



Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households

Themes Emerging from the Call for Evidence: Briefing Ten *Social Change: Experiences of change in family life, household patterns and living arrangements*

The Call for Evidence

The Commission launched its Call for Evidence in October 2021 as the first major step in our inquiries. It provided an opportunity to engage with a wide range of people aged 18 and over, faith communities, and organisations working with children and families in England in thinking about some of the key issues relevant to the Commission's work. These are described in our first Briefing paper.¹

We are analysing the responses thematically and sharing the emerging themes through a number of discrete briefing papers. In reporting the emerging themes the Commission is not commenting on them at this stage, but simply sharing them with a wider audience while using them to inform our thinking and to guide the various Commission activities that are taking place to dive more deeply into the evidence.² The briefings we share may well spark additional conversations, which we would welcome.

About this Briefing

The Commission is examining the factors that promote strong relationships, stability, safety and sustainability within families and households, and the conditions in which children can thrive and reach their full potential. In previous Briefings we have reported on the main themes to emerge from questions relating to the meaning of family and the characteristics of human flourishing, family relationships today, and the issues facing children and young people.

As part of its work, the Commission is exploring social change and how this has impacted on families and households in recent centuries up to the present day. So we asked a number of questions in the Call for Evidence about respondents' personal experiences of change in family life, household patterns and living arrangements during their own lifetime. In addition, we asked those responding on behalf of an organisation to reflect on their organisation's experiences of changes in family life.

Not surprisingly, the personal experiences reflected the age of the respondent, with those who are older having seen more change in their own family life and living arrangements than younger respondents. Nevertheless, there is a significant similarity in the major changes that have been experienced across the generations. The organisational responses reflected the

¹ *Themes Emerging from the Call for Evidence: Briefing One - The meaning of family*, March 2022

² *ibid*



same themes and also drew attention to more recent events which have signalled change. In this briefing we report on the key themes that emerged from the answers we received from individuals and from organisations.

Reflecting on your own experience what have been the biggest changes in family life during your lifetime?

Context

Social change is continuous. However, it is generally recognised that there have been huge changes in everyday life since the end of World War Two. In Briefing Four we acknowledged that family structures have always evolved and changed, but in the period since the 1940s there have been widespread shifts in patterns of family formation, living arrangements, parenting practices, social attitudes and public policy. We also highlighted that one of the most significant changes impinging on partnerships, parenting and family life in the past 20 years has been the rapid development of electronic communication and the centrality of social media in our everyday life.

Digital technology has dramatically changed working patterns and family relationships. Social networking is a central and ever-present feature in the lives of children, young people, and their parents. It changes the way in which relationships are formed and maintained, how families live their daily lives, and it influences the expectations that children and adults have for themselves and their families. Technological advances continue at an extraordinary rate and very many of the responses to the questions about changes in family life referred to the impacts of social media, the rapid and instantaneous access to information via the world-wide web, and the ability to communicate visually with people across the globe. We live in a society which offers more choice, more personal freedoms, more opportunities and more challenges than ever before.

If the Commission is to understand the challenges that families and households face today and consider the ways in which they can be supported to flourish, it is important to take account of the ways in which changes have occurred in order to set the challenges in context.

In recording personal experiences of family change some people have highlighted experiences which are viewed as being both negative and positive. Inevitably, the kinds of changes recorded by some people as being positive, have been recorded by others as being negative, thus reflecting different attitudes to similar experiences of change.

We first look at the themes emerging from individual responses relating to changes in family life.



The benefits and challenges of change

The main changes experienced by the vast majority of respondents included changes in partnerships and parenting, and societal changes including the increased use of social media and modern technology. Many people indicated that these changes could be viewed as progressive while recognising the potential negative consequences:

- *While modernisation has certainly helped us make great progress in areas of medicine, health improvement, new technology etc. It has also taken us many steps back in some respects. We seem to have become more aware of global issues but lost touch with reality at local neighbourhood levels. There is a global drive that feeds consumerism and places great emphasis on materialism, individual choice and instant gratification. While this may aid in economic recovery in the short term, the longer-term negative impact on family dynamics will most likely suffer*
- *Acceptance of much greater diversity, but also raising expectations of what we are all expected to achieve*
- *Thankfully it is no longer acceptable for physical violence against children in the home. Life in the 60s was more straightforward there weren't the distractions that exist today, such as the Internet. TV programmes, especially the soaps seem to promote bad behaviour for the sake of sensationalism ... Shops are open every day, people no longer go to church and are isolated from community and the support*
- *Positively - the increased acceptance of non-traditional families, which so often can teach traditional families so much. Negatively - the epidemic of stress in our society, which causes such damage to relationships, and to children growing and developing within a stressed environment*
- *The single biggest factor within my lifetime has been the introduction of the contraceptive pill for married women in the 1960s and unmarried women in the 1970s. Prior to that, couples who wished to sleep together or live together faced the very real risk of pregnancy. The way out was either a backstreet abortion or a shotgun marriage ... Birth control changed the game, undoubtedly allowing greater freedoms for couples. But with that freedom has come the breaking of the link between love, time, commitment, marriage, sex and children. The consequence is that far too many fragile relationships enter cohabitation before couples have made a clear plan for the future or signalled their commitment to that plan*

