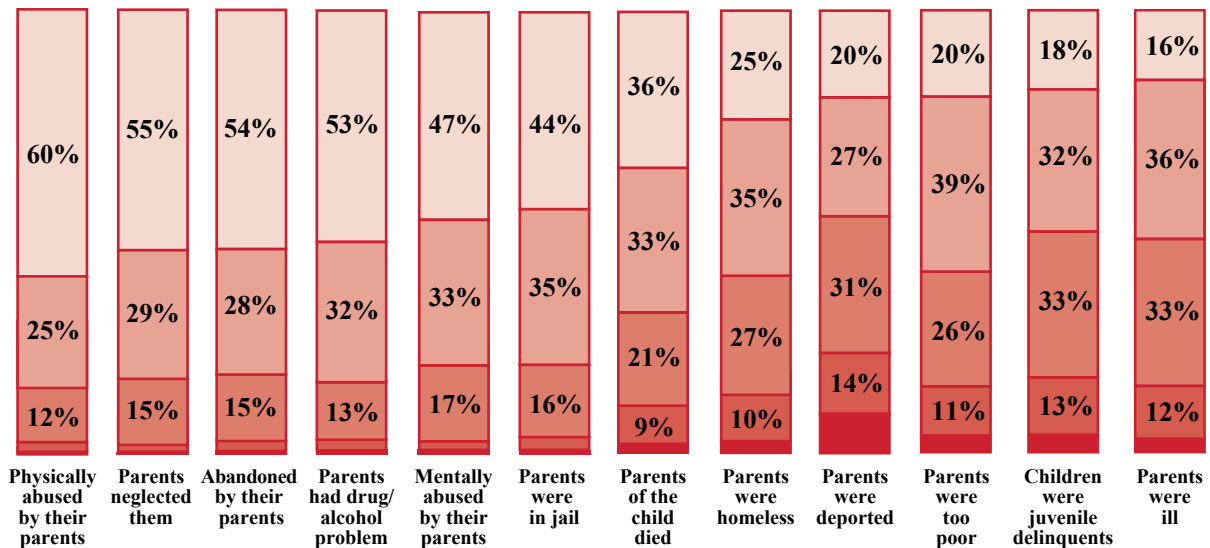
## RACE PREFERENCES AMONG THOSE CONSIDERING ADOPTION



## PERCEIVED REASONS FOR CHILDREN BEING IN FOSTER CARE

Americans think children who have endured pain and tragedy are most likely to enter foster care and could have behavior, self-control, trust and bonding and learning issues. About half of Americans believe children in foster care are juvenile delinquents. In reality, children enter the foster care system through no fault of their own, as victims of neglect, abandonment and/or abuse.

## REASONS FOR BEING IN FOSTER CARE



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

- Stongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Stongly disagree



## WILLINGNESS TO ADOPT A CHILD WITH VARIOUS CHARACTERISTICS

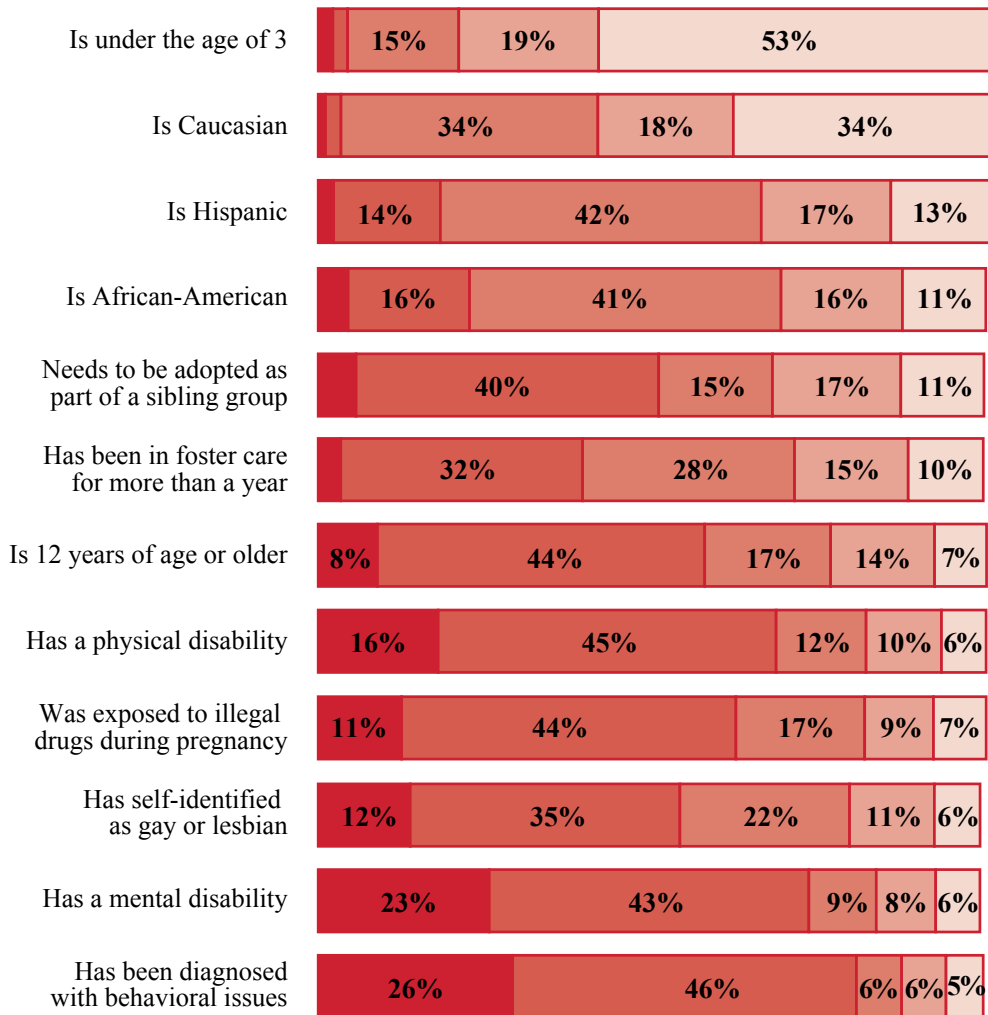
An overwhelming majority of Americans would consider adopting children who have a variety of characteristics that are sometimes viewed as unfavorable for adoption — a different race, older or part of sibling groups.

