

Over the past decade, the cultural shift for American families has moved away from traditionalism and toward modernity. During this time, American society has seen an increase in divorce rates, a decline in marriage rates, an increase in mothers in the workforce, an increase in single-parent households, a rise in blended families, and an increase in same-sex families. Current trends indicate that by 2035, the traditional family model will be even closer to extinction than it is now. However, Gen Z and younger generations are seeking religion and offering hope to those looking for a return to traditionalism.

The current trends in marriage are showing several interesting findings. One of these is the overall declining rate of marriage. In 2024, U.S. adults were less likely to be married than at almost any point in history (USAFacts, 2023). The overall rate of decrease in marriage is easily explained by the decrease in religiosity in today's population. Since 2014, there has been a 9 percent drop in those who identify as Christian (Pew Research Center, 2025). While obviously Christianity is not the only religion, it is the most important in the U.S. and still reflects the overall drop in religiosity. This drop in religiosity could also be a reason why there has been such an increase in single parenting and an increase in adults living together in relationships without being married.

Overall, cultural trends are pushing certain lifestyles that may have been unacceptable a couple of decades ago to being acceptable now. People mainly feel that consenting adults should be able to be with other adults in several different capacities that do not involve marriage or that may not involve traditional marriage. This change is also responsible for the different types of parenting seen now, and why some styles of traditional marriages or parenting are looked down upon. Today, the overall shift from traditional family structures to nontraditional structures is staggering. One piece of research done by Pew found that “the share of children living in a

two-parent household is at the lowest point in more than half a century: 69% are in this type of family arrangement today, compared with 73% in 2000 and 87% in 1960” (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Besides the change in religiosity, there are other explanations for why there has been such a decrease in the traditional family. A good one to start with is the current economic state of the country, which has made it hard to be a traditional family if you are poor or middle class for at least the past 50 years. This has made it fundamentally difficult for working-class families to follow the traditional model even if they want to. Currently, it is not fiscally possible to support a family if the man is not making at least the median household income of \$80,000 per year. On this same line of thought, housing prices, as a result of a higher amount of inflation and lack of available land in most populated areas, have caused a housing crisis, making it hard, if not impossible, for working-class families to buy a house at a young age. Traditional households were objectively easier and occurred more frequently in the past because families could buy property at cheaper rates and make more money than they do now.

Another simple explanation for the change in society's view on marriage and the structures of families is the overall increase in technology. While having many objectively positive effects on society, technology has had some negative consequences, and one of those is the way relationships have changed. With the advent of smartphones and dating apps, there has been a shift in the way people value the relationships they seek. One study points to the fact that a large chunk of users on dating apps are just dating casually or hooking up (Vogels & McClain, 2023). This overall causes a shift away from the traditional values and structures society once held because individuals, especially young people, value the meaning of sex less and do not hold long-term relationships in the same regard.

Technology has not only changed the way people value relationships and go about meeting potential partners, but it has also changed the way nontraditional families can structure their families or have kids. A good example of this is things like IVF and surrogacy. Both of these practices make it possible for those who would not qualify under the traditional family structure to raise their own offspring in some way. While there is definitely ethical ambiguity around the subject, it still does not take away from the fact that the increase in science and technology has made it possible for nontraditional families to have children when they could not before.

Based on current cultural and political trends, there are several different typical household scenarios that may occur or probably will occur in 2035. The biggest one is likely to be the steady increase in dual-income households with shared parenting responsibilities. This is already the majority of households now, and barring any major economic change, the number is only going to increase. Beyond just the financial reasons, culturally, society will probably never go back to limiting women to just the house. Even among conservatives, the idea of women just being housewives is fading. It is important to note that while the number of households with dual-income earners will steadily increase and become the vast majority of marriages, the number of egalitarian households will probably still be below 50 percent. This is because today, only 29 percent of marriages are egalitarian (Fry et al., 2023).

Another household scenario increasing by 2035 is LGBTQIA+ households and LGBTQIA+ households with children. Currently, there are more than 2.5 million LGBTQIA+ adults parenting children (Williams Institute, 2024). Out of all scenarios, this will undoubtedly have the biggest consequences and pose the greatest challenge to conservatives with traditional values. Many traditionalists and Christians alike argue the irreparable harm the rise in these

households will have on not just society, but the children the LGBTQIA+ parents are raising. One study done in 2012 found that children raised in same-sex relationships had more negative outcomes as adults compared to those raised by their married biological parents (Eggebeen, 2012). While this study is fundamentally sound, it is important to note that at the time, there were not many transgender marriages to analyze, so they are not very well represented in the study. While yes, the research is from 2012, it is almost impossible to find any recent social science research that is not politically biased.

In conclusion, by the year 2035, there will probably be no "typical" household structure outside of two adults who both work full-time jobs to support their families. This ultimately stems from the drastic changes in our economy, culture, and political landscape. For traditionalists who advocate for the nuclear household system, there is still hope. Several bodies of research indicate that while religiosity might be going down among the general population, it is actually increasing among young people, specifically Gen Z (Hill, 2025). This means that maybe not in 2035, but later down the road, society may see a return to the more traditional model, and more families will begin adhering to conservative values.

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