

EARLY PERMANENCE: 2020/21- 2025/26

KEY FINDINGS IN 2025/26:

- **22%** of total adoptions were Early Permanence (EP) adoptions.
- All regions experienced an increase in EP adoptions since 2020/21.
- The time taken between entry into care and adoption was **19** months, **1** month quicker compared to last year.
- There was a significant decrease in EP Agency Decision Maker (ADM) reversals compared to 2024/25, **1** down from **10**.
- **17%** of approved adopters were taking part in EP adoption, a decrease of **4%** since last year.
- The South West had both the highest percentage of EP placements (**35%**) and the highest percentage of adopters participating in an EP arrangement (**21%**).
- **20%** of ethnic minority children adopted had an EP adoption. The majority of these children were predominantly Asian or of "Other" ethnicities.
- Compared to standard adoptions, children in an EP placement were matched **5** months sooner, and adopted **9** months sooner, from entry into care.

CHILDREN

The proportion of EP adoptions increased from **14%** in 2020/21 to **23%** in 2024/25, and then decreased to **22%** in 2025/26 (fig. 1).

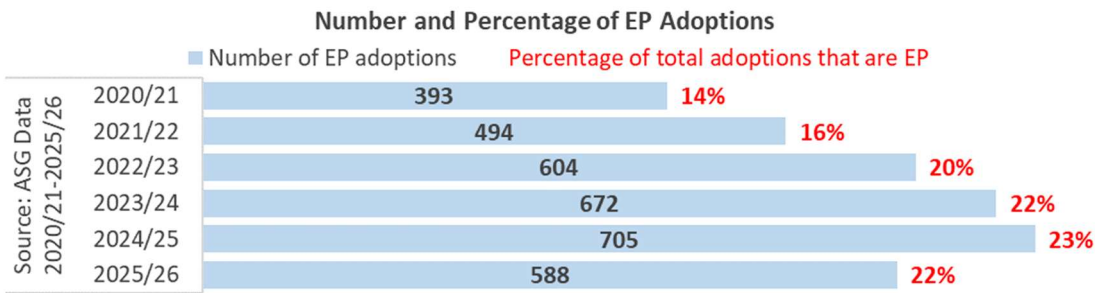


Fig. 1: number and percentage of EP Adoptions from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

Since 2024/25, the proportion of children in an EP Placement with an ADM decision, PO, Match and AO has declined, and children with a placement have remained the same. These declines will likely impact the number of EP adoptions over the next two years (fig. 2).

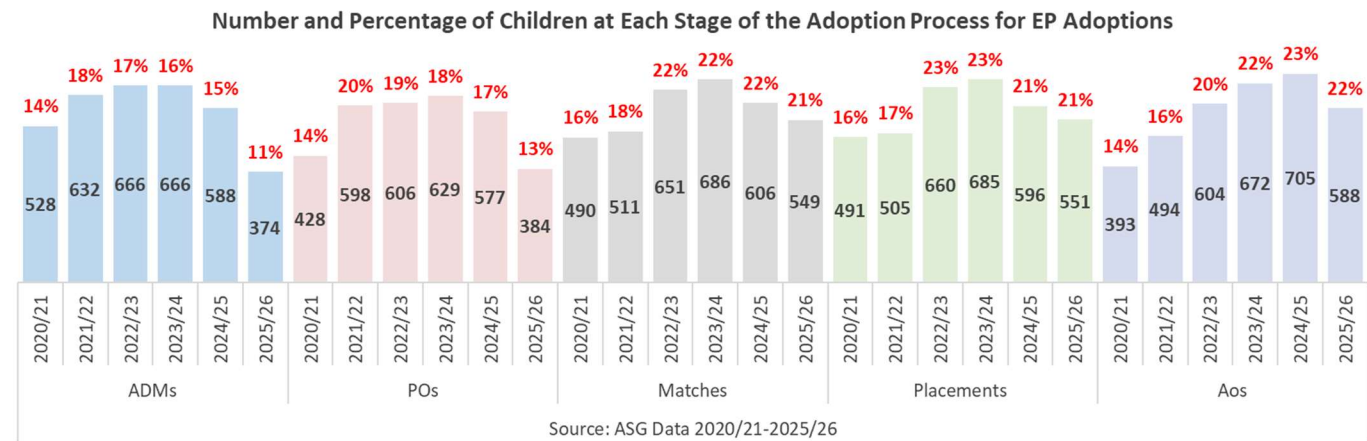


Fig. 2: number and percentage of children at each stage of the adoption process for EP adoptions from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

In 2025/26, the average time for a child in an EP Placement from entry into care to:

- being matched was **13** months
- to adoption was **18** months

Both these figures were **1** month shorter compared to last year. When compared to standard adoptions, children in an EP Placement, the time taken from entry to care to being matched, was **5** months shorter, and from entry into care to adoption was **9** months shorter (fig. 3).