Changes in attitudes towards marriage and divorce

In recording changes such as those referred to above, many respondents also talked about the considerable changes in marriage and attitudes towards it, again some viewing these changes very positively and others viewing them negatively:



- *It has become acceptable to be family without being married. Cohabitation has become a norm as has the bringing to an end of unhealthy relationships. In my parents' and grandparents' generations there was an expectation to put up with unhealthy relationships 'till death do us part'. We have also seen the end of children having to be adopted due to the 'scandal' of being conceived out of wedlock. Cohabitation has brought with it a much wider understanding of the value of relationships, particularly for parenting*
- *[The] Sanctity of marriage has lost its importance. Cohabitation. Contraception. Same sex marriage. Impact of media. Religious values. Attitude towards divorce.*
- *The rise of single parent and same sex parent families and the recognition that all are good if they create a nurturing environment*
- *The increasing social acceptance, particular in secular society, of same-sex partnerships and households*

Many respondents referred to the increase in divorce and separation. While some expressed concern about the number of families that split up, others referred to the ability to leave an unhealthy relationship and to form more loving relationships:

- *Divorced, civil partnerships and blended families are now more common than long-term married families ... Families who have disabled parents and children are more often seen rather than hidden (thankfully)*
- *Family breakdown was already an issue in my childhood, so whilst it remains one, I'd probably have to say the very welcome increase in openly gay parents*
- *Divorce is more acceptable socially, there is more support to leave a damaging or abusive marriage, and there is less financial dependence, so that fewer people have to stay in hugely unhappy marriages life-long as they would have done in my grandparents' time. There is more openness and acceptance of all sorts of challenges which might have caused family rifts or exclusion in the past - sexuality, mental health difficulties - and so more chance these can be worked through, and more kinds of accessible support available out there to help this happen. There is much more awareness of all kinds of abuse and neglect which can be perpetrated within families, and the profoundly damaging impact of these. There is more acceptance and understanding of a whole host of ways people can create loving and caring relationships*

Changes in family life

The changing attitudes to partner formation and both heterosexual and same-sex partners being able to marry has led to significant changes in family life which were referred to by most



respondents. Many people referred to the reduction in social stigma that had previously accompanied non-traditional families:

- *The acceptance of single mothers, non-nuclear families, and same sex marriages. This is a great leap forward*
- *Less reliance on the family to be at the centre of an individual's life. Living further apart. The increasing social acceptance of having no children. The lack of a need to marry. The lowering stigma against step-families*
- *Increase in divorce; more single parent families; more relaxed parenting styles, therefore less boundaries for children; the rise of social media affecting all members of the family negatively ... more screen time - less social interaction both within and between families, therefore deterioration of relationships*
- *The nuclear family has changed. Many families now have children from different relationships and parents who may have been married previously*
- *Families are not just mum, dad and children. It's better now because families of all types are recognised*
- *More separated families but more families where their environment is happier. We are more aware of the need for stable home life and wellbeing, including that of a parent*

Some respondents, however, referred to what they regard as the negative consequences of changes in family life, including the use of social media:

- *Family life is becoming more disconnected. Disconnected from each other, and from their wider family or community.*
- *[The] impact of social media and a lack of understanding about it and the impact it can have on life for individuals and families. Mobile phones being an everyday part of life for many that can mean people are in the room but not present. Pressure of time and need for money. How much stuff we have, and think we need. The far reaching consequences of family breakdowns/fall outs. Being too busy for family.*
- *[The] availability of time consuming distractions that prevent families spending time together and doing things that they might have otherwise done in the past*
- *The introduction and takeover of media as cultural teachers. This affects the rhythm and structure of daily life. People spend time on devices instead of with each other ... Digital communication overload steals time and attention away from families*

Nevertheless, there were some strong endorsements of positive changes brought about by increased technology. People who have family members living in different countries were at



pains to celebrate the wonders of modern travel and modern communications. The following response from someone whose family members had come at different times to live in England highlighted the changes they had experienced:

