**Family Structures**

The following types of families exist today, with some families naturally falling into multiple categories. For example, a single parent family who lives in a larger, extended family. While these types of families are distinct in definition, in practice the lines are less clear.

**Nuclear Family**

The [nuclear family](http://family.lovetoknow.com/definition-nuclear-family) is the traditional type of family structure. This family type consists of two parents and children. The nuclear family was long held in esteem by society as being the ideal in which to raise children. Children in nuclear families receive strength and stability from the two-parent structure and generally have more opportunities due to the financial ease of two adults. According to U.S. Census [data](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2010.html), almost 70 percent of children live in a nuclear family unit.

**Single Parent Family**

The [single parent family](http://family.lovetoknow.com/single-parent-family) consists of one parent raising one or more children on his own. Often, a single parent family is a mother with her children, although there are single fathers as well. The single parent family is the biggest change society has seen in terms of the changes in family structures. One in four children is born to a single mother. Single parent families are generally close and find ways to work together to solve problems, such as dividing up household chores. When only one parent is at home, it may be a struggle to find childcare, as there is only one parent working. This limits income and opportunities in many cases, although many single parent families have help from relatives and friends.

**Extended Family**

The [extended family](http://family.lovetoknow.com/about-family-values/definition-extended-families) structure consists of two or more adults who are related, either by blood or marriage, living in the same home. This family includes many relatives living together and working toward common goals, such as raising the children and keeping up with the household duties. Many extended families include cousins, aunts or uncles and grandparents living together. This type of family structure may form due to financial difficulties or because older relatives are unable to care for themselves alone. Extended families are becoming increasingly common all over the world.

**Childless Family**

While most people think of family as including children, there are couples who either cannot or choose not to have children. The childless family is sometimes the "forgotten family," as it does not meet the traditional standards set by society. Childless families consist of a husband and wife living and working together. Many childless families take on the responsibility of pet ownership or have extensive contact with their nieces and nephews as a substitute for having their own children.

**Stepfamily**

Over half of all marriages end in divorce, and many of these individuals choose to get remarried. This creates the stepfamily, which involves two separate families merging into one new unit. It consists of a new husband and wife and their children from previous marriages or relationships. Stepfamilies are about as common as the nuclear family, although they tend to have more [problems](http://health.howstuffworks.com/pregnancy-and-parenting/understanding-family-structures-and-dynamics-ga8.htm), such as adjustment periods and discipline issues. Stepfamilies need to learn to work together and also work with their exes to ensure these family units run smoothly.

**Grandparent Family**

Many grandparents today are raising their grandchildren for a variety of reasons. [One in fourteen children](http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2012/US-children-grandparents.aspx) is raised by his grandparents, and the parents are not present in the child's life. This could be due to parents' death, addiction, abondonment or being unfit parents. Many grandparents need to go back to work or find additional sources of income to help raise their grandchildren.

**Variety of Structures**

There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to what is the best type of family structure. As long as a family is filled with love and support for one another, it tends to be successful and thrive. Families need to do what is best for each other and themselves, and that can be achieved in almost any unit.