

Family structure changes

[Family](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

During the past few decades there have been major changes in the structure of the family. A family used to be represented by a married couple with children, generally of the same race and living under the same roof. The traditional family was known for its stability and unmarried people were considered to live a life of loneliness. Numerous people today still believe that the nuclear family is the best for raising children and even the media and television portray the best situations with the traditional family. Studies show that people in Canada and all around the world are freer than ever before to establish the kinds of family relationships that best work for them. More and more people choose to stay in long-term common law relationships rather than to get married.

People in the 21st century also choose to have fewer children than the previous generations. They want to focus more on their careers and be financially stable before they decide to settle down. The divorce rates are also very high, it is estimated that half of all marriages will end up in divorce. i] Canadians wait longer than did their parents or their grandparents to establish their own families and only 38% of couples with children are legally married. [ii] We now see different types of families in our society such as nuclear families, single-parent families, extended families and childless families. There has even been a growing movement in the number of countries that support same-sex marriages. People in the 21st century marry later in life or choose not to marry at all.

Women focus on developing themselves to better their lives before getting married and having children. More and more people feel the need to “live their lives” while they are still at a young age. In the 1970’s women and men

used to marry when they were around 23 and 25. Now they're 28 and 30, five years older. [iii] Women are becoming more independent, they don't feel that they need a husband to support them anymore. They have priorities such as traveling or getting good jobs and expect more egalitarian relationships than ever before. The media and our culture have managed to create and sustain a fear of marriage.

Many singers today write songs about the "single life" and promote the idea that lots of money will help you find a partner easily. One of the main reasons why people choose not to marry is the fear of losing their independence. People want to be free of family responsibilities, they want to be able to go out and not feel tied down by their partner. They want to know they can leave any time they wish if the relationship doesn't make them happy anymore. Men and women who grew up in a family where there was constant fighting are afraid of becoming just like their parents. Another reason why people choose not to marry is because they fear failure. They consider that a "piece of paper" doesn't mean anything and in case of divorce, they would add to the high number of already divorced couples.

It is well known that the rising proportion of women who bear children out of wedlock has been increasing in the past decades. Government health officials say that 4 in 10 babies in the United States are born out of wedlock. [iv] This phenomenon was once associated with African-American women but it affects the white population as well. Children who are raised in only-mother homes can suffer harmful consequences such as school suspension, abuse and drug addiction. Single-parent families are most popular in England, America, Canada, Russia, the Middle East, China and Japan. It was in the <https://assignbuster.com/family-structure-changes/>

enlightened countries that divorce became legal and individual consent was required for signing a marriage contract. The law (until into the 20th century) made it clear that a child had to have two parents.

Now the policies have changed. Men and women who marry don't necessarily view marriage as a lifelong commitment and it is more socially acceptable to have a child out of wedlock. Nearly 40% of all babies born in the United States in 2009 were born to unmarried women. [v] One type of marriage that is becoming popular in today's society is same sex marriage, also known as gay marriage. There is a lot of misunderstanding as well as many stereotypes about gay relationships. A high number of people admit to being against gay marriage. Some believe that marriage is an institution between a man and a woman or that the purpose behind marriage is procreation.

In reality, people are simply not comfortable with this idea. The growing acceptance of homosexuality is a threat to the traditional Christian beliefs about sex and marriage and some religious groups see homosexuality as a sin and condemn all forms of homosexual behaviour. Many suggest that both a father and a mother are necessary for the normal development of the child and that any time of significant change in family structure is a time of stress to the parties and the children involved. Divorce in a family has a very negative effect on the views and behaviour of the child. People faced with a change in their family structure grow more critical of personal relationships, especially when it comes to marriage because they have more experience in the breaking up of relationships than children from stable relationships. People get divorced due to multiple reasons such as abuse,
<https://assignbuster.com/family-structure-changes/>

infidelity, financial problems or simply rushing into marriage too quickly without realizing what it actually means. One of the main reasons why people choose to go on separate ways is abuse.

Abuse can be of different types and it can change a child's life forever.

Physical abuse includes hitting and or striking a person in a harmful way.

Physical abuse is easy to spot because it often leaves bruises on the body of the victim. Sexual abuse is any type of touching that is unwanted and it is often performed by a person close to the victim. There have been numerous cases of children who were abused by one of their parents or a close relative.

Verbal abuse includes yelling and name calling. Verbal abuse can have a huge impact on the mental state of a child; constant name calling can be extremely harmful to his or her self-esteem.

Adults who were abused as children often find themselves in abusive relationships. There are few very obvious differences between children in single and two-parent families. One of the main differences is the economic decline experienced usually by single mothers. It is estimated that 40% of poor families have a female head of the household. Divorced women with children are four times more likely to have an annual income below the poverty line. [vi] Another main difference is the stress that children go through during their parents' divorce. They often have to move away from home, change schools and lose touch with old friends and family members.

Both parents and children are affected by this, as seen in the huge increase of suicides and psychological and sociologic damage done to families. The third main difference is the changed family structure that the child has to

deal with. They often grow up without the example of a parent of the same sex and have high risks of teenage pregnancy, teenage marriage and divorce later on in life. Studies have shown that there are also lower educational expectations and lower general well-being in children in step-families. Some believe that Enlightenment was the intellectual development that managed to throw off all ancient rules and taught people how to make their own decisions. The falling marriage rate, the rising number of working mothers, the tolerance of homosexuality, abortion and childlessness have transformed our society. It is estimated that as the baby boom ages, the number of people in marriages will decline and the number of couples without children will increase.

[vii] Marriage is now seen as a personal preference, the law and public opinion enforce the idea of maintaining a happy relationship without worrying about making it formal.