

## = Family structure in the United States =

The traditional family structure in the United States is considered a family support system involving two married individuals providing care and stability for their biological offspring . However , this two @-@ parent , nuclear family has become less prevalent , and alternative family forms have become more common . The family is created at birth and establishes ties across generations . Those generations , the extended family of aunts , uncles , grandparents , and cousins , can hold significant emotional and economic roles for the nuclear family .

Over time , the traditional structure has had to adapt to very influential changes , including divorce and the introduction of single @-@ parent families , teenage pregnancy and unwed mothers , and same @-@ sex marriage , and increased interest in adoption . Social movements such as the feminist movement and the stay @-@ at @-@ home dad have contributed to the creation of alternative family forms , generating new versions of the American family .

## = = At a glance = =

### = = = Nuclear family = = =

The nuclear family has been considered the " traditional " family since the communist scare in the cold war of the 1950s . The nuclear family consists of a mother , father , and the children . The two @-@ parent nuclear family has become less prevalent , and pre @-@ American and European family forms have become more common .

These include same @-@ sex relationships , single @-@ parent households , adopting individuals , and extended family systems living together . The nuclear family is also choosing to have fewer children than in the past . The percentage of married @-@ couple households with children under 18 has declined to 23 @. @ 5 % of all households in 2000 from 25 @. @ 6 % in 1990 , and from 45 % in 1960 .

### = = = Single parent = = =

A single parent ( also termed lone parent or sole parent ) is a parent who cares for one or more children without the assistance of the other biological parent . Historically , single @-@ parent families often resulted from death of a spouse , for instance in childbirth . Single @-@ parent homes are increasing as married couples divorce , or as unmarried couples have children . Although widely believed to be detrimental to the mental and physical well being of a child , this type of household is tolerated .

The percentage of single @-@ parent households has doubled in the last three decades , but that percentage tripled between 1900 and 1950 . The sense of marriage as a " permanent " institution has been weakened , allowing individuals to consider leaving marriages more readily than they may have in the past . Increasingly single parent families are due to out of wedlock births , especially those due to unintended pregnancy .

### = = = Stepfamilies = = =

Stepfamilies are becoming more familiar in America . Divorce rates are rising and the remarriage rate is rising as well , therefore , bringing two families together making step families . Statistics show that there are 1 @, @ 300 new stepfamilies forming every day . Over half of American families are remarried , that is 75 % of marriages ending in divorce , remarry .

### = = = Extended family = = =

The extended family consists of grandparents , aunts , uncles , and cousins . In some

circumstances , the extended family comes to live either with or in place of a member of the nuclear family . An example includes elderly parents who move in with their children due to old age . This places large demands on the caregivers , particularly the female relatives who choose to perform these duties for their extended family .

Historically , among certain Asian and Native American cultures the family structure consisted of a grandmother and her children , especially daughters , who raised their own children together and shared child care responsibilities . Uncles , brothers , and other male relatives sometimes helped out . Romantic relationships between men and women were formed and dissolved with little impact on the children who remained in the mother 's extended family .

= = Roles and relationships = =

= = = Married partners = = =

A married couple was defined as a " husband and wife enumerated as members of the same household " by the U.S. Census Bureau , but they will be categorizing same @-@ sex couples as married couples if they are married . Same @-@ sex couples who were married were previously recognized by the Census Bureau as unmarried partners . Same @-@ sex marriage is legally permitted across the country since June 26 , 2015 , when the Supreme Court issued its decision in Obergefell v. Hodges . Polygamy is illegal throughout the U.S.

Although Cousin marriages are illegal in most states , they are legal in many states , the District of Columbia and some territories . Some states have some restrictions or exceptions for cousin marriages and / or recognize such marriages performed out @-@ of @-@ state . Since the 1940s , the United States marriage rate has decreased , whereas rates of divorce have increased .

= = = Unwed partners = = =

Living as unwed partners is also known as cohabitation . The number of heterosexual unmarried couples in the United States has increased tenfold , from about 400 @,@ 000 in 1960 to more than five million in 2005 . This number would increase by at least another 594 @,@ 000 if same @-@ sex partners were included . Of all unmarried couples , about 1 in 9 ( 11 @.@ 1 % of all unmarried @-@ partner households ) are homosexual .

The cohabitation lifestyle is becoming more popular in today 's generation . It is more convenient for couples not to get married because it can be cheaper and simpler . As divorce rates rise in society , the desire to get married is less attractive for couples uncertain of their long @-@ term plans .

= = = Parents = = =

Parents can be either the biological mother or biological father , or the legal guardian for adopted children . Traditionally , mothers were responsible for raising the kids while the father was out providing financially for the family . The age group for parents ranges from teenage parents to grandparents who have decided to raise their grandchildren , with teenage pregnancies fluctuating based on race and culture . Older parents are financially established and generally have fewer problems raising children compared to their teenage counterparts .

= = = Housewives = = =

A housewife is a married woman who does not work outside of the home for income but stays and takes care of the home and children . This includes doing the cooking , washing , cleaning , etc . The roles of women working within the house has changed drastically as more women start to pursue careers . The amount of time women spend doing housework declined from 27 hours per week in 1965 to less than 16 hours in 1995 , but it is still substantially more housework than their

male partners .