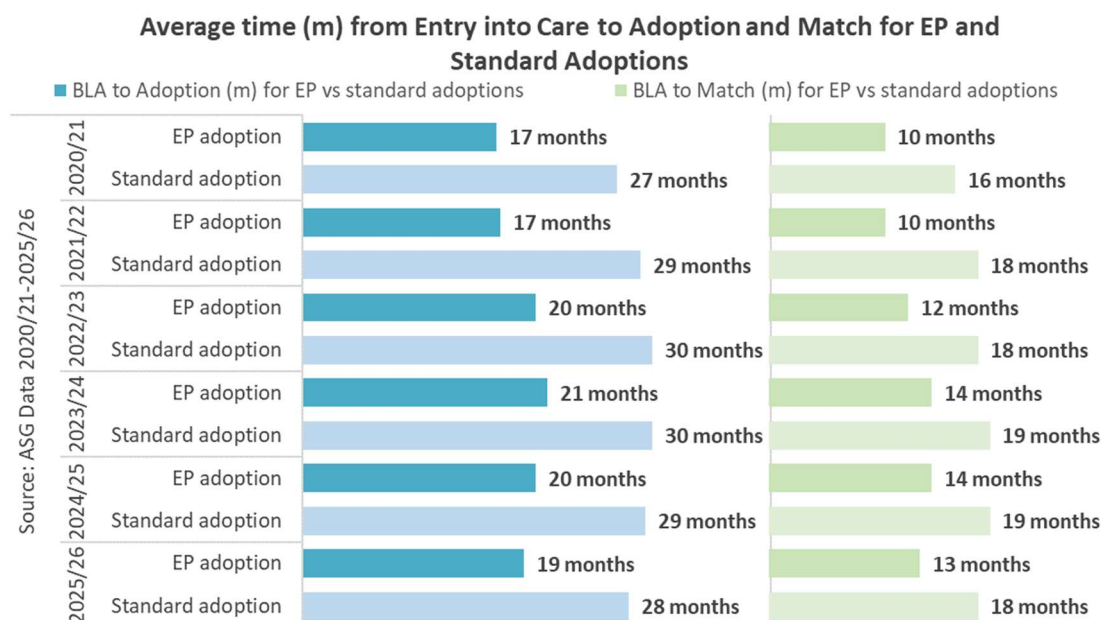


Fig. 3: average time (months) from entry into care to adoption and match for EP and standard adoptions.

In 2025/26 the number of ADM reversals decreased for all adoptions (fig. 4). For EP placements there was **1** ADM reversal, down from **10** in 2024/25, and **5** fewer reversals than standard adoptions in 2025/26. The average time from entry into care to ADM reversal also decreased for EP adoptions, from **14** in 2024/25 to **2** in 2025/26 (86% decrease), but remained the same for standard adoptions (fig. 5).



Fig. 4 (left): number of ADM reversals from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

Fig. 5 (right): average time (months) from entry into care to ADM reversal from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

REGION

The charts below show the number and proportion of EP adoptions by region (fig. 6) and the timeliness for EP adoptions by region (fig.7), in 2025/26. The South West had the largest percentage of EP Adoptions (**35%**), and London and the North West had the longest time from entry into care to adoption (**22 months**).