Among the results, the survey found:

- Nearly three-fourths of Americans would consider a child under the age of 3 more likely to be adopted (73 percent).
- Being age 12 or older has a perceived negative impact on a child's adoptability.
- More than half of Americans indicate Caucasian children are more likely to be adopted (52 percent) than Hispanic (29 percent) or African-American children (28 percent).
- A quarter of Americans (25 percent) would consider it a positive impact on a child's adoptability if the child has been in foster care for more than a year.
- Just over a quarter of Americans consider it positive if a child needs to be adopted with his or her sibling group (28 percent).

## ADOPTABILITY FACTORS

PLEASE INDICATE HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT YOU FEEL THE FOLLOWING HAS ON A CHILD'S "ADOPTABILITY."



Percentages less than 5 were not labeled.

■ Very negative impact  
 ■ Somewhat negative impact  
 ■ Neither negative or positive impact  
 ■ Somewhat positive impact  
 ■ Very positive impact



## CONCERNS ABOUT OUTCOMES FOR ADOPTED CHILDREN

The study analyzed what Americans think about the likelihood that adopted children in general, and children adopted from foster care in particular, will have a variety of medical and behavioral problems.

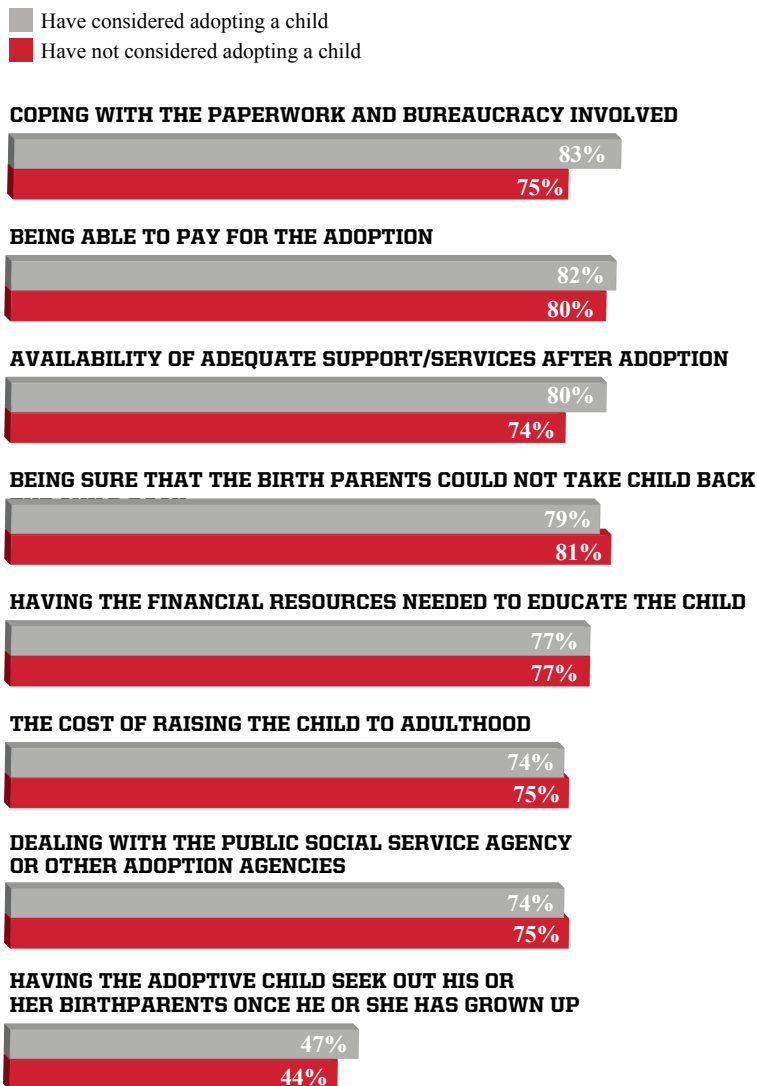
Generally, Americans believe adopted children are more likely to have behavior issues and problems with trust and bonding. In addition, Americans view children who are adopted from foster care as significantly more likely to experience problems than adopted children in general.