== = " Breadwinners " == =

A breadwinner is the main financial provider in the family . Historically the husband has been the breadwinner ; that trend is changing as wives start to take advantage of the women 's movement to gain financial independence for themselves . According to the New York Times , " In 2001 , wives earned more than their spouses in almost a third of married households where the wife worked . " Yet , even within nuclear families in which both spouses are employed outside of the home , many men are still responsible for a substantially smaller share of household duties .

== = Stay @-@ at @-@ home dads == =

Stay @-@ at @-@ home dads are fathers that do not participate in the labor market and raise their children ? the male equivalent to housewives . Stay @-@ at @-@ home dads are not as popular in American society . According to the U.S. Census Bureau , " There are an estimated 105 @,@ 000 ' stay @-@ at @-@ home ' dads . These are married fathers with children under 15 who are not in the labor force primarily so they can care for family members while their wives work outside the home . Stay @-@ at @-@ home dads care for 189 @,@ 000 children . "

== = Children == =

== = Only child families == =

An only child ( single child ) is one without any biological or adopted brothers or sisters . Single children are stereotypically portrayed as spoiled , self @-@ centered , and selfish . Single children often excel more in school and in their careers than children with siblings .

== = Childfree and Childlessness == =

Childfree couples chose to not have children . These include young couples , who intend to have children later , as well as those who do not plan to have any children .

Involuntary childlessness may be caused by infertility , medical problems , death of a child , or other factors .

== = Adopted children == =

Adopted children are children that were given up at birth , abandoned or were unable to be cared for by their biological parents . They may have been put into foster care before finding their permanent residence . It is particularly hard for adopted children to get adopted from foster care : only 50 @,@ 000 children were adopted in 2001 . The average age of these children was 7 years old , which shows that fewer older children were adopted .

== = Modern family models == =

== = Same @-@ sex marriage , adoption , and child rearing == =

Same @-@ sex parents are gay or lesbian couples that choose to raise children . Nationally , 66 % of female same @-@ sex couples and 44 % of male same @-@ sex couples live with children under 18 years old . In the 2000 census , there were 594 @,@ 000 households that claimed to be headed by same @-@ sex couples , with 72 % of those having children . In July 2004 , the

American Psychological Association concluded that " Overall results of research suggests that the development , adjustment , and well @-@ being of children with lesbian and gay parents do not differ markedly from that of children with heterosexual parents . "

= = = Single @-@ parent households = = =

Single @-@ parent homes in America are starting to become more common in today 's society . With more children being born to unmarried couples and to couples whose marriages subsequently dissolve , children increasingly live with only one parent . The proportion of children living with a never @-@ married parent has also grown , from 4 % in 1960 to 42 % in 2001 . Of all one parent families , 83 % are mother ? child families .

= = = Adoption requirements = = =

The adoption requirements and policies for adopting children have made it harder for foster families and potential adoptive families to adopt kids . Before a family can adopt they must go through state , county , and agency criteria . Adoption agencies ' criteria express the importance of age of the adoptive parents , as well as the agency 's desire for married couples over single adopters . Adoptive parents also have to deal with criteria that are given by the birth parents of the adoptive child . The different criteria for adopting children makes it harder for couples to adopt children in need , but the strict requirements can help protect the foster children from unqualified couples .

Currently 1 @.@ 5 million ( 2 % ) of all U.S children are adopted . There are different types of adoption ; embryo adoption when a couple is having trouble conceiving a child and instead choose to have their sperm and egg conjoined outside the womb , international adoption where couples adopt children that come from foreign countries , and private adoption which is the most common form of adoption . In private adoption , families can adopt children via licensed agencies or with by directly contacting the child 's biological parents .

= = = Male / female role pressures = = =

The traditional " father " and " mother " roles of the nuclear family have become blurred over time . Because of the women 's movement 's push for women to engage in traditionally masculine pursuits in society , as women choose to sacrifice their child @-@ bearing years to establish their careers , and as fathers feel increasing pressure to be involved with tending to children , the traditional roles of fathers as the " breadwinners " and mothers as the " caretakers " have come into question .

= = African @-@ American family structure = =

The family structure of African @-@ Americans has long been a matter of national public policy interest . The 1965 report by Daniel Patrick Moynihan , known as The Moynihan Report , examined the link between black poverty and family structure . It hypothesized that the destruction of the black nuclear family structure would hinder further progress toward economic and political equality .

When Moynihan wrote in 1965 on the coming destruction of the black family , the out @-@ of @-@ wedlock birthrate was 25 percent among blacks . In 1991 , 68 percent of black children were born outside of marriage . In 2011 , 72 % of black babies were born to unwed mothers .

= = Television portrayals = =

The television industry initially helped create a stereotype of the American nuclear family . During the era of the baby boomers , families became a popular social topic , especially on television . Family shows such as Roseanne , All in the Family , Leave It to Beaver , The Cosby Show , Married ... with Children , The Jeffersons , and Good Times , Everybody Loves Raymond have portrayed different social classes of families growing up in America . Those " perfect " nuclear families have

changed as the years passed and have become more inclusive , showing single @-@ parent and divorced families , as well as older singles . Television shows that show single @-@ parent families include Half & Half , One on One , Murphy Brown , and Gilmore Girls .

While it did not become a common occurrence the iconic image of the American family was started in the early 1930s . It was not until WWII that families generally had the economical income in which to successfully propagate this lifestyle .