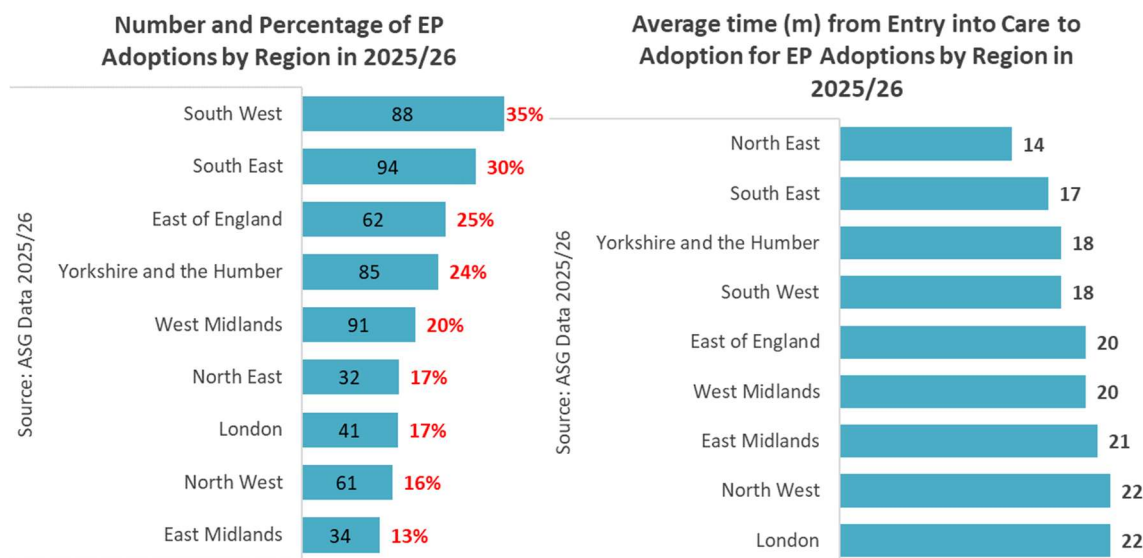


Fig. 6: number and percentage of EP adoptions by region in 2025/26.

Fig. 7: average time (months) from entry into care to adoption for EP adoptions by region in 2025/26.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of EP adoptions by region since 2020/21. All regions have seen an increase of EP adoptions since 2020/21. However, between 2024/25 and 2025/26, 4 regions saw a decrease in EP adoptions, with East Midlands seeing the largest decrease of 9%. The remaining regions have seen an increase, with Yorkshire and the Humber seeing the largest increase of 5%.

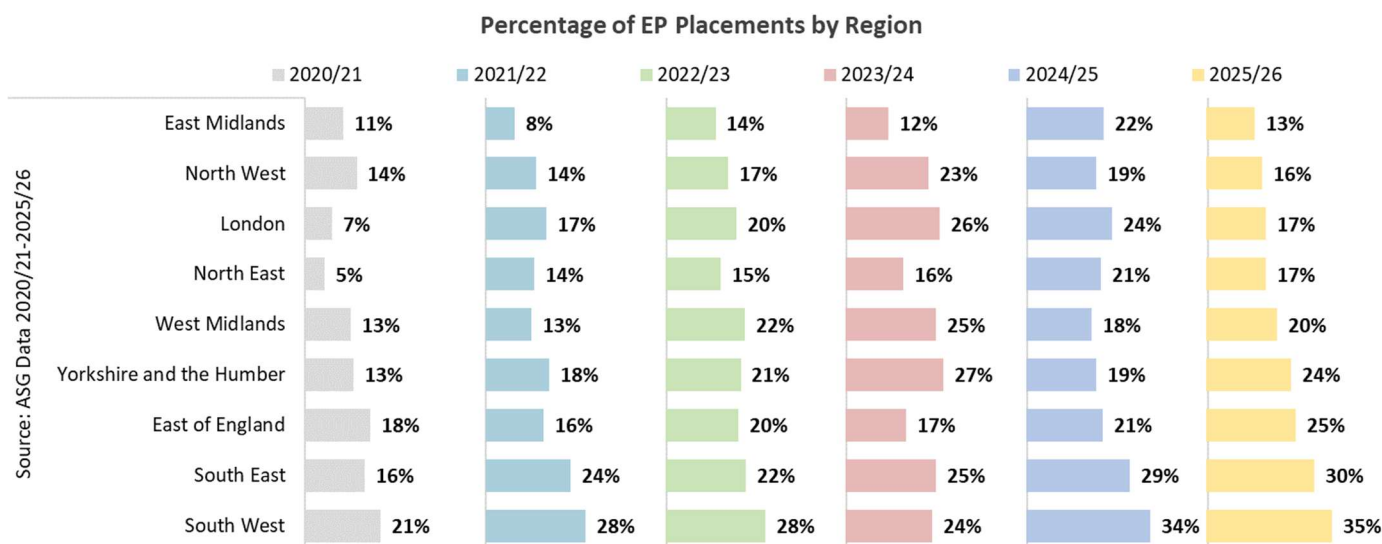


Fig. 8: percentage of EP placements by region from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

Figure 9 below shows the average time taken from entry into care to adoption for EP adoptions by region since 2020/21. All regions have experienced increases and decreases in the average time taken since 2020/21. Since 2024/25, 5 regions saw a decrease in timeliness, 1 remained the same and 3 saw an increase.

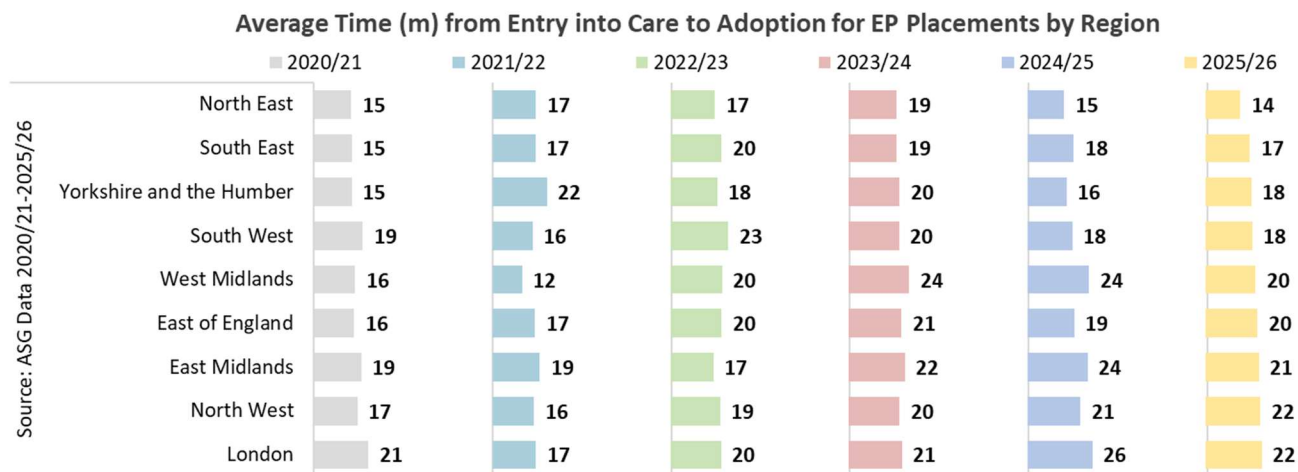


Fig. 9: average time (months) from entry into care to adoption for EP placements by region from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

CHARACTERISTICS

Figures 10, 11, 12 and 13 below show the breakdown of EP placements by children's characteristics when placed in an EP placement, matched, and at adoption order (AO).

In 2025/26:

- the average age of a child placed in an EP placement was **11** months, and matched was **16** months, the same as last year. The average age at AO was **23** months, which is a **1** month decrease compared to 2024/25
- the percentage of children with a disability in an EP placement decreased at placement (0.2%), match (0.5%) and AO (0.9%) compared to 2024/25
- the proportion of children in a sibling group placed and matched continue to decrease, from 24% in 2024/25, to **23%** placed and, **25%** to **21%** matched, while those with an AO increased from 24% to **26%**
- the proportion of children with a Harder to Place (HTP) characteristic, placed in EP and with an AO, increased from **32%** in 2024/26 to **34%** and **25%**, respectively, but % matched remained the same, 32%

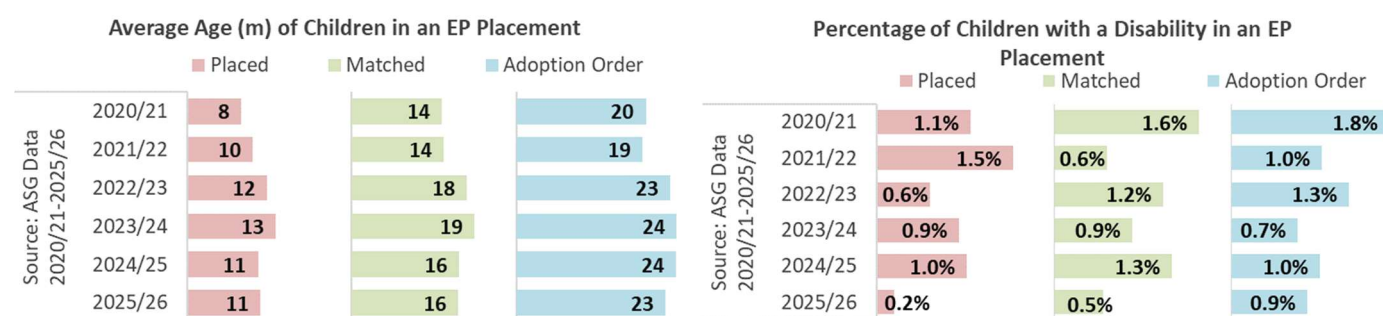


Fig. 10 (left): average age (months) of children in an EP placement from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

Fig. 11 (right): percentage of children with a disability in an EP placement from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

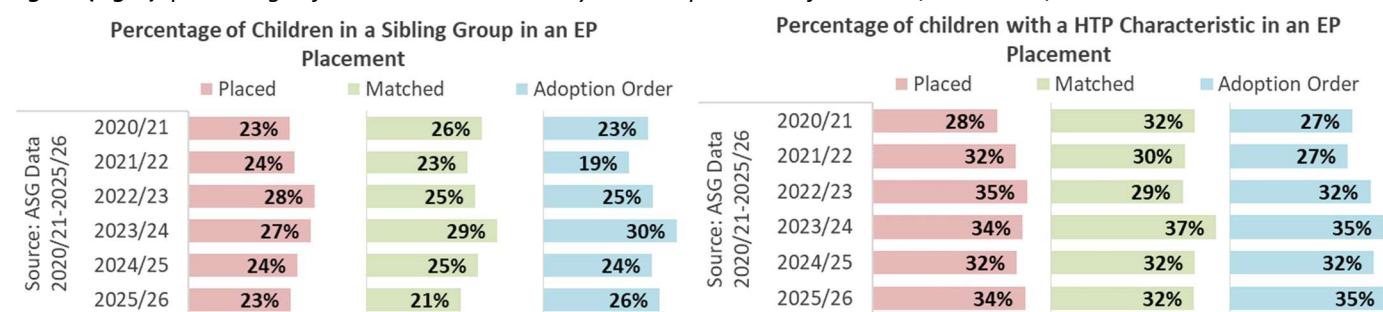


Fig. 12 (left): percentage of children in a sibling group in an EP placement from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

Fig. 13 (right): percentage of children with a harder to place (HTP) characteristic in an EP placement.

The percentage of ethnic minority children placed in an EP placement, matched and with an AO either remained the same or increased when compared to last year (fig. 14). In 2025/26, for children in an EP placement, those from an ethnic minority represented **15%** of children placed, **17%** of children matched and **15%** of children with an AO.

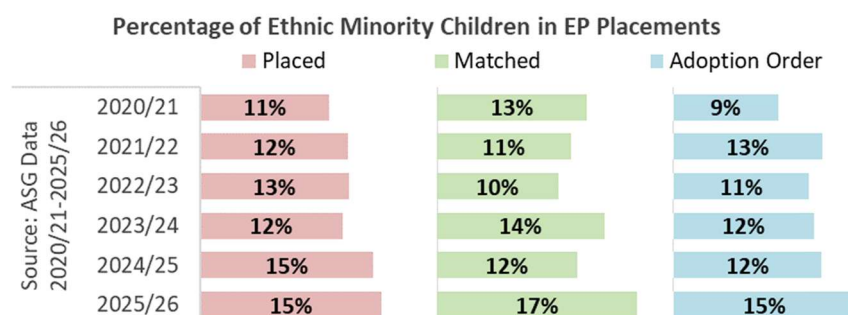


Fig. 14: percentage of ethnic minority children in EP placements from 2021/21 to 2025/26.

Figure 15 below shows the full breakdown of children placed, matched and with an AO by ethnicity.