Responses indicate that Americans think trust and bonding issues — the characteristics that are of most concern when considering adoption — are more likely to occur among children adopted out of foster care (53 percent) than among other children. And perceptions of adopted children in general have improved since 2007, with dramatic improvement for children adopted through foster care.

The concern about outcomes for children adopted from foster care may be due in part to the belief that they suffered maltreatment at the hands of their biological parents. The reasons that respondents give as to why a child in foster care may be available for adoption support this view. When Americans think about adoptable children in general, they tend to select explanations for their availability that emphasize decisions by birth parents. When they think about children in foster care available for adoption, Americans overwhelmingly assume, accurately, that they were removed because of maltreatment.

Encouragingly, the perception of problems with children in foster care is not holding people back from considering foster care adoption.

## CONCERNS ABOUT ADOPTION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTION



## UNDERSTANDING POTENTIAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE ADOPTION PROCESS

These results gauge what Americans want to know about adoption and provide a sense of their overall concerns about adoption.

Respondents were also asked to indicate how much of a concern — major, minor or no concern at all — each of eight potential concerns would be if they were thinking about adoption. These questions were chosen to expose respondents to a wide range of possible concerns that often arise in adoption discussions.

It is important to note that when respondents were first asked about their concerns about the adoption process, the different types of adoption had not been specifically delineated from one another. Respondents were asked about adoption in general.

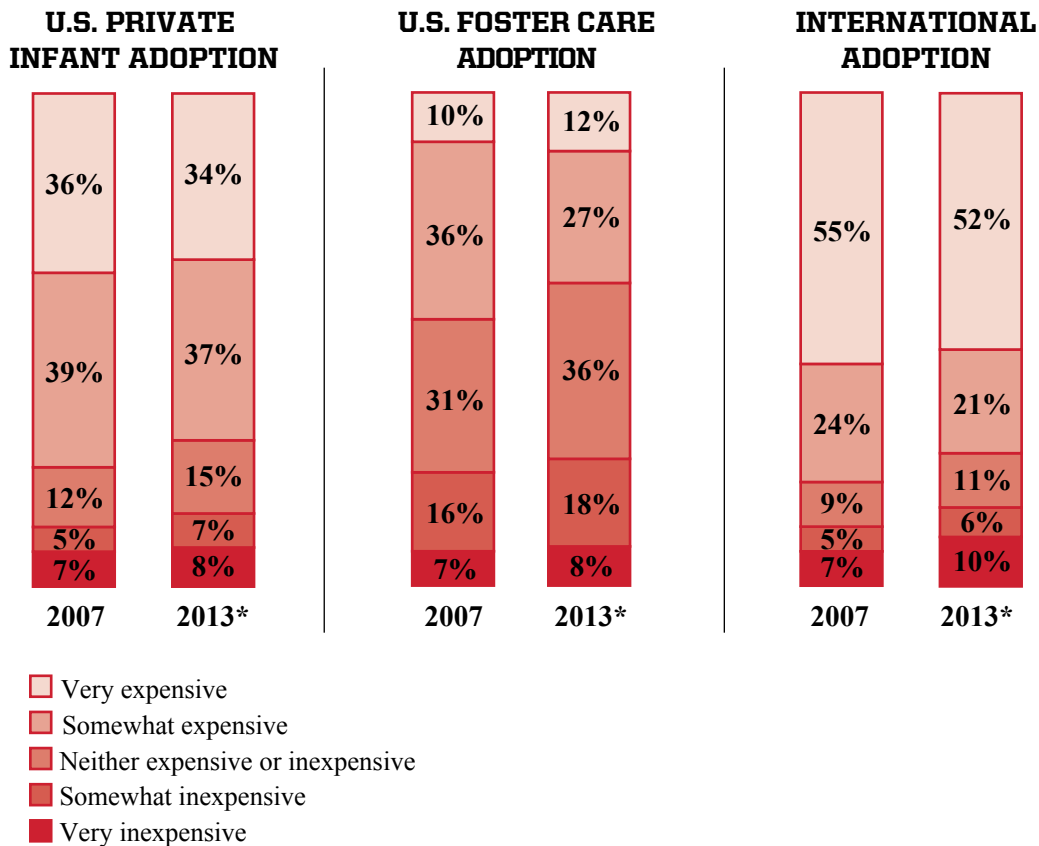
## EXPENSE, DIFFICULTY AND CONSIDERATION OF FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

