

# The decrease of the nuclear family

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There are several possible reasons for the decrease in the number of nuclear families, particularly in the past forty years. This includes rising cohabitation, higher divorce rates, secularisation, rising same sex relationships, more career seekers and the rise in feminism. Firstly, a nuclear family is a family consisting of a man and woman (usually married) in a sexual relationship with one or more children. One reason for this type of family becoming less common is due to the rising number of divorces.

Getting divorced has become much easier than in the past. 40% of all marriages end in divorce. There is much less stigma attached to divorce in modern society so people are less afraid to do it, resulting in more people divorcing. In the past divorce was highly frowned upon within society. This could have been because people were more religious and using the example of Christianity divorce was not allowed according to the church. Divorce breaks down a nuclear family into what would become a single parent family and a singleton.

If more divorces occur then less nuclear families are able to exist therefore explaining part of the decrease of nuclear families. Secondly, another reason is because cohabiting is becoming more popular. People are seeing the upsides of cohabitation such as it is cheaper than paying for a marriage ceremony, also people are scared of divorce so to not be married takes away this fear and people find it good to cohabit before marrying to get to know your partner better. Most people cohabit before they marry as a sort of ‘tester’ marriage.

If fewer marriages as a whole are taking place and more people finding it appealing to cohabit then less nuclear families are able to form due to the

lack of first marriages. Thirdly, sex before marriage and previously mentioned, Cohabitation and divorce are all examples of the effect of secularisation. Secularisation is the decrease in influence of religion and this is a large contributing factor to the decrease of nuclear families. Religion provides discipline and structure to ordinary life. Rules such as no sex before marriage direct people onto the pathway of family and would increase the number of nuclear families.

Secularisation however means people are not following rules such as these and therefore leading to a decrease in the number of nuclear families as more people did follow these rules in the past. Fourthly, over the last 40 years more same sex relationships are occurring due to change in legislation and reduce in stigma. Same sex relationships in the past were highly frowned upon and even illegal. Linking back to secularisation, stigma has decreased on the topic of homosexuality as most religions state same sex relationships are not allowed.

So in the past more people agreed with and followed these rules however now people are much more accepting and open about same sex relationships. The civil partnership act of 2004 meant that gay couples could have the same rights as married couples. This led to a large rise in the amount of same sex relationships and as this was increasing the amount of nuclear families started decreasing as a nuclear family cannot consist of two people of the same sex. Fifthly, the rise in career seeking people has risen.

People who are dedicated to their work often do not have time to sustain a relationship and settle down and have a family. This means there are less first marriages today as the facts show. In England and Wales 143,000 first  
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marriages occurred in 2007. This is significantly lower than the figure of 340,000 which was the number of first marriages in 1971. If less first marriages are happening then the amount of nuclear families cannot rise and is very likely to fall. Finally, the rise in feminism means women have less reason to marry as they do not need a male provider.

Women have gained equal rights to men and many choose to show their independence by pursuing a career or excelling in education. Females now perform better in schools than males and are equally viable for jobs which in the past would be done by men such as most office work. Women are now in high up positions in many companies and no longer need the man of the house to provide for them and so do not marry. This decrease in first marriages impacts the amount of nuclear families as less are able to form due to less overall marriages.