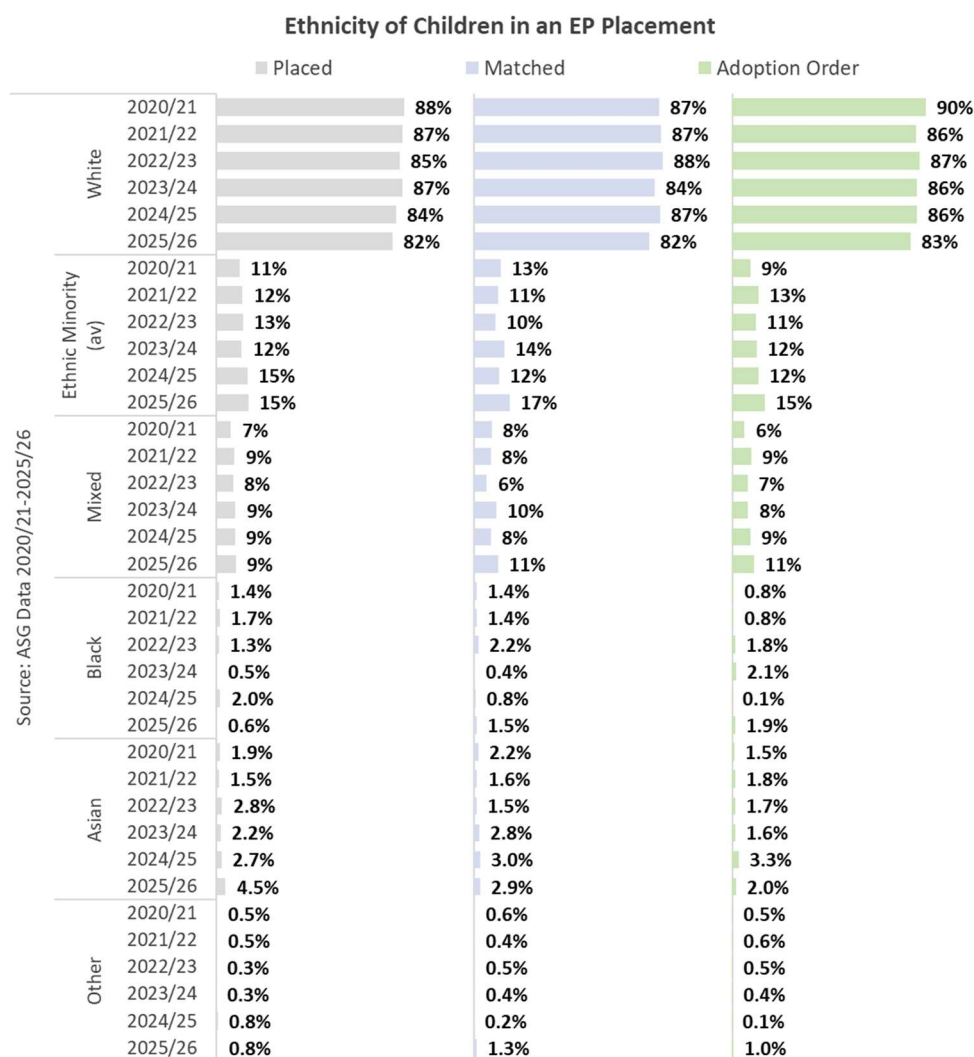


Fig. 15: percentage of children in an EP placement by ethnicity from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

Figure 16 shows the proportion of children adopted who have had an EP Adoption, broken down by ethnicity. In 2025/26, **20%** of all ethnic minority children adopted had an EP adoption. 'Other' ethnicities and Asian children had the highest rate of EP adoptions at **30%** and **29%** respectively.

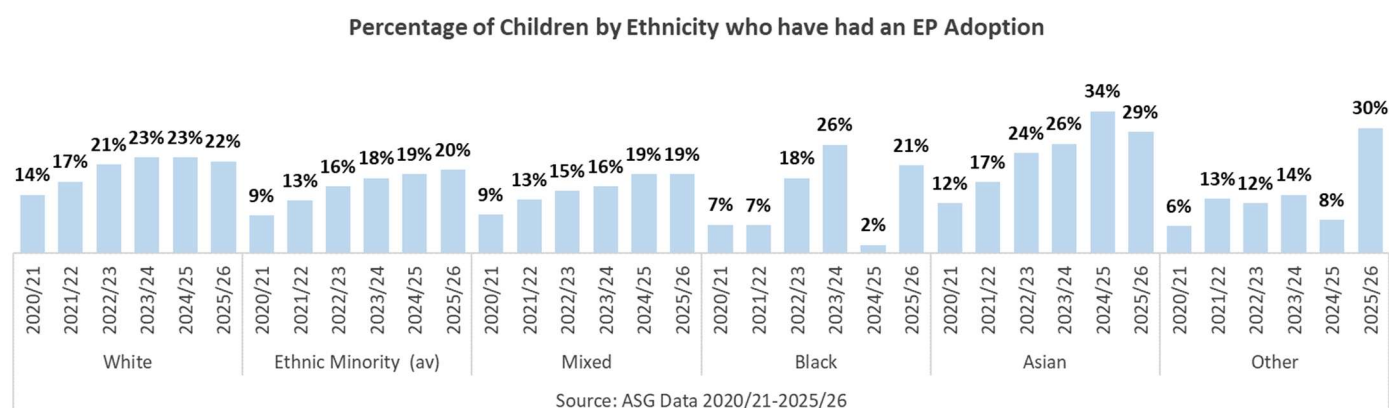


Fig. 16: percentage of children by ethnicity who have had an EP adoption from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

EARLY PERMANENCE ADOPTERS

In 2025/26, **17%** of all approved adopters were participating in an EP adoption (fig. 17), **407** adopters had a child placed and **58** adopters were approved and waiting (fig. 18).

