

# Adoption & Its Competitors

Results of a National Survey  
Regarding Adoption in the U.S. in 2022

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Research conducted by Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University



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About Opt Institute

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# Introduction

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This research was commissioned by The Opt Institute, a national adoption research and information center, to better understand perceptions and expectations related to adoption in the United States. The research was conducted among a nationally representative sample of the women who are considered to be of prime child-bearing age (a group the report will refer to as “CBA women”), which is 15 to 44. There are an estimated 65 million women currently in that age segment.

**The research examined a variety of elements that have not been widely researched, if at all, regarding adoption in the United States. Those elements include:**

- perceived value of children and human life
- past conception experiences
- anticipated response to future pregnancies
- attitudes about adoption
- knowledge about adoption
- influences on adoption thoughts and behavior
- relative knowledge and appreciation of adoption compared to abortion
- awareness and favorability regarding organizations advocating adoption and abortion

This study was conducted by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, which is located in the Phoenix metropolitan area (Glendale, AZ). The study was fielded in January 2022 among a national random sample of 1,091 women 15-44 years of age. The results described in this report are drawn from cross-tabulated data based on the completed interviews.

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# Before *We Really* Start

**Before exploring the results of this study, there are some contextual factors to be considered as we evaluate the findings.**

- A majority of the women currently populating the “prime child-bearing age” are Millennials (which we define as people born between 1984 and 2002). Millennials, like every generation, have qualities and characteristics that define them. Among those that may be of significance to this project are their views regarding human sexuality, marriage and family, truth, morality, economic and racial equality, and the role of community. They have gained notoriety for their mastery and reliance upon technology as well as their heightened levels of personal drama and conflict. As a group, they are reshaping the role and substance of personal faith at the same time that they are widely considered to be narcissistic. Our recent research also found them to be a group that feels rather than thinks, and is comfortable with contradictions in their beliefs and behavior. Americans, as a rule, are not deep thinkers, under the best of circumstances. We are a nation of achievers; investing time in reflection typically feels uncomfortable or like wasted time. Millennials are known to be a generation of “feelers.”

While older Americans sometimes believed that they should have spent more time considering information or circumstances more closely, Millennials seem to be more comfortable accepting their intuition or emotions as the best guide to their choices. But having an array of option from which to choose is a major consideration to Millennials. They do not appreciate limitations on their thinking or decisions; having the freedom to pick from among multiple options is important to them.

- People make every decision based upon their worldview. In studying the worldview of women in the 15 to 44 age group, very few of them (roughly one out of every 20) possess a biblical worldview. This means they are not likely to consistently think and behave in concert with fundamental biblical principles – even if they believe that the Bible is true, trustworthy and relevant (which only a minority of them do). Their worldview is syncretism, which is a personalized blend of beliefs and behaviors drawn from a half-dozen or more popular worldviews to which they are exposed (e.g., Marxism, postmodernism, secular humanism, eastern mysticism, etc.).

- The rapidly changing perceptions of gender identity and sexual orientation undoubtedly have a direct link to women's views on life and childbearing. While the older generations (Boomers and Builders) have about 3% to 5% who are practicing LGBTQers, our recent research on Millennials revealed that 30% identify as LGBTQ (though they do not necessarily practice the lifestyle). The momentum is clearly behind young adults supporting that community, if not necessarily engaging in that lifestyle.
- Forms of abuse have become a hot topic in recent years, with the "Me Too" and related movements sensitizing Americans to behavior that was once deemed rude or sleazy but is now deemed abuse and criminal. Abuse comes in a variety of forms - verbal, physical, sexual, emotional, etc. Such acts are manifested in violent physical assault, rape, murder, sex-trafficking, emotional assault, sexual coercion or inappropriate contact, verbal harassment or ridicule, and more. While government estimates of such abuse vary widely, when all instances are combined, it appears that close to one-half of all women have experienced some sort of abuse, whether it was reported to authorities or not. As this research project discovered, that rate is consistent with what the women interviewed reported.

Some observers have complained that many of those alleged instances of abuse are not legitimate since they are merely a woman's perception. The stance taken in this report is that perception is reality; if a woman says she was abused, in her mind/heart she experienced abuse. The connection to the factors examined in The Opt Institute research is that her perceptions will affect her views on children and family. Rather than play the subjective role of abuse arbiter, we will accept her words concerning her abuse experience just as we accept her other statements regarding her life.



# Topline Summary

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The following are the “topline” results of a survey conducted by the Cultural Research Center for The Opt Institute, an adoption research and information center. The research was undertaken by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University in January 2022 among a national sample of 1,091 women 15-44 years of age, considered to be of “prime childbearing age.” The completed interviews with qualified women included 505 women interviewed by telephone and 586 interviewed online. A more extensive discussion of the findings (and research methodology) described in this summary can be found in the full report that follows this section.

## Women’s Childhood Experiences

When asked to identify the situations they had experienced as a child, before age 13, the most common experience was undergoing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. That was listed by nearly **half** of the women (45%). About one-third (36%) were raised in a single-parent home. Three out of 10 (29%) had spent time during their childhood dependent upon government aid or welfare. One out of every 10 had been in foster care. Overall, 5% of the women had been adopted as an infant; 7% had been adopted after their infant years.

## Opinions about Abortion Rights

Nearly two-thirds of women of prime childbearing age (62%) believe that abortions should be legal – either “under all circumstances” (35%) or “under most circumstances” (27%). Only three out of 10 women in this age bracket say abortion should be illegal, either “under most circumstances” (18%) or “under all circumstances” (11%). The remaining 8% do not know what they think about the legality of abortion.

## Past Pregnancies

Half of the women interviewed (50%) have ever conceived a child. Among those women, the average (median) number of conceptions (born plus unborn) was two. Nearly nine out of every 10 instances of conception (85%) resulted in a child that was born. When asked about all of the children to whom they had given birth, almost nine out of 10 (87%) of the women said that at least one of those children was currently being raised in their home. An additional one out of 10 (10%) said at least one of the children had reached adulthood and was now living independently. Another 10% said at least one of those conceptions produced a child who died during pregnancy or childbirth. Yet another 10% indicated that they had given birth to at least one child who was being raised elsewhere (7% by other family members, 2% by an adoptive family, 1% in a foster home). Oddly, only 3% admitted to having aborted one or more of the children they conceived.



### Future Pregnancies

Less than one-half of the women said they are likely to intentionally conceive a child in the future: 24% said they “definitely will” and 22% said they “probably will.”