- *The biggest change in a very positive way for keeping family contact was the introduction of affordable air travel and modern communication. With my aunt we only had contact by letter. Nowadays I can see my daughter, grandchild and other family members at the press of a button any time I wish. And I can afford to travel if I want to see them directly. This is more than marvellous*

Changes for Children

Some answers to this question focused specifically on the changes for children in recent years:

- *Children staying home for longer and staying in education for longer*
- *Both parents going out to work, children living much longer at home*
- *Parents are finding it harder to navigate the complexity of their children's lives, since children are now facing endless amounts of options and choices and exposure to a global disconnected community that literally allows them to be whoever they want to be. The pressure to discover and understand who you are is confusing. A rise in mental health disorders in children, teens and parents creates very real pressures and stresses in family life and can impact the parent's wellbeing too (and vice versa). As does the rise in families with children with neurodevelopmental disorders (ADHD, ASD, TS). There has been a rise in two parents working in order to finance the household, which means less available time for children and busy family lives*
- *Broken relationships meaning children live often in more than one home as they shuttle between parents. Both parents working and juggling childcare so that they are often not at home together - one going off to work as the other comes home. More single-parent families; a larger geographical spread of the wider family leading to more isolation; a greater number of non-married people living together; more children living with unmarried parents*
- *There are many more demands on time now than in my youth. Children seem to be expected to be busy every minute of the day. From school, to sports clubs, music lessons or homework, children are under more pressure to fill their days. Parents also need to work longer hours to make ends meet, or meet unreasonable expectations from employers, leading to less time together*

One father commented on the extent to which he had experienced a change in respect of schools taking more responsibility for his children's lives, reducing the role parents play in their children's upbringing.



Societal change

Some people commented on changes that they had observed in society as a whole:

- *Children no longer play outside in most places. There are lots of things behind this: fear (as a response to terrible but rare cases we see in the news), breakdown of community (e.g. "it takes a village to raise a child") and changing patterns of human engagement related to technology (which can be a good or bad thing)*
- *Rise of single parent households, divorce and people living alone, decline of intergenerational families and families living close together*
- *When I was a child I saw the family as fundamental to my existence. Most families were very local. Now families are split by distance and very varied. I feel those who are able to maintain a family are undervalued and individuals are seen by the state as more important than families*
- *The change in pace of life and demands on families. The essential need for both parents to work to meet basic household needs in many families. The lack of good quality affordable housing. The change in Sundays no longer being a 'different' day of the week, when there is less pressure and families can relax and be together more*

The changing roles of women in society

Some respondents drew attention to the changes in the roles of women in society in their lifetime, and how these impacted, alongside other changes, on family life and on society as a whole:

- *The increasing role of women in the public sphere, dual career/work households, increasing tolerance of diverse family forms and expressions of sexuality*
- *Contraception has enabled more women to play greater roles in society and childcare has become more shared with people other than the mother*
- *Women are more likely to work, with children spending time in childcare both before and after school. There is less connection with wider family as people move away to work, meaning more families are isolated and without support, whilst elderly relatives are also unsupported. Families are busier as people work long hours, travel long distances, and have higher expectations of what their children need to achieve. People within families are less connected and spend time connecting with people via social media*
- *Much more common to have both parents working and women returning to work after having a child*
- *More acceptance of same-sex relationships and less (thankfully) degradation of blended families. More willingness to realise women can be enabled and encouraged to not be*



limited or reduced to supporting a household from behind closed doors and in the kitchen

- *More positive acceptance of blended and non- traditional families. More positive opportunities for women*
- *The biggest changes have been: the widespread use of technology and social media; the general expectation that women have to do everything; the unobtainable standards of being the perfect mothers, whilst having high flying careers*

Increasing numbers of single-person households

A number of people pointed to the increase in the numbers of people living alone. While this was seen as a positive opportunity by some, others saw it as reducing companionship and creating distance between family members:

- *Massive increase in people living alone*
- *Transport is easier and more families move away from the extended family reducing the cohesion of the family and the support available within the extended family. Many more people live in single person households reducing both the support and the mutual companionship of sharing*
- *Fewer people having children, more acceptance and understanding of single life, sexuality and gender beyond heterosexual and cisgender. More connection with online communities and groups with similar life experience beyond the immediate locality*

The experience of church and faith

A number of people referred to their experience of the ways in which the church and faith groups have responded to social change. Most of the comments were negative about the church and the perceived inability to accept and adapt to change:

