

## MAIN TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY FAMILY LIFE

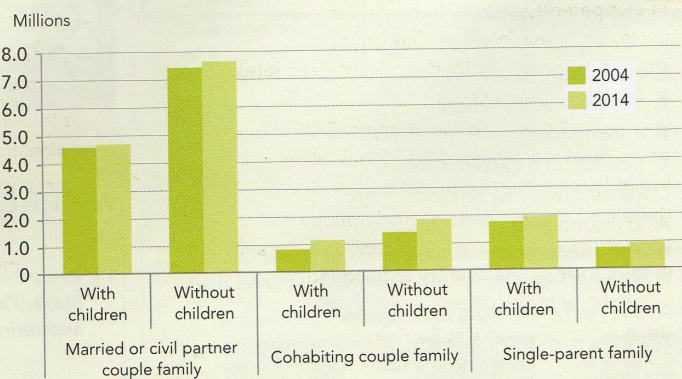
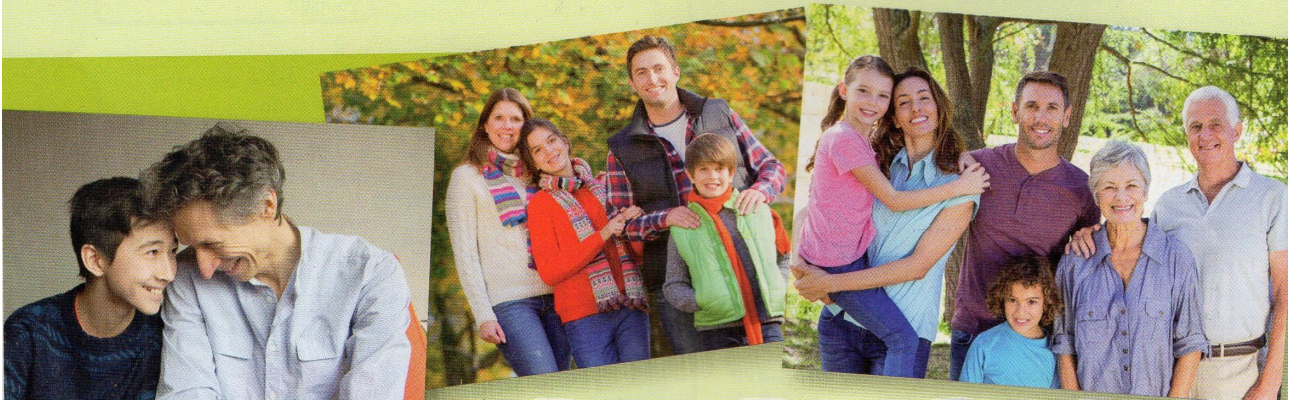
### Getting started

① Read the following family descriptions (1–8). Ask your classmates questions: can you find at least one person in your class whose family fits each description?

- 1 I don't have any brothers or sisters.
- 2 I live with only one parent.
- 3 I live with two parents.
- 4 I live with a grandmother or grandfather.
- 5 I have a stepmother or stepfather.
- 6 My family comes from a different country.
- 7 At least two people in our family are different races.
- 8 I live with people who love me.

## The UK family in the early 21st century

040



② Match the types of family (1–5) with their definitions (a–e).

- 1 stepfamily
- 2 nuclear family
- 3 extended family
- 4 multi-ethnic family
- 5 single-parent family

c  
e  
d  
b  
a

- a family with only one parent
- the mother and father come from different ethnic backgrounds
- a family formed with the remarriage of a parent and a child/children with another person
- different generations of the same family live together
- a family with a father, mother and child/children



3 **040** Read and listen to the text. Are the following sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false ones. If the information is not in the text, write DS (doesn't say).

- 1 The nuclear family is still very common in the UK. T
- 2 The percentage of single-parent families is growing. T
- 3 Stepfamilies are not so common in the UK. DS
- 4 Of all one-parent households, most are father-child families. DS
- 5 The high rate of divorce and remarriage is not the main reason for the development of extended families. F
- 6 Single people prefer living on the outskirts of cities. F

4 What does the table show us about the changing face of family types in the UK? *It explains us how are changing the family types*

The stereotypical family image – mother, father and two children – is now a myth. Today's census<sup>1</sup> confirms that a great proportion of the UK's households<sup>2</sup> now comprise single parents, adult children living with their parents, or pensioners. Much of the data we can find in the census confirm well-established underlying<sup>3</sup> trends.

Apart from the erosion of the nuclear family the main themes are:

- a there is a 6.4% rise in the number of families;
- b there is a 9.5% increase in single-parent families, up from 2.6m to almost 2.9m. Single-parent families are almost 17% of all families in the census;
- c the number of cohabiting couple families is high;
- d the development of extended families: networks of stepparents, stepchildren, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents. This group reflects changing demographics due to increased rates of divorce and remarriage;
- e young people tend to live at home: 58% of men and 39% of women aged 20-24 in England still live at home with their parents;
- f there are large numbers of single people living in London; married couples and families are mainly in the centre of the country and around the outskirts<sup>4</sup> of major cities;
- g the number of people in England and Wales living with or married to someone from another ethnic group is growing.

### Glossary

- 1 **census**: an official process of counting a country's population and finding out about the people.
- 2 **household**: all the people who live together in one house.
- 3 **underlying**: the most important even if not easily noticed.
- 4 **outskirts**: the parts of a town or a city that are furthest from the centre.

5 **041** Listen to the interview about the changing shape of American families and read the types of families described in Exercise 2. Which are *not* mentioned by the sociologist? *extended family, multi-ethnic family*

6 **041** Listen again then choose the correct option.

- 1 Sociologist Cohen gives / *doesn't give* his own definition of family.
- 2 In US society cohabitation / *marriage* is now very common.
- 3 The number of working mothers *isn't* / is rising.
- 4 Single-parent families *aren't* / are more numerous than in the past.
- 5 Diversity / *Decline* is the appropriate word to describe the typical American family of today.

## Focus on Communicating

7 Read the following statements and say if you agree or disagree. Exchange views with your partner.

- 1 These are all families:
  - a single mother looking after/bringing up her two daughters
  - an uncle and aunt looking after/bringing up their nephew
  - a couple without children
  - a single man and his dog
  - a child or children with two mothers or two fathers
- Your family are the people you live with.
- You can't have more than one family.

### STATING AN OPINION

While *expressing an opinion*, it is important to present findings and supporting evidence so that listeners can follow the line of reasoning.

The following phrases can be used when introducing your opinion:

- In my opinion ...
- The way I see it ...
- If you want my opinion, ...
- According to me ...
- As far as I'm concerned ...
- If you ask me, ...

## Focus on Competences

8 Find information about the changing *forma* shape of the family in your own country.

Use different types of sources and texts (websites; a newspaper article; a report; graphs, charts and tables).

Write a paragraph to illustrate the major changes.

## Focus now

Es 7 pag. 2f

In my opinion a single mother looking after/bringing up her two daughters and a couple without children are examples of families.

I'm agree that you can't have more than one family and your family are the people you live with.

Es 8 pag. 2f

Divorces are growing up and the stereotypical family aren't as numerous as in the past. In Italy the typical family, formed with father, mother and child or children is coming less popular because other types of families, for example stepfamily, multi-ethnic family or single-parent family are growing a lot now.