Among the women who said they are likely to conceive a child in the future, their expectations about the outcome of those instances of conception were intriguing. Just three-quarters (74%) said they were “very likely” to raise the child in their home. Approximately one out of every seven (15%) said what happens would depend on whether the child was intentionally or unintentionally conceived. Roughly one out of 10 women (9%) said they were very likely to abort the child(ren), while slightly fewer (7%) said they were very likely to place the child(ren) for adoption. Just 4% expect any children they conceive to eventually be placed in the foster care system.

When asked to predict their most likely choice should they become intentionally pregnant in the future, nine out of 10 (87%) said they would raise the child in their home; 12% expected to abort the child; and 8% claimed they would place the child for adoption.

When asked to predict their most likely choice should they become unintentionally pregnant in the future, their choices were notably different. Two-thirds (66%) said they would raise the child in their home; one-third (35%) claimed they would abort the child; and less than half as many (16%) predicted they would place the child for adoption.

The greatest perceived influence on their decision of whether to raise, place for adoption, or abort a child that they conceive was identified as responding to the child’s best interests (i.e., doing what is best or right for the child), listed by almost half (45%). The second most common influence named was the financial realities related to raising the child (28%). No other influence was provided by at least one out of five women. Other influences in double figures included their own maturity (i.e., their readiness to raise a child – 16%); how the child would impact their own future (16%); their faith (15%); the expectations or preferences of the child’s father (13%); and their past personal experiences (either their own your upbringing, or their previous pregnancy and child-bearing experiences -10%).

### Considering Adoption

Women who said they would consider placing a child they conceive for adoption were asked to describe the most important reasons behind that choice. There were four reasons listed for one-quarter or more of the women. Those were the financial obstacles of raising the child (33%); believing that adoption would serve the child’s interests best (32%); the benefits accrued by the child and the adopting family (29%); and their personal lack of maturity to raise the child (23%).

Less popular reasons for considering adoption included obstacles to getting an abortion (such as the cost or the judgment of others – 14%); the child’s safety (11%); concerns about the child’s health and the parents’ inability to handle those needs (11%); the presence of the child undermining her personal hopes, dreams, or plans (also 11%); the lack of a support system (10%); and feeling that she is too young to raise a child (10%).

Most women said they would not consider placing a child for adoption. The most important reasons for that disinterest were their unwillingness to surrender a child they gave birth to (56%); the emotional trauma of giving up the child (39%); and their felt need to protect the child from a bad placement (27%). No other reasons were identified by more than 10% of the women.

Women who said they would not consider adoption, regardless of the conception circumstances, were asked if they would be more open to adoption if they could be assured that the child would experience a very positive and desirable life with the adoptive family. Overall, one out of seven women (14%) said they would be much more likely; an additional one out of four (25%) said they would be a little bit more likely. Almost half said it would not change their outlook, and the remaining 15% said they did not know what impact such an assurance would have on their openness to placing the child for adoption.

The survey respondents were asked to imagine experiencing an unintended pregnancy in the near future. Seven out of 10 (71%) said they would raise the child; one out of seven (14%) predicted getting an abortion; and just 6% said they would place the child for adoption. One out of 10 did not know what they would do.

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### **Sources of Adoption Influence**

The primary sources of information for guidance or advice on how to handle an unintended pregnancy were family (41%); doctors or medical professionals (34%); friends and peers (25%); and counselors, psychologists, or psychiatrists (20%). One out of five (20%) also said they would not seek external guidance; they would make their decision independently.

When asked to assess what sources of information had already exerted significant influence on their opinions about adoption (i.e., a lot or some influence), the dominant influences were family (46%), friends (39%) and their religious beliefs (36%). Other significant influences were doctors and medical professionals (listed by 33%), adopted people they have known (32%), and information from the internet (29%). Tied for last place among the ten influence entities evaluated were adoption organizations (21%).

### **Adoption Knowledge**

Respondents were read five realities about adoption and asked to indicate whether they believed each of those descriptions were true or false. A majority were aware that all five descriptions were accurate. However, there were substantial disparities in the proportions that emerged. Three out of four women know that pregnant women can participate in an “open” adoption that allows the birth parents to remain part of the child’s life in a specified capacity; and three-fourths also know that birth parents can receive private counseling and other emotional support before, during, and after the adoption. About three out of five know that the birth parents may choose the family that adopts the child; and the same proportion is aware that the birth mother may continue her education or job throughout the pregnancy and adoption proceedings, without losing any income or benefits. Women were least likely to know that the birth mother’s pregnancy may be completely paid for by the adopting parents (56%).

Being aware that all five of those conditions are true – i.e., the birth mother can choose to remain connected to the child, receive counseling and other support, have the pregnancy and delivery fully paid for, continue her education or career throughout the pregnancy, and choose the adopting family – made adoption more appealing to four out of 10 women (17% much more appealing, 22% a little more); while a majority (55%) said those insights made no difference to them.

### **Organizational Awareness and Favorability**

Most women claimed to know enough about both Planned Parenthood and Adoption Is an Option to have an opinion about each organization. Overall, 55% have a generally favorable opinion of Planned Parenthood, 34% have a generally unfavorable opinion, 22% were neutral, and 4% had never heard of it. In contrast, 44% said they have a favorable opinion of Adoption is an Option; 15% have a negative view; 21% are neutral toward AIAO; and 18% admitted to not having heard of it.

### **Lifestyle and Faith**

Following national patterns, barely half of the women of childbearing age (54%) consider themselves to be Christian. Also reflecting national patterns, more than 3 out of 10 (31%) are atheist, agnostic, or disinterested in faith.

Not quite half of the women interviewed (49%) claimed to be deeply committed to practicing their faith.

The lack of biblical views shaping their life decisions was further evident by the facts that just one-quarter might be considered born again (28%); one-quarter firmly believe that the Bible is the actual, true words of God that are a relevant and reliable guide for life today; seven out of 10 agree that the best indicator of a successful life is experiencing happiness, freedom, or unrestricted productivity; and just four out of 10 believe in one true, living God who is the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect and just creator of the universe who rules it today.

A small majority (57%) considers having children to be a special, God-given privilege.

Less than one-half of the women (47%) believe you make life what it is; human life has no absolute value.

When asked to indicate their feelings about the statement that “the Bible is ambiguous about abortion; it is possible to make a strong biblical argument either for or against abortion,” the women were nearly evenly divided. In total, 37% agreed, 34% disagreed, and 29% said they did not know if the statement was accurate or not.

More than three out of five women under 45 (62%) believe that determining moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time.

Among all of the women interviewed, two-thirds (65%) believe that the LGBTQ lifestyle is morally acceptable; in total, one-sixth of women in this age range (15 to 44 years old) are practicing gay, lesbian, or transgender individuals (17%).