Most Americans correctly believe that adoption from foster care costs less than other types of adoption, but 39 percent still incorrectly believe it is expensive. Foster care adoption is affordable, with little or no cost to adopt.

Similar to cost issues, the level of difficulty involved in foster care adoption is seen as being far lower than international adoption and private infant adoption (see charts on page 25).

Neither the lower cost or the greater ease appear to have any impact on consideration of foster care adoption, as it is perceived nearly the same as those who are not considering foster care adoption.

### PERCEPTIONS OF EXPENSE OF ADOPTION

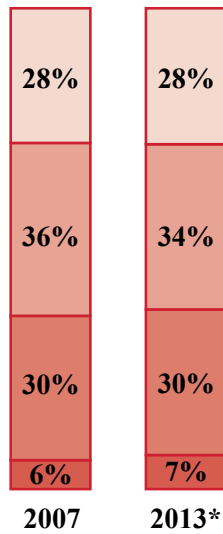


\*Data collected in Q3 2012

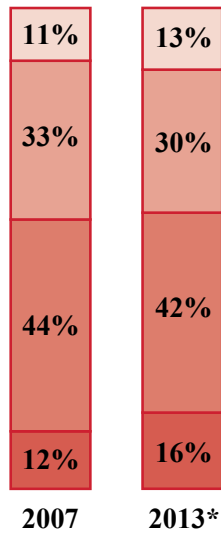


## PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFICULTY OF ADOPTION

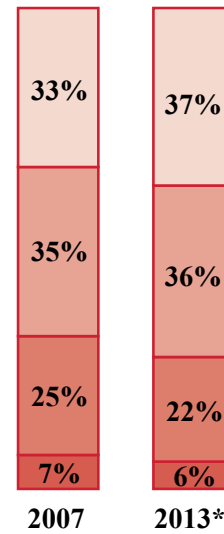
### U.S. PRIVATE INFANT ADOPTION



### U.S. FOSTER CARE ADOPTION



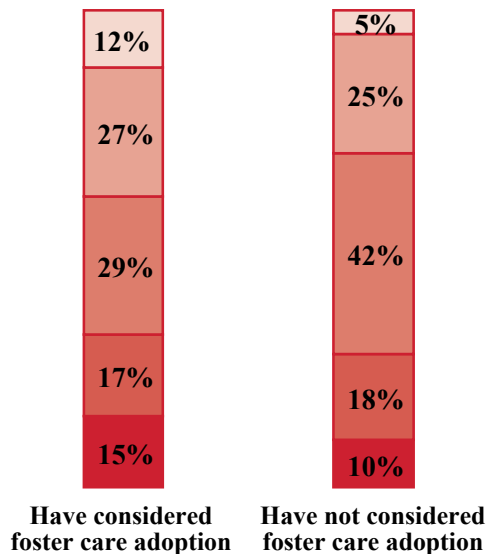
### INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION



- Extremely difficult
- Very difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Not at all difficult

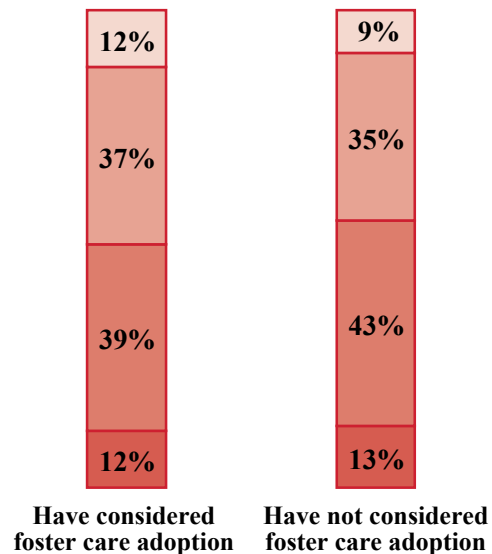
## PERCEPTION OF COST AND DIFFICULTY OF FOSTER CARE ADOPTION AMONG THOSE WHO ARE CONSIDERING FOSTER CARE ADOPTION VS. THOSE WHO ARE NOT

### EXPENSE



- Very expensive
- Somewhat expensive
- Neither expensive or inexpensive
- Somewhat inexpensive
- Very inexpensive

### DIFFICULTY



- Extremely difficult
- Very difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Not at all difficult

\*Data collected in Q3 2012

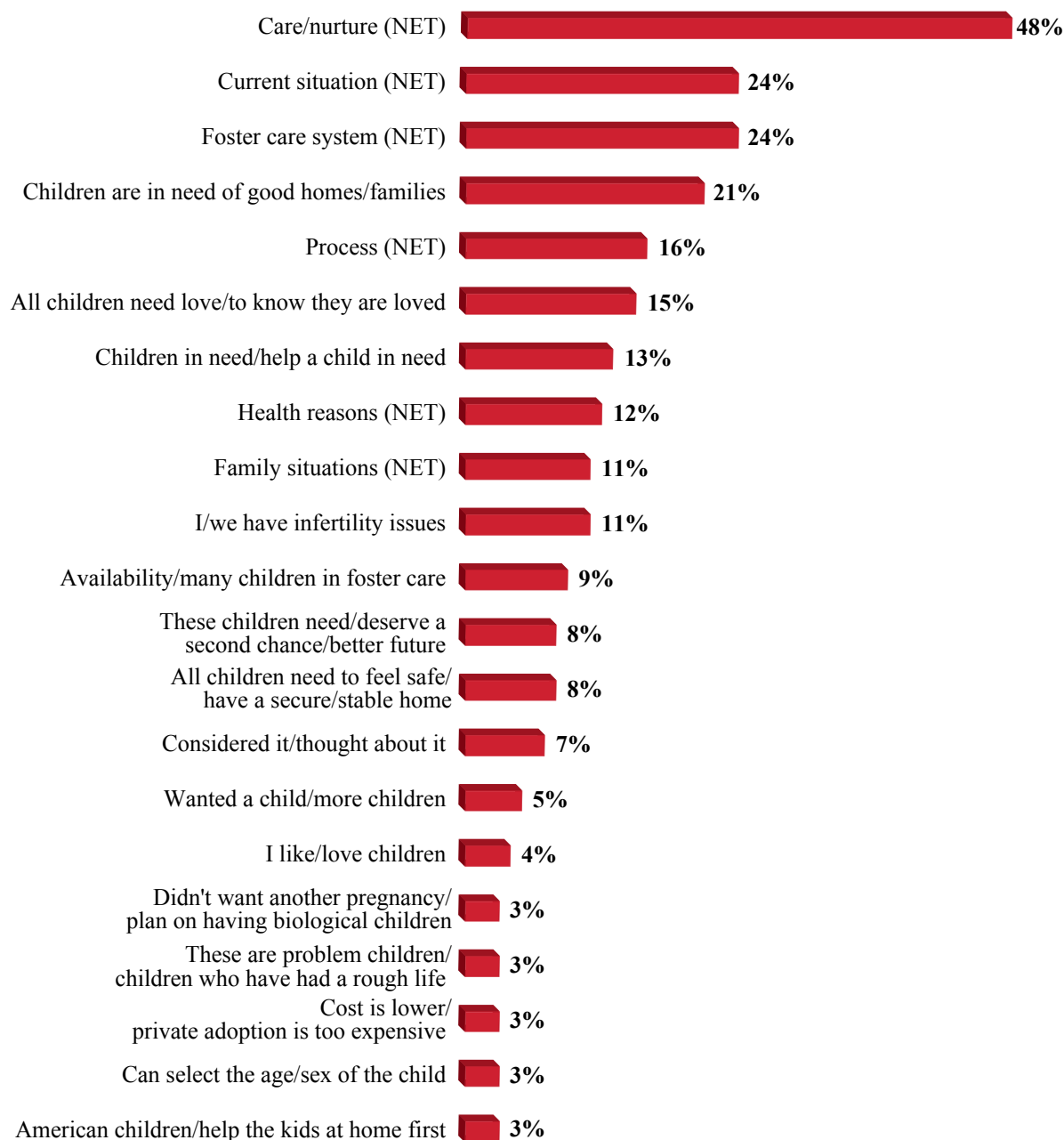


## 4. Adoptive parents: Motivations and perceptions

### REASONS ADULTS CONSIDER FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

Altruistic reasons, such as believing that all children need love and wanting to help children in need, are among the most prevalent examples of why Americans consider adoption through foster care, with fertility being one exception. The chart below lists the other main reasons Americans consider foster care adoption.