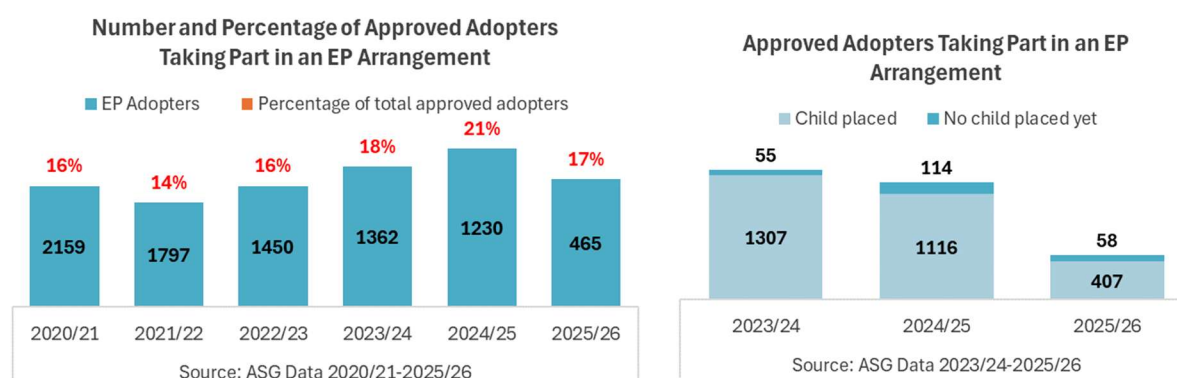


Fig. 17 (left): number and percentage of approved adopters taking part in an EP arrangement from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

Fig. 18 (right): approved adopters taking part in an EP arrangement with a child placed and no child placed yet from 2023/24 to 2025/26.

In 2025/26 the proportion of approved adopters taking part in an EP arrangement was highest in the South West and London, **21%** and **19%** respectively, and lowest in the West Midlands at **7%** (fig. 19).

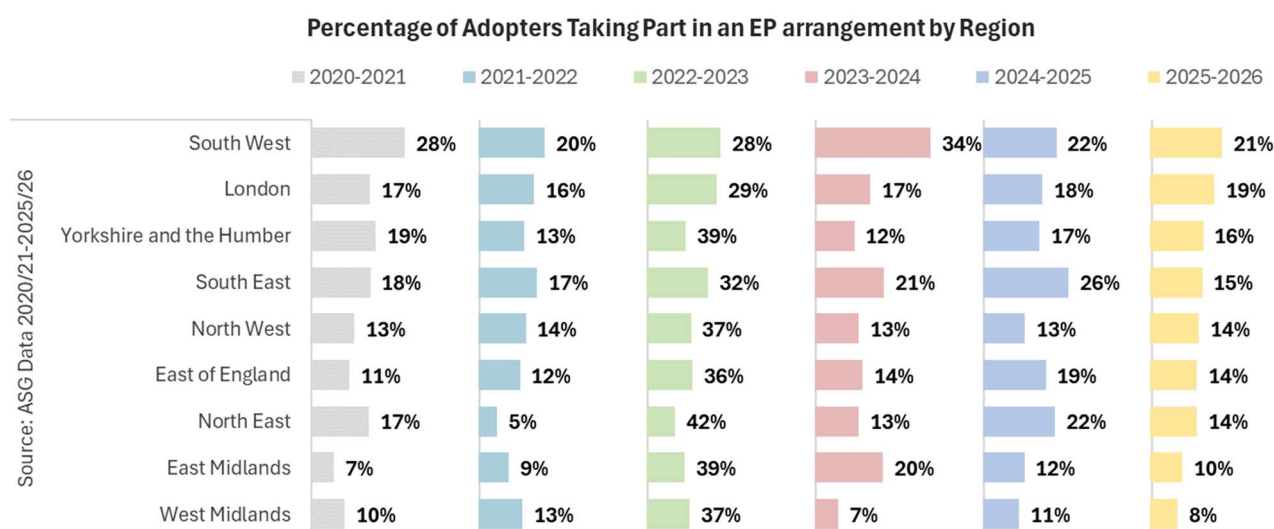


Fig. 19: percentage of adopters taking part in an EP arrangement by region from 2020/21 to 2025/26.

In 2025/26, the number of approved adopters in an EP arrangement with a child placed was also highest in the South West (**69**), and the number with no child placed was highest in the East Midlands (**21**) (fig. 20).

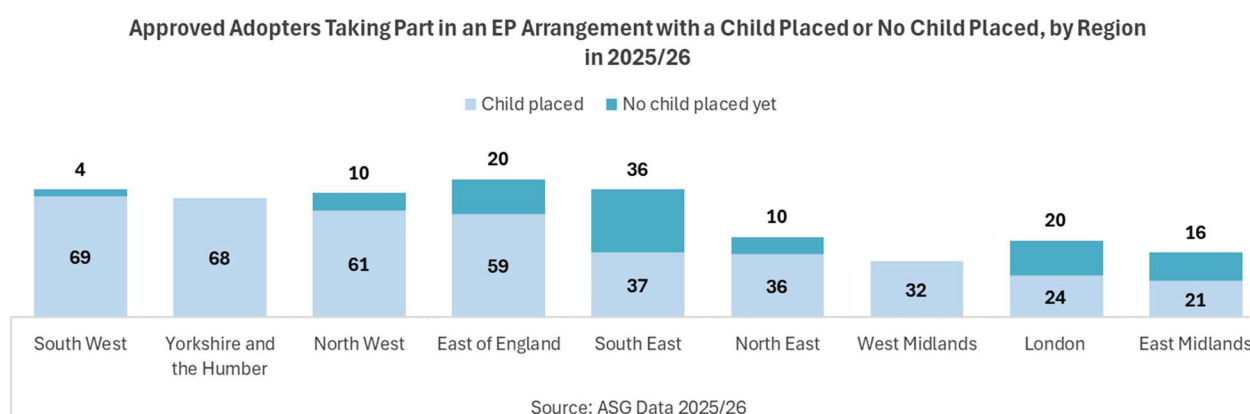


Fig. 20: number of approved adopters taking part in an EP arrangement with a child placed or no child placed, by region in 2025/26.

EARLY PERMANENCE MAPS

The three maps below geographically illustrate the regional findings of EP adoptions:

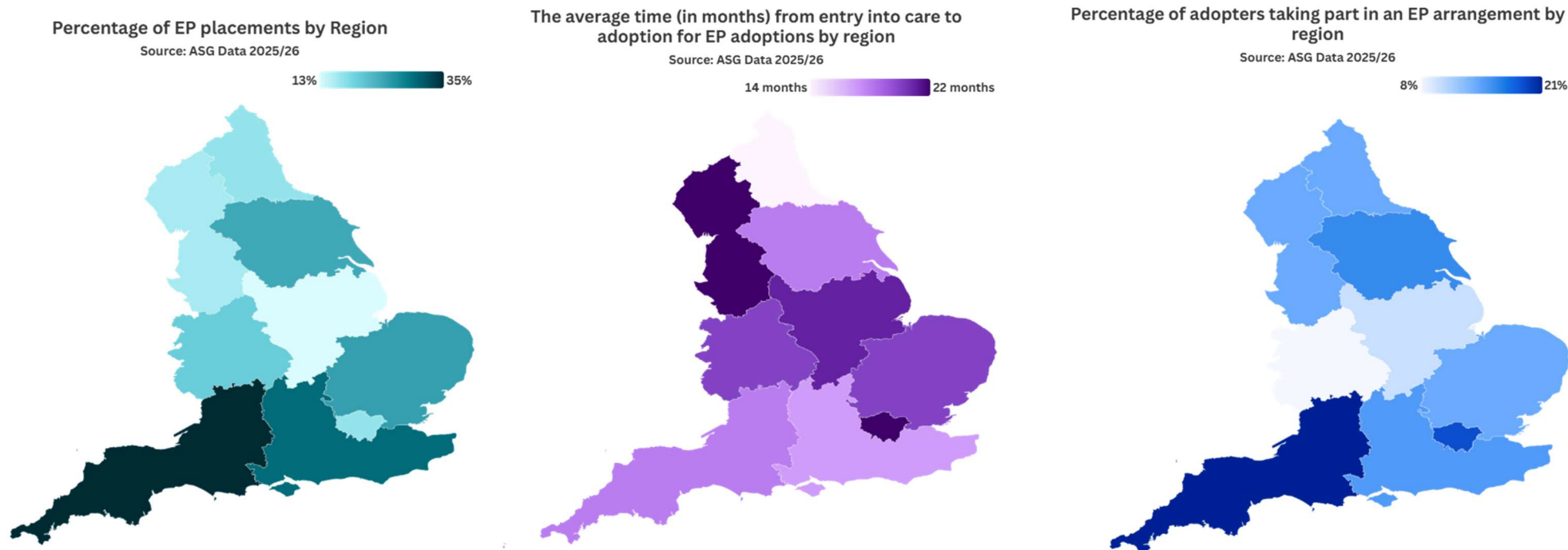


Fig. 21 (left): the percentage of EP placements by region in 2025/26.

Fig. 22 (middle): the average time (months) from entry into care to adoption for EP adoptions by region in 2025/26.

Fig. 23 (right): percentage of adopters taking part in an EP arrangement by region in 2025/26.

These maps show that in 2025/26:

- The South West has the highest percentage of EP placements (fig. 21), and the highest proportion of adopters participating in EP arrangement (fig. 23).
- London had one of the lowest percentage of children in EP placements (fig. 21), the longest time from entry into care to adoption (fig. 22), and one of the highest percentage of adopters participating in EP arrangement (fig. 23).
- The East Midlands had the lowest percentage of children placed in an EP (fig. 21), and one of the lowest percentage of adopters taking part in an EP arrangement (fig. 23).