#### WORTH NOTING

**Our recent research also found them (millennials) to be a group that feels rather than thinks, and is comfortable with contradictions in their beliefs and behavior.**

# Adoption & Its Competitors In American Society

# Adoption & Its Competitors

## A Profile of Women of Child-Bearing Age

Here is what we learned about the background characteristics of women who are in the age group considered to be the “prime child-bearing years” by government researchers – ages 15 to 44. There are an estimated 65 million women currently within that age bracket. For simplicity, the remainder of the report will describe women of **child-bearing age** as “CBA women.”

This population reflects some of background attributes of the population at-large. For instance, the racial and ethnic composition is similar (63% white, 14% Hispanic, 12% black, 5% Asian), as is their regional location (18% in the Northeast, 22% in the Midwest, 37% in the South, 23% in the West).

**However, there are noteworthy differences between these women and the U.S. population. Among those are:**

- Women of child-bearing age (CBA women) are more prone to being practicing LGBTQs (17%). Compared to the national norms, that figure is skewed by the youth of the women interviewed. The LGBTQ activity rate was 29% among the women 15 to 21 years old but just 6% among those 35 or older.
- CBA women are less likely to call Christianity their faith of choice: just 54% did so. Among all women nationally, 71% do so. CBA women are more likely to have no faith of choice (31%) compared to 21% among all U.S. women. Also of note: 9% of all American women associate with a non-Christian faith compared to 15% of CBA women.
- Socioeconomic status indicates that CBA women compare poorly to the entire segment of American women. While almost four out of 10 U.S. women (39%) have a college degree, just 28% of CBA women have one. (This is partly because the survey includes women who are not yet of college age, or who are currently seeking their college degree.) In parallel, we find that while a majority of U.S. women (53%) live in households with an annual income exceeding \$40,000, but that is true for only a minority of CBA women (46%). (Again, this discrepancy may disappear once the younger women reach the age norm for all U.S. women.)

- Marital status is also skewed by the younger ages represented among CBA women. Presently, 33% of CBA women are married (compared to 40% among all women); 7% are separated or divorced (versus the national female norm of 15%); 18% are cohabiting (compared to 14%); and 40% are living alone or with roommates (dwarfing the 25% among all American adult females). However, attitudinal studies suggest that interest in formal marriage is on the decline among younger adults, so the eventual increase in the number of women married may not be as great as would have been true in the past

Perhaps the most eye-opening and, in some cases, unexpected discoveries relate to the childhood experiences of today's CBA women. One out of every eight of them (12%) was adopted: 5% during their infant years, 7% after their infancy. Asian women were double the national average in terms of likelihood to have been adopted as an infant. CBA women who are currently divorced are also more likely to have been adopted during infancy. The people most likely to have experienced a post-infancy adoption were those in the younger two generations (Millennials and Gen Z). White women were less likely than women of color to have been adopted after their infancy.

### A Comparison of Women

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>All U.S. Women 18+</u>	<u>U.S. Women 15-44</u>
<b>Race-Ethnicity:</b>		
White	68%	63%
Hispanic	15	14
Black	13	12
Asian	5	5
<b>Region of residence:</b>		
Northeast	17%	18%
South	38	37
Midwest	25	22
West	21	23
<b>Highest Earned Degree:</b>		
No Bachelor's degree	60%	70%
Bachelor's degree	25	18
Graduate degree	14	10
<b>Gross Household Income:</b>		
Under \$40,000	41%	46%
\$40,000-\$75,000	27	24
Over \$75,000	26	22
<b>Marital Status:</b>		
Married	40%	33%
Separated/Divorced	15	7
Cohabiting	14	18
Single, Not Cohabiting	25	40

One in 10 of the women surveyed (10%) experienced foster care at some point. Individuals currently in their teens or twenties are twice as likely to have experienced foster care as were older CBA women. Similarly, black and Hispanic women are nearly twice as likely to have been fostered as whites.

Unexpectedly large proportions gave evidence of struggles during their formative years. Three out of 10 (29%) said they had received some type of financial assistance from the government while growing up. That coincides with a slightly larger share (36%) who said that at some point they were raised by a single parent.

The most shocking statistic of all, however – and one that undoubtedly has a bearing on the conception and child-birthing choice of millions of CBA women – is that 45% said they experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse while growing up. In some of the subgroups of CBA women the figures were even higher: 58% among those who are now practicing LGBTQ women, and about half of those who are presently downscale (i.e., below-average household income and lacking a college degree) have endured abuse. Asians (26%) and those with a college degree (34%) were less likely than average to have experienced abuse.

### **The Perceived Value of Children and Human Life**

Before diving into the attitudes and behaviors of women of child-bearing age across America, a valuable element of context has to do with their perceptions of children and the value of life. One cannot help but believe that the decision of raising or burying a conceived child is related to perceptions about life.

### **Absolute Value to Life?**

A plurality of women (47%) believes that life is what you make it, but there is no absolute value associated with human life. In comparison, 38% of women of child-bearing age disagree with that sentiment, and one-seventh (15%) do not know. Various segments were substantially more likely than average to concur that human life has no absolute value. Those segments include college-aged women 62% of the 18-21s agreed); those who are practicing LGBTQers (63%); more than six out of ten women who were adopted; and 55% who have no faith affiliation.

In contrast, the female groups most likely to contend that human life does have absolute value included those 35 or older (50%); upscale women; and those who are married (49%). The biggest correlation regarding the value of life had to do with faith. Specifically, the more committed to Christianity women were, the more likely they were to value life. Those most likely to value life included 89% of the women possessing a biblical worldview, half of those who are born-again Christians, half of the weekly churchgoers, and about half of those who said the greatest influences on their attitudes about adoption were their religious beliefs and their church.

### **Children: A God-Given Privilege?**

A surprisingly small majority of women interviewed (57%) believe that having children is a special, God-given privilege. A little more than half as many (31%) disagreed with that idea. (Just 12% did not take a stand.)



The women most likely to embrace this notion are those with a biblical worldview: nine out of 10 see conception as a special, God-given privilege. Women who qualify as born-again were also far above-average in this regard (84%).

Roughly three-quarters of women who attend church services every week; those who are black; and women who describe themselves as Christian agreed with this idea.

About two-thirds of women from various groups also accept having children as a God-given privilege: those 35 or older, residents of the South, women who had been raised by a single parent and those who relied on government assistance while growing up, and those who have already conceived at least one child.

There were several segments of women interviewed who were substantially less likely than the norm to see pregnancy and giving birth as a special gift from God. Those included Asians, upscale women, those without any faith affiliations, and practicing LGBTQs.

### **Conception and Child-Bearing History**

Approximately half of the women interviewed had conceived at least one child. Not surprisingly, while women 30 to 44 comprised half of the women who participated in the survey, they also represented 71% of those had had conceived at least one child. Women in the 15 to 21 age segment – i.e., those typically of high school or

college age – were nearly one-quarter of the sample (24%) but just 6% of those who had conceived a child. The median number of children conceived by those women who qualified was two children; the mean was 2.6 children.

The segments most likely to have conceived three or more times were those 35 or older (43% had done so); people not engaged in an LGBTQ lifestyle (twice as likely as those who are so engaged); married women (twice as likely as those who are single); and women of significant Christian faith (i.e., possess a biblical worldview or are born-again), who were roughly 50% more likely to have conceived three or more times than were women without significant Christian faith.

**Nearly nine out of every 10 times a woman conceives (85%), she gives birth.**

### **What happens to those children that enter the world?**

- 13% of the women raised them to adulthood
- 87% are in the process of raising one or more children they have birthed
- 13% have had children who have since passed away (three times out of four the death occurs during the pregnancy of childbirth process)
- 7% have had children raised for them by other family members
- 2% have given over at least one child to adoption
- 1% have had a child delivered into foster care
- 3% admit to having had one or more abortions

(Note: the statistics above add to more than 100% because many women have had more than one child born and thus may fit into multiple categories.)

**Future Pregnancies: What to Expect**

A surprisingly small share of CBA women (24%) say they definitely will conceive a child in the future, with an additional 22% saying they probably will. Combined, that's a minority of CBA women. A similar proportion (47%) claim they are not likely to have a child in the future with the remaining 8% not sure.

As expected, the anticipated probability of conceiving a child varies dramatically by age and by past conception experience. More than six out of 10 women under 30 (63%) said they are likely to conceive a child in the future, compared to half as many (33%) among women in their thirties and roughly one-fifth of women (19%) in their forties. Among women who have already conceived a child, 38% said they are likely to do so again while 55% of the women who have yet to conceive a child expect to do so.

There were some demographic differences in expectations besides age. Women of color (59% of Hispanics, 57% of Asians, 54% of blacks) were more likely than white women (40%) to anticipate conceiving. Women aligned with a faith group were more likely than women who have no faith leanings to foresee getting pregnant (50% versus 37%, respectively). Single women were more likely than married women (49% compared to 38%) and practicing LGBTQers were more likely than heterosexual women to predict a pregnancy in their future (55% vs. 44%, respectively).

If and when they do become pregnant, how do women estimate they will respond? The vast majority (84%) expect to raise the child in their home, regardless of whether the pregnancy was intentional or unintentional.

Even allowing for the fact that many of these women undoubtedly foresee becoming pregnant multiple times, adoption is clearly not something they aspire to. In total, just 12% said it was either very or somewhat likely that at least one child they conceive would be placed for adoption. The only segment of women who are more prone than average to foresee an adoption in their future is women who had been adopted: 22% of those adopted as infants and 31% of those adopted after infancy said they are likely to place a child for adoption. Interestingly, two groups emerged as unusually unlikely to place a child for adoption: blacks (just 7%) and women with a biblical worldview. The latter group is less interested in adoption because almost all of them expect their raise any children in their home. Black women, on the other hand, consider abortion a more viable option (especially if the pregnancy was not intended).

Abortion is deemed a more amenable option than adoption to a substantial share of women. Policy-wise, CBA women prefer abortion to be legal in all or most circumstances by more than a 2:1 margin (62% legal, 29% illegal). Segments of CBA women who stood out as advocates of legal abortion were those younger than 30 (67% opt for legal abortion); Asians (72%); residents of the Northeast (73%); those with a graduate degree (72%); LGBTQers (72%); CBA women who have no religious faith (78%) or those who associate with a faith other than Christianity (68%). In contrast, the subgroups who were most likely to be opposed to abortion being legal included residents of the South (36% oppose legalized abortion); CBA women in their forties (35%); those who were adopted after their infancy (39%); those who identify as Christian (41%) or as being deeply committed to their faith (43%); those who attend church every week (50%); and born-again Christians (52%). Only one niche was adamantly opposed to legalized abortion: 75% of the women who have a biblical worldview.

Intriguingly, women's positions on abortion did not reveal a significant correlation with their view on whether the Bible is ambiguous or clear in its teaching about abortion. When combined with another question about perceptions of the validity of the Bible, it does not appear that perceptions about the Bible and its teaching have influenced women's views about abortion.

The women most likely to express willingness to abort a child are those under 30 (24%); LGBTQers (31%); single women (23%); and women who have no religious faith (28%). Unexpectedly, women who were adopted after their infancy were also among those most prone to getting an abortion (22%).

Very few women expect their children to ever wind up in the foster care system. Overall, nearly nine out of 10 (86%) said it is unlikely to happen. There were no significant differences across the subgroups studied regarding this view.

Among one out of four CBA women (26%) who said how they handle a pregnancy depends on whether it was intentional or unintentional, each possibility was probed. First they were asked to assume that their pregnancy was intentional. About nine out of 10 women in this segment (87%) said they would most likely bear and raise the child. An additional 12% expected to have an abortion, 8% said they would choose adoption, and 2% were not sure. (Those figures add to more than 100% because women were allowed to provide multiple answers, assuming they might have different actions if they anticipated conceiving more than once – which about one in 10 women did.) Choosing adoption was most prevalent among women who were adopted as children (20%) women associated with a non-Christian faith (15%). In contrast, abortion was a more popular than average choice for teenagers, practicing LGBTQ women, and those who have no religious faith.

It may seem unusual for a woman to become intentionally pregnant and yet consider abortion and adoption for the conceived child. There are various explanations for such thinking. One has to do with the youngest women interpreting “intentionally pregnant” as meaning the child is not the result of a rape. Another is that most of the women who said they would consider adoption and/or abortion were within the younger portion of CBA women and represent a segment for whom having options is important, even if they do not use them. Further, many young women now think of abortion as simply a matter of taking the “morning after” pill – a simple solution. And for a generation that does not consider human life to be sacred, or a child to be a God-given gift, and for whom the choice they make may reflect little more than their feelings in the moment, “seriously considering” adoption and abortion after an “intentional pregnancy” is understandable.

The same subset of women was then asked to assume that their pregnancy was unintended. Their choices changed dramatically. The proportion of women who would likely raise the child at home dropped to one-third (66%). The expressed preference for both adoption and abortion increased substantially, but the gap between the two choices also widened tremendously, with these women more than twice as likely to opt for an abortion (35% versus 16%). (Again, the numbers add to more than 100% due to the opportunity to give multiple responses, in anticipation of multiple unintended pregnancies.) The women most inclined to select adoption

were those who had been adopted (34%). Those who were disproportionately inclined toward abortion included women under 30 (43%); whites (37%); LGBTQ women (52%); single women (38%); and women with no religious faith (55%). Also of interest was the exaggerated share of abused women opting for abortion under these circumstances (42%). This is one of the few instances where abused women were notably different in attitudes or actions compared to women who have not suffered physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.

The survey then asked the women who said their choice was conditional (i.e., whether the child had been conceived intentionally or unintentionally) questions regarding why they had chosen that disposition, likely sources of information that would influence their choice, and whether being assured the conceived child would have a very desirable and positive life if adopted out made them more open to adoption. At that point, the women who had previously said their choice was conditional were again asked the likely disposition of an unintended pregnancy.

There were changes in their opinions, but changes in expected behavior were the exception to the rule: just 7% of the women shifted from one outcome to another. Women who originally said they would raise the child of an unintentional pregnancy increased by two percentage points. Among those who initially claimed they would place the child for adoption, there was a five percentage point decline. Among the women who originally planned to abort the child, there was a three point drop. The proportion of women who expressed uncertainty about what they would likely do rose by five points.

This information suggests that there is some pliability in the responses women are likely to have to an unintended pregnancy, but it is likely to require applied influence, reliable information, and ample time before a shift might take place.

Among all of the CBA women interviewed, when asked how they would be likely to handle an unintended pregnancy, seven out of 10 (70%) said they would raise the child, one in seven (14%) said they would abort the child, and 6% leaned toward adopting out the child. The other 10% did not know what they would do. But keep in mind that these statistics include both groups of women - the six out of 10 (58%) who originally offered their expected behavior regardless of whether the conception was intended or unintended and the one-quarter (26%) who said their decision

**Observed Change in Projected Behavior among Women Whose Decision is Affected by Whether the Conception was Intentional or Unintentional (n=288)**

<u>Behavior</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> inquiry</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> inquiry</u>	<u>Change</u>
Raise the child	55%	57%	+2 points
Place child for adoption	14	9	-5
Abort the child	29	26	-3
Don't know	3	8	+5

depended on knowing that information. If we solely examine the responses of the women who originally chose not to determine an outcome based upon the nature of the pregnancy, the responses show that three-quarters of them (76%) would raise the child, regardless of its genesis; 9% would abort the child; 4% would choose adoption; and 10% did not know.

**Observed Change in Projected Behavior among Women Whose Decision is Not Affected by Whether the Conception was Intentional or Unintentional (n=803)**

<u>Behavior</u>	<u>Expectation</u>
Raise the child	76%
Place child for adoption	4
Abort the child	9
Don't know	10

**Openness to Adoption**

Overall, about one out of every seven CBA women (15%) said that they would be likely to place a conceived child for adoption, whether the pregnancy was intentional or unintentional. When those women were asked to identify the most important reasons for that willingness, there were four reasons supplied by at least one out of every five of these women. Those were financial considerations (.i.e., recognizing they were financially incapable of raising the child, listed by 33%); wanting to do what is in the child's best interests (32%); seeking to benefit the family that is seeking a child to adopt (29%); and recognizing her personal lack of maturity to raise a child (23%).

There were six reasons listed by 10% to 14% of these women. Those reasons included obstacles to getting an abortion (such as cost, guilt, external judgment or reputation, listed by 14%); concerns about the safety of the child in the mother's living environment (11%); the fear of not being able to handle any special health needs of the child (11%); the negative impact of having child on her personal plans for the future (11%); lacking the support system to raise the child (10%); and acknowledging that she was simply too young to be raising a child (10%).

**Reasons Given for Openness to Placing Their Child for Adoption (n=163)**

Personal financial limitations	33%
Desire to serve the child's best interests	32
Seeking to benefit others	29
Your emotional unpreparedness for parenthood	23
Obstacles to getting an abortion	14
Inability to handle any special health needs	11
Concerns regarding the child's safety	11
Having a child would undermine your future	11
Lack of an adequate support system	10
You are too young to raise a child well	10
Guidance based on your faith	8
Inability to take care of one more child	7
Desire to give the child a two-parent home	6
Concerns about the child's father	6

The survey also explored the reasons why the vast majority of CBA women (85%) were not likely to place their child for adoption. The responses of these women were more clear cut. A majority of them (56%) said it was because they wanted to keep and raise the child. About four out of 10 (39%) admitted it was because the emotional difficulty of giving up the child was too much for them to bear. Roughly one-fourth (27%) noted that they felt an obligation to protect the child from an uncertain future if he/she were placed in the adoption market. The only other reason to reach double figures was the influence of their religious faith (10%).

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**Reasons Given for Not Being Open to Placing Their Child for Adoption (n=928)**

Just don't want to give up a child you give birth to	56%
Emotionally too hard to give up the child	39
Desire to protect the child from potential harm, neglect	27
Don't believe in adoption for religious/moral reasons	10
Adoption has a bad reputation; don't trust it	9
Would prefer to have an abortion	8
Carrying a baby to birth could endanger your health	8
Child's father would not agree to an adoption	7
Adoption is too expensive, cannot afford it	7
Can't select the family/adoptive conditions for the child	7
Don't know how to initiate the adoption process	5
Lack sufficient information about adoption	4
Adoption process is too long or too complicated	4
Social stigma or shame related to giving up the child	4

A deeper dive into the numbers shows that some of the obstacles to adoption are more deeply entrenched with some segments of CBA women than among others. While the general patterns are consistent across subgroups, among the noteworthy aberrations were:

- High school-aged girls are substantially more likely than other females of child-bearing age to be reluctant to consider adoption because of the emotional hardship of surrendering the child (50%), because there is no guarantee the child would be adequately loved and cared for (43%), and because of adoption's "bad reputation" (noted by 21%).
- Women in their forties are more resistant to adoption than are younger women partially because of their determination to keep the child (65%).
- Women who were adopted were substantially more likely than those who were not to not consider potentially placing their baby for adoption because they believe the father would not consent (14%) because their faith teaches raising the child rather than giving it up (20%), and because the process takes too long (17%).



- Black women were less inclined than others to consider adoption because of the cost (14%).
- Compared to other CBA women, Asians were comparatively uninformed about how to initiate adoption proceedings (17%).
- Women who have a biblical worldview do not necessarily have anything against adoption; a much higher proportion of them simply want to keep any child they conceive (76%). Married women share that desire, although not to the same heightened degree (67%).

When those same women were asked if they might be more open to considering adoption if they could be assured that the conceived baby could be adopted and experience a very positive and desirable life with the adoptive family, the results were tempered but encouraging. One out of seven (14%) said they would be much more likely to consider adoption and another one-quarter (25%) said they would be a little bit more likely to consider it. Although half said it would not affect their view, there was also another 15% who were not sure, so they might also be persuaded under the right conditions.

### **Knowledge about Adoption**

The research revealed that women know a surprising amount about the possibilities related to facilitating an adoption.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether each of five statements describing adoption was true or false. Each of the statements was true, but not obviously so. The reactions of CBA women are shown below.

**Statement: Being able to participate in an “open” adoption allows the birth parents to remain part of the child’s life in a specified capacity.**

*Reaction: 74% said that is true, 9% said was false, 17% said they did not know.*

The subgroups that were particularly unaware of this were teenagers (40% thought it was false or said they did not know if it was true); Hispanics (36%); and blacks (34%).

**Statement: Birth parents can receive private counseling and other emotional support before, during, and after the adoption.**

*Reaction: 77% said that is true, 6% said was false, 17% said they did not know.*

Strangely, women who had been adopted were the group least likely to be unaware of this (33%).

**Statement: The birth mother's pregnancy is completely paid for by the adopting parents.**

*Reaction: 56% said that is true, 15% said was false, 29% said they did not know.*

Not only was this information the least known among all CBA women, but there were five segments that were above average in their ignorance about the financial side of adoption. Perhaps the most important niche is teenagers, among whom 64% were in the dark on this reality. Other segments in which a majority were not clued in are women who were adopted (59%), Asians (59%), single women living alone (53%), and blacks (52%).

**Statement: The birth parents may choose the family that adopts the child.**

*Reaction: 64% said that is true, 15% said was false, 21% said they did not know.*

Teenage girls again emerged as the group far less likely than the norm to know this information. Overall, close to half of them (46%) were unaware.

**Statement: The birth mother may continue her education or job throughout the pregnancy and adoption proceedings, without losing any income or benefits.**

*Reaction: 60% said that is true, 13% said was false, 27% said they did not know.*

Close to one-half of Asians (48%), women with no religious faith (47%) and women aligned with a faith other than Christianity (46%) were unaware of this information.

About half of CBA women (53%) knew that four or all five of the statements were true. That was particularly the case among women in their forties (70% knew four or five were true); married women (63%); and upscale women (about six out of 10). At the other end of the knowledge continuum were 15% who did not know that any, or just one, of the statements were true. The least informed groups of CBA women regarding adoption are those adopted as an infant (29%); Asians (28%); and teen girls (23%).

When told that all five statements about adoption were true, women were then asked if that made adoption more appealing to them. In total, 17% said it made adoption much more appealing and 22% said it made adoption a little bit more appealing. Looking more closely at the 17% whose opinion of adoption was most favorably impacted, several subgroups were especially impressed by the body of information. Almost one-third of women who had been adopted (30%) indicated that the new knowledge made adoption much more appealing to them. Similarly, the stock of adoption rose among those who are actively LGBTQ (28%); women who had experienced foster care (26%); girls 15 to 17 years old (25%); and born-again Christians (24%).

### **Who and What Influences Women Regarding Pregnancy?**

The survey gathered information about perceived influences related to handling a pregnancy (in general), handling an unintended pregnancy, and consideration of adoption.

Women were asked what would affect them the most as they decide whether to raise, place for adoption, or abort a child they conceive. Far and away the top consideration of women was the best interests of the child, listed by nearly half of the women (45%). That was followed by their financial realities (28%). There was a noticeable gap between that and the next most common influence: their maturity (i.e., readiness to raise a child) and how having a child would affect their future. Both of those concerns were named by 16%, while faith considerations were identified by 15%. Other influences that reached double figures were the expectations and preferences of the child's father (13%), and past personal experiences related to child-bearing and parenting (10%).

Women were later asked from what sources they would seek guidance or advice regarding the handling of an unintended pregnancy. Overall, there was a huge disparity in where CBA women would turn for insight. The most common sources were family (41%), doctors and medical professionals (34%), peers/friends (25%), and mental health professionals (counselors, psychologists, or psychiatrists – 20%). The next level of assistance incorporated Planned Parenthood (17%), church or

religious leaders (12%), and print materials (10%). The least likely resources included abortion clinics (9%), adoption organizations (6%), and government agencies (4%). Significantly, 20% of the women said they would make their decision independent of any outside resources.

There were important distinctions by the woman's intended choice in the wake of becoming pregnant.

#### **Women who would raise the child if they became unintentionally pregnant were more likely than average to rely upon:**

- health and medical professionals, family, and friends – or nobody at all.

#### **Women who would place the child for adoption if they became unintentionally pregnant were more likely than average to rely upon:**

- medical and health professionals, friends, family, Planned Parenthood, and adoption organizations.

#### **Women who would abort the child if they became unintentionally pregnant were more likely than average to rely upon:**

- medical and health professionals, Planned Parenthood, and abortion clinics.

**Women who would do not know what they would do if they became unintentionally pregnant were more likely than average to rely upon:**

- medical and health professionals, family, and friends – and a large percentage of them did not even know where to turn for help (four times higher than the norm).

Importantly, notice the pattern of whose advice each group would seek.

Women who are likely to have an abortion sought advice from people who would support that choice. Women who would likely pursue adoption would seek guidance from adoption-friendly entities (with the exception of Planned Parenthood, leading us to believe many women are not aware that Planned Parenthood is the nation’s largest abortion provider and advocate). Women who would probably raise the child would also consult those who would support their decision. Women who don’t know what choice they will make also don’t know where to turn for help.

**Sources of Guidance Most Likely to be Consulted by Unintentionally Pregnant Women, According to Their Likely Pregnancy Disposition**

Source of Guidance	All Women	--- Most Likely Pregnancy Choice by the Woman ---			
		Adoption	Abortion	Raise Child	Don't Know
Family	41%	28%	24%	46%	33%
Doctor/Medical Professional	34	34	43	32	28
Friends, Peers	25	31	24	25	25
Counselor, Psychologist, Psychiatrist	20	31	23	19	18
None	20	5	14	23	15
Planned Parenthood	17	25	37	13	14
Church, Religious Leaders	12	15	1	14	6
Written materials	10	15	6	11	4
Abortion clinics	9	10	40	3	7
Adoption organizations	6	23	5	4	7
Government, Laws	4	10	5	3	5
Don't Know	5	5	3	3	22

All of the survey respondents were asked to estimate how much influence each of ten entities has upon their opinions about adoption. There was not a sense of much influence being had at all, beyond the input of family. Three entities emerged as clearly having very little, if any, influence: churches and religious leaders (58% of the women said these entities had no influence on their thinking about adoption), government agencies and laws (53%), and adoption organizations (52%). The only entities which at least one-quarter of the women said had either “a lot” or “some” influence were family (46%), friends (39%), personal religious beliefs (36%), doctors and medical professionals (33%), and adopted people they have known (32%). Entities stuck in the muddled middle of the pack of influencers included the internet and Planned Parenthood

**Entities with “A Lot” of Influence on the Likely Choice of Pregnant Women**

Influence Entity	Pregnant Woman is Very Likely to Seek This Conception Outcome			
	All women	Raise child	Adoption	Abortion
Their family	28%	28%	32%	22%
Their personal religious beliefs	22	23	23	19
Doctors and medical professionals	17	16	21	23
Their friends and peers	16	17	18	14
Adopted people they have known	16	17	18	21
Planned Parenthood	14	12	23	19
Their church or religious leaders	13	14	17	13
Information from the internet	13	12	16	21
Government laws and agencies	9	9	13	10
Adoption organizations	8	7	13	11

When examining those perceived amount of influence on adoption views exerted by each of the 10 sources, the differences based on the pregnancy choice to which the women lean was surprisingly small. This, again, suggests that there probably has been little exploration of adoption as an option by women, and that few sources have brought the possibility of adoption to the attention of women.

Among the insights provided by the answers to this question are:

- Among the women who are prone to place their child for adoption, Planned Parenthood is listed as one of the sources of influence that has had a lot of influence on their thinking about adoption.
- Among the women who are most likely to place their child for adoption, adoption-related organizations ranked as the least likely of the 10 entities tested to have had a lot of influence on the woman’s thinking about adoption.
- Women who listed their church or religious leaders as having exerted a lot of influence on their perceptions about adoption were just as likely to be affiliated with a non-Christian faith as with Christianity.

**Views about Advocacy Organizations**

Most CBA women have favorable impressions of Planned Parenthood. Overall, 55% have a favorable opinion of the organization against 17% who have a negative opinion, with 22% aware of the group but neutral toward it, and 4% claiming to have never heard of it. The “extreme” opinions – i.e., those who are either “very

The only other organizational brand tested was Adoption is an Option. Although that entity is a new entry into the marketplace, a shockingly large proportion of CBA women (82%) claimed to have heard of it. Even more stunning is the fact that six out of 10 had an opinion about the organization. Close to half (44%) held a favorable opinion compared to only 15% who claimed to have an unfavorable opinion.

For what it’s worth, the Adoption is an Option (AiaO) positive-to-negative ratio is very similar to that of Planned Parenthood. While the latter has a 3.2:1 ratio, AiaO has a 2.9:1 ratio. Although Planned Parenthood has a far superior favorability ratio among the women who lean toward abortion (an outcome that is to be expected), AiaO has a very similar ratio to Planned Parenthood among women who are likely to raise any conceived child and those who lean toward adoption.

<u>Organization</u>	<u>All CBA women</u>		<u>Very likely to raise their child</u>		<u>Very likely to place / adoption</u>		<u>Very likely to abort their child</u>	
	<u>Pos-Neg</u>	<u>ratio</u>	<u>Pos-Neg</u>	<u>ratio</u>	<u>Pos-Neg</u>	<u>ratio</u>	<u>Pos-Neg</u>	<u>ratio</u>
Planned Parenthood	55%-17%	3.2:1	54%-20%	2.7:1	59%-14%	4.2:1	71%-12%	5.9:1
Adoption is an Option	44%-15%	2.9:1	46%-14%	3.3:1	52%-13%	4.0:1	37%-22%	1.7:1

Overall, the women more likely than average to hold a negative view of Planned Parenthood were those who are most engaged in the Christian faith: those who possess a biblical worldview (71%), theological born-again Christians (29%), those who attend church regularly (27%), and women self-described as deeply committed to their faith (26%). But there were also a few demographic segments more inclined than the norm to have unfavorable views: women in their early forties (24% negative); those from households making more than \$100,000 annually (24%), and married women (25%).

### Insights into the Faith of CBA Women

This research has shown that women who have a deep faith take a different approach to life and children than do women who lack such faith. But what do CBA women believe?

While a small majority of CBA women may consider themselves to be Christian (54%), their beliefs might disqualify them from such standing. Orthodox biblical beliefs are hard to come by among young women which explains why more than nine out of 10 of them do not have a biblical worldview. Regarding the faith of CBA women, the survey found:

- Less than three out of every 10 (28%) can be classified as born-again Christians, based on what they believe about their sin and salvation.

- Less than three out of every 10 (28%) can be classified as born-again Christians, based on what they believe about their sin and salvation.
- Only four out of every 10 (40%) maintain a biblically orthodox perspective on the existence and nature of God (i.e., He is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the universe who still rules the world today).
- These women were two-and-a-half times more likely to strongly affirm that success is best defined as happiness, freedom, or unrestricted productivity. A biblical view would argue that success is best described as consistent obedience to God.
- Less than three out of 10 CBA women (28%) strongly believe that the Bible is the true words of God that are a relevant and reliable guide for their life.
- Merely one out of seven (15%) strongly disagree that the Bible is ambiguous in its teachings about abortion, allowing one to make a strong argument either for or against abortion based on biblical teaching.

The response patterns indicate, as might be expected, that the women least likely to represent biblical views are the youngest females; Asians; single women; and practicing LGBTQ females.

The background features a series of thin, light-colored curved lines that originate from a central point on the right side and fan out towards the left, creating a sense of depth and movement. The lines are more densely packed in the center and become more sparse as they spread out.

# Research Methodology and the Research Team



This research was commissioned by the Opt Institute, a national adoption research and information center, to better understand perceptions and expectations related to adoption in the United States. The research was conducted among a nationally representative sample of the women who are considered to be of prime child-bearing age (a group the report will refer to as “CBA women”), which is 15 to 44. There are an estimated 65 million women currently in that age segment.

The research examined a variety of elements that have not been widely researched, if at all, regarding adoption. Those elements include:

- perceived value of children and human life
- past conception experiences
- anticipated response to future pregnancies
- attitudes about adoption
- knowledge about adoption
- influences on adoption thoughts and behavior
- relative knowledge and appreciation of adoption compared to abortion
- awareness and favorability regarding organizations advocating adoption and abortion

The study was fielded in January 2022 among a national random sample of 1,091 women 15-44 years of age. Each completed interview lasted approximately 16 minutes and consisting of 64 closed-ended questions posed to qualified respondents.