#### REASONS FOR CONSIDERING/HAVING CONSIDERED FOSTER CARE ADOPTION



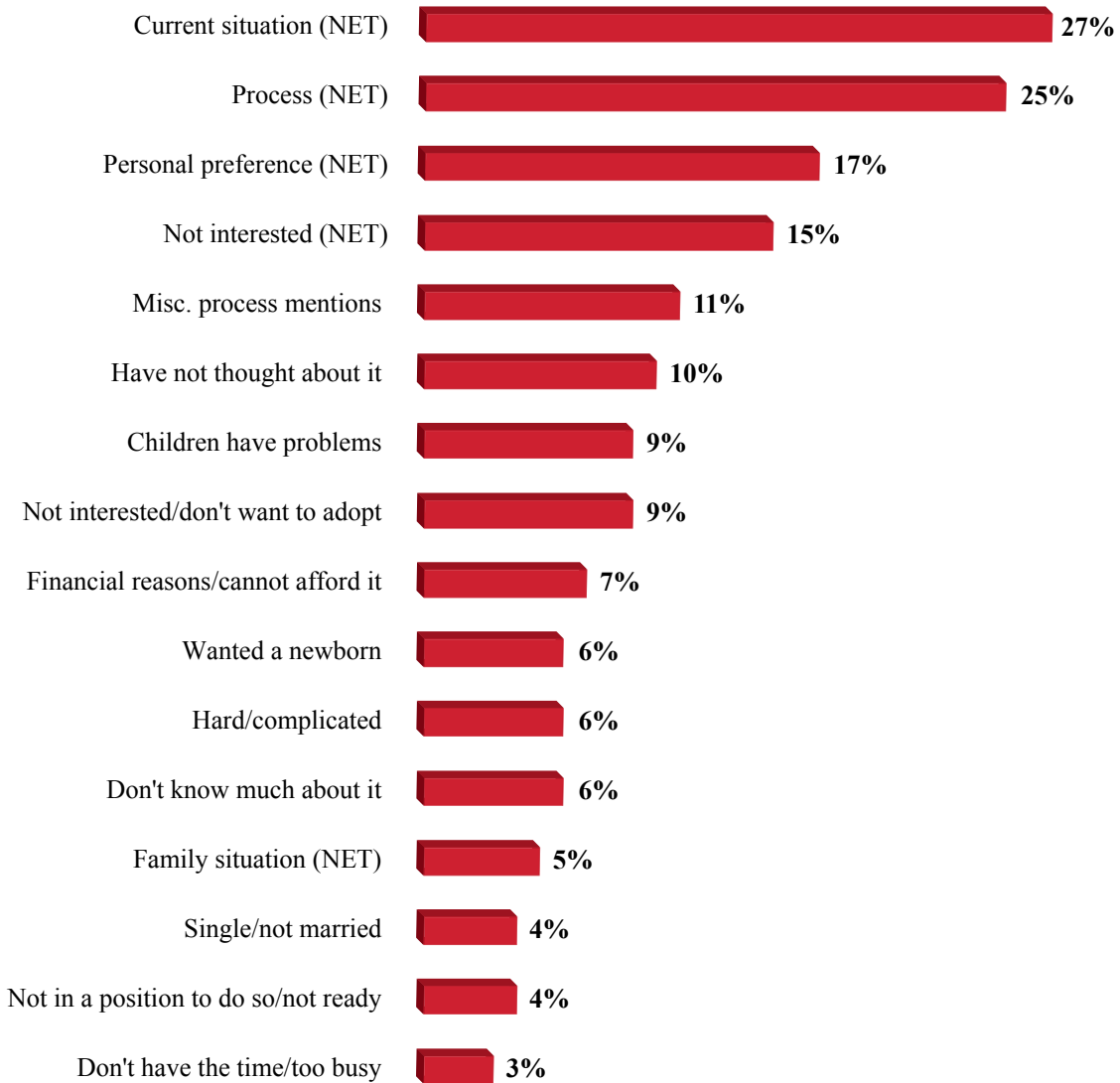
*\*Only responses of at least 3% shown.*





A quarter of those considering adoption, but not foster care adoption, cite some aspect of the process as a deterrent (see page 23). An additional 16 percent say they haven't thought about or don't know enough about foster care adoption.

### REASONS FOR NOT CONSIDERING/HAVING CONSIDERED FOSTER CARE ADOPTION



*\*Only responses of at least 3% shown.*

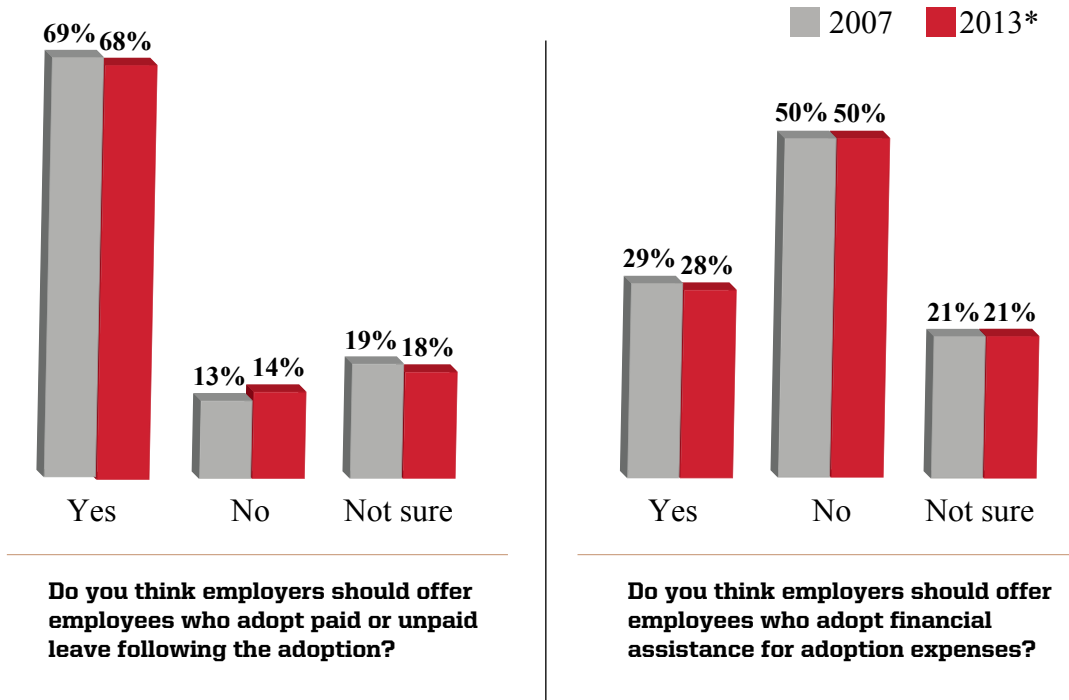


## 5. Adoption policies, assistance and consumer awareness

### EMPLOYER ASSISTANCE

While most believe that employees who adopt should get leave after an adoption, there is still a high degree of ambiguity on whether or not the employer should offer financial assistance, such as adoption benefits.

#### EMPLOYER ASSISTANCE TO EMPLOYEES WHO ADOPT



### ADOPTION TAX CREDIT

The Adoption Tax Credit helps offset the expenses related to adoption and to support families who stepped forward to adopt from foster care. The survey found that three out of five Americans are in favor of the Adoption Tax Credit. Since the original legislation, adoption tax credit efforts have been a non-partisan issue, widely supported by Congress, but subject to extensions, changes and rotating authority.

#### VIEWS ON ADOPTION TAX CREDIT



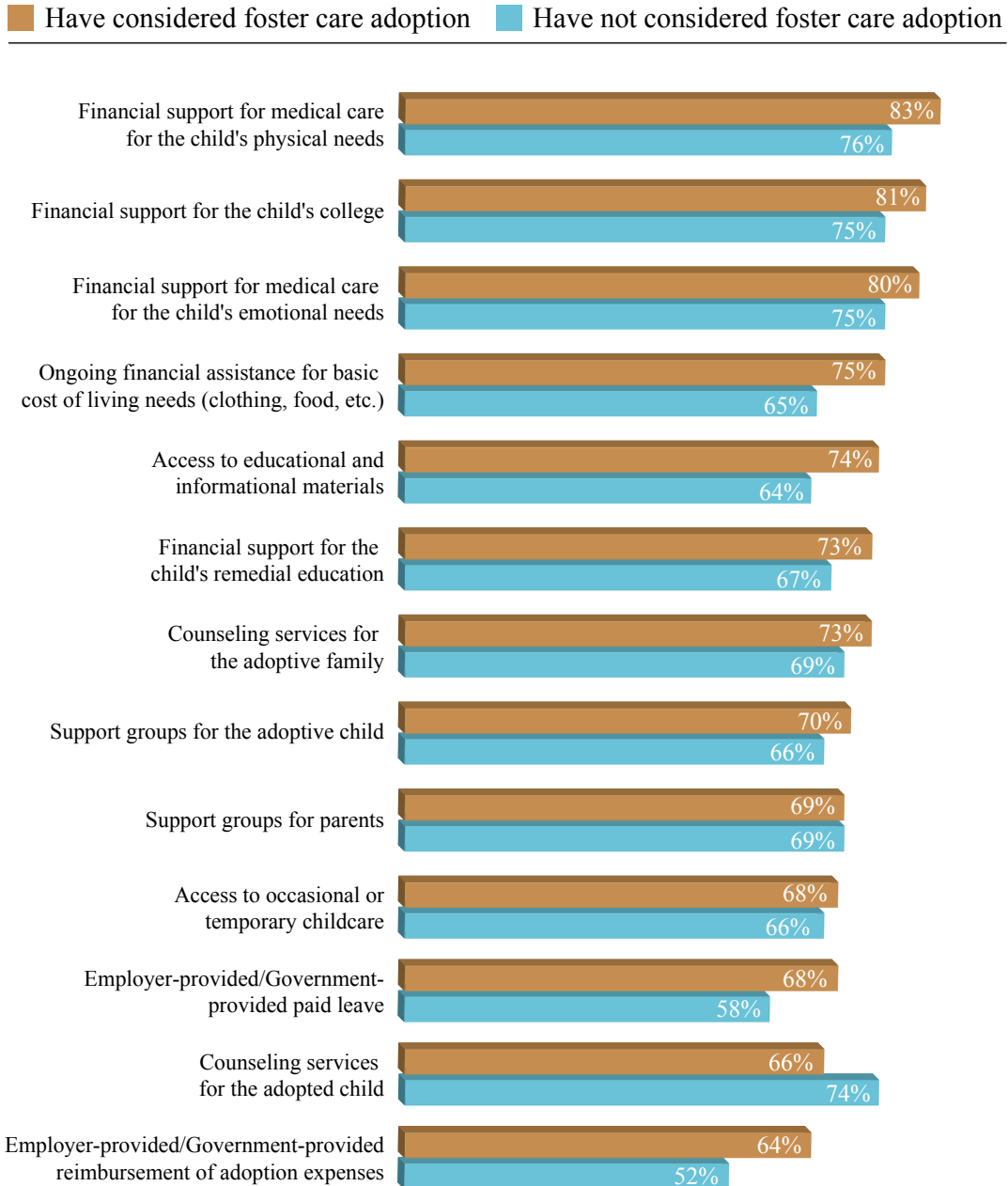
\*Data collected in Q3 2012



## FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

Those who have considered foster care adoption, and those who have not, see financial-support-related steps as making the biggest difference in the decision to adopt. Financial support for medical care and college are critical considerations for Americans.

### DIFFERENCE-MAKERS FOR FOSTER CARE ADOPTION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE VS. HAVE NOT CONSIDERED ADOPTION



## HOW AMERICANS LEARN ABOUT ADOPTION

Knowing people who have adopted or have been adopted, whether friends or family, is one important way people learn about adoption. But there are other potential sources of information. Government agencies, social welfare organizations, churches, the media and the Internet were also cited.

When respondents were asked where they could find information about foster care adoption, the three biggest sources were:

- Family/friends/neighbors (37 percent)
- Television (28 percent)
- Internet (27 percent)

However, nearly one in four Americans cite no sources whatsoever, demonstrating how little Americans interact with this issue in general.

When those considering foster care adoption were asked where they could obtain information about it, their responses showed that these individuals make heavy use of the Internet, expanding beyond their personal network to learn more.

There is a decline in the use of traditional news sources for information. The Foundation makes all of its information available on its website, [davethomasfoundation.org](http://davethomasfoundation.org), and provides links to resources from all of its social media channels.



## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

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With more Americans considering foster care adoption, there is hope for children waiting in foster care for adoptive families. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption's mission remains as important today as when it was created 21 years ago: to find a forever family for every child waiting in foster care.

After incorporating the survey's data into its programs, communications and education efforts, the Foundation must continue to:

- Reinforce that every child is adoptable and every child deserves a loving, forever family.
- Expand awareness about the realities of foster care adoption to the general public and targeted audiences, including policy makers, businesses and individuals interested in adoption.
- Inform potential adoptive parents about the need, the affordability and the finality of foster care adoption.
- Continue to advocate for evidence-based best practices for foster care adoption recruitment and increased support for the families who step forward to adopt.

For more information, please contact the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption at 1-800-ASK-DTFA or [davethomasfoundation.org](http://davethomasfoundation.org).





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