Types of Family Structures

Family structure has changed dramatically over the last 50 years. The "Leave it to Beaver" family is no longer the standard, and several variations on family have been created. There are different types of family structures identified by society today.

**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 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, almost 70 percent of children live in a nuclear family unit.

**Single Parent Family**

The 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 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.

**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 . Stepfamilies are about as common as the nuclear family, although they tend to have more problems, 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.

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.