The survey planned to incorporate 1,000 completions. In the end, 1,091 qualified respondents were interviewed: 505 via telephone and 586 via online surveys. The telephone respondents were randomly sampled, with geographic quotas established. Each telephone number selected for inclusion in the sample was contacted a minimum of six times, on different days and at different times of day, in order to provide each potential respondent with ample opportunities to participate. The online interviews were conducted among Lucid panels (Fulcrum platform); each potential online respondent was initially invited and then contacted multiple times to elicit their engagement.

Fulcrum is a platform that integrates with panel partners globally to provide qualified online sample. Fulcrum operates as a network of ‘buyers’ and ‘suppliers’ to connect each together via digital ‘bridges,’ using multiple ‘bridges’ to connect survey respondents to appropriate surveys, allowing researchers to accurately target qualified respondents (in this case, American women ages 15 to 44). Invited respondents were still screened for this project’s qualification criteria, but the Fulcrum process identifies viable respondents more efficiently without sacrificing representativeness, time, or budget.

The survey itself utilized a mixed mode data collection strategy, combining both telephone and online methods. The reason for that approach is that the research marketplace has changed dramatically in the past two decades due to transitions in technology, attitudes, and lifestyles. Sampling has become abundantly more complicated, and there are various studies suggesting that mixed mode surveys now provide the best combination of methods to generate a representative sample of the public.

The results described in this report are drawn from cross-tabulated data from 1,091 completed interviews. The data are based on about half of the interviews completed by telephone (n=505) and the other half completed by respondents online (either via computer or a mobile device, n=586).

The research was conducted by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University under the direction of Dr. George Barna. The Cultural Research Center (CRC) at Arizona Christian University is located on the school's campus in Glendale, Arizona, in the Phoenix metropolitan area. In addition to conducting the annual *American Worldview Inventory*, CRC also introduced the *ACU Student Worldview Inventory (SWVI)* in 2020. That survey is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final administration among students just prior to their graduation. The *ACU SWVI* enables the University to track the worldview development of its student body and to make changes to the educational process as suggested through the research. The Cultural Research Center also conducts nationwide research studies to understand the intersection of faith and culture

and shares that information with organizations dedicated to transforming American culture with biblical truth.

CRC is guided by George Barna, Director of Research, and Tracy Munsil, Executive Director. Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity. The Center serves alongside a variety of theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Access to the results from past surveys conducted by CRC, as well as additional information about the Cultural Research Center, are available at [www.culturalresearchcenter.com](http://www.culturalresearchcenter.com).

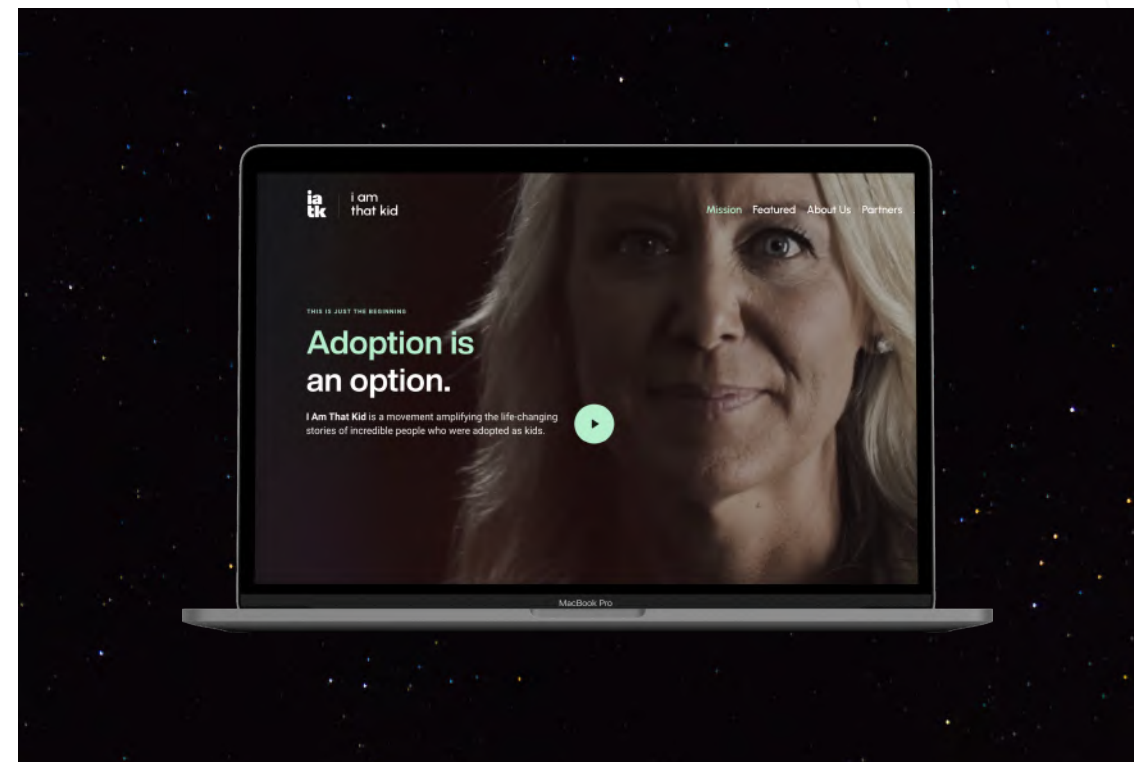
Arizona Christian University (ACU) is an accredited, private, non-profit, Christian university in the Phoenix metropolitan area. ACU is an award-winning, culturally and theologically conservative university where students and their professors are serious about deepening their Christian faith and where relationships and community deeply matter. It offers a wide variety of degrees preparing students for successful careers, while remaining committed to its vision of transforming culture with biblical truth. Students actively engage in biblically-integrated academics and gain a liberal arts foundation with critical thinking skills that last a lifetime. Spiritual development is integrated within the University experience, where all four-year campus students receive a minor in Biblical Studies, attend chapel twice a week, and complete spiritual formation and service hours each semester. Further information about Arizona Christian University is accessible at [www.arizonachristian.edu](http://www.arizonachristian.edu).



# About the Opt Institute

Opt Institute is a non-profit research and think tank dedicated to access to and support for private infant adoption.

To learn more about our research and our initiatives please visit: [optinstitute.org](https://optinstitute.org)



**I Am That Kid** is a platform amplifying the life-changing stories of incredible people who were adopted as kids. [iamthatkid.com](https://iamthatkid.com)



**Adoption Is An Option** is movement of adoption-focused organizations committed to change the view of private infant adoptions in the United States. [adoptionisanoption.com](https://adoptionisanoption.com)