- *Being a single parent and being treated as an outcast in church*
- *Recognition of same sex relationships: the church's failure to catch up means that for those who are LGBT and clergy who are not permitted to marry a same sex partner, the discrimination and pain of singleness or non-recognition of their love and relationships is even more acute than previously when all those in the LGBT community shared that sense of discrimination*
- *[There is] wider acceptance in society of the different make up of a "family". The C of E needs to catch up. And quickly.*
- *[I experienced] within church ... continual criticism of my parenting [of a child with autism] and telling me how I should do things, having my child upset by people at church*



... and a false accusation (because parenting strategies for autism can be different) ... all because no one chose to ask me and listen

- *No one size fits all pattern of family life-but the church still assumes it does*

There were a few comments about the 24/7 society and the erosion of a day in the week which is treated differently:

- *[There is now] no Sabbath*

One respondent referred specifically to the positive impact church has had in the family:

- *The biggest change was my life changed with my children for the better when I started going to church and still is*

Deeply personal experiences of change

A number of responses to this question included very personal stories of changes which had been painful and distressing. In order to preserve anonymity the experiences are summarised below rather than presented as direct quotes. Many of the experiences were connected to the breakup of a parental relationship. These experiences of change included:

- A parent leaving home on numerous occasions and finally leaving for good when a child became a teenager
- The feeling of grief and rejection when parents split up and one parent is no longer in a child's life
- The challenges of step-family life and multiple break-ups as parents re-partner, re-marry and re-divorce
- Having to adapt to different family constellations during childhood and step-siblings moving in and out of a child's life
- The feeling of loneliness when parents divorce
- The distress for adults when marriages end
- The challenges of mental health struggles, financial pressures, miscarriages, and bad housing

Experiences of this kind had clearly left a strong mark on the lives of those who reported them to us.

Summary

Responses to the Call for Evidence came from people within a wide age range, from 18 into the 90s. Those at the older end of this scale had experienced most of the changes that have been recorded since the Second World War. For many, the changes in family life and in society generally had been positive and welcome, but there was a clear recognition that change can



also bring new challenges, and that there can be losses as well as gains. A few people referred to what they described as a culture that no longer values some of the ways of life in times past:

- *There is a slightly “throw-away” culture with people as well as products. ‘If its not working right now just get a new one’ instead of trying to fix it*

Generally, however, the changes in family life are regarded as being less discriminatory than in the past, although there is some criticism that the church has failed to keep up with societal changes in attitudes and changes in policy, particularly in respect of family formation. This is particularly emphasised in the answers about attitudes towards sexuality.

Overall, the responses to this question suggest that

- Changes in family life mean that families are no longer defined by a more traditional model of mother, father and their children
- Children and young people have more opportunities and experience more pressures than previously, and they tend to look to social media and the internet for their knowledge and entertainment
- The changing roles of women have had widespread implications for everyday living, childcare and the role of fathers
- The increases in global travel, the digital revolution and modern technology have enabled families to remain connected across the globe
- The pace of life today is faster and more pressured than previously

At the time of the Call for Evidence, England was still recovering from the coronavirus pandemic which has had major impacts on everyone’s life. Specific responses to this are reported in the next Briefing. The dramatic rise in the cost of living had not yet reached the levels currently being experienced in 2022, however, and just a few people referred to the impact of poverty when looking at their experiences of change.

What have been the biggest changes in family life that your organisation has noticed since its inception?

We turn now to the responses from organisations. In many ways these echoed those from individuals but clearly reflected the specific aims and objectives of each organisation. Most responses, however, referred to the societal changes that they had experienced.

Societal changes

On the whole, the responses reported changes in family life and in living arrangements as the most prominent changes:

- *The stereotype of men as ‘father providers’ who mostly worked in heavy, dirty manual work whilst women were ‘mother carers’ and housewives is no longer the norm. Women and men have careers, most study up to and beyond 18 years of age. Most families, whether married or not, rely on two incomes to make ends meet or to meet their aspirations. Many dads now play an active part in playing with their children, reading to them, bathing them and performing all the caring activities traditionally (in the UK)*



carried out by mums. With the development of economic independence and sex equality, came increased freedom for couples to live independent lives, and recognition that survival did not necessitate remaining in unhappy marriages. It enabled people to consider more than one steady relationship in their lives or none at all

The Mothers' Union referred to being set up when

- *traditional marriage was the norm. This has moved through the acceptance of divorce, and the reality of today when family has many forms, and both functional and dysfunctional environments can be seen in all forms of family*

A few people made comparisons between faith groups to highlight differing attitudes about family life:

- *As a teacher I can say that the unmarried status of parents, and the socially different family groups and expectations that creates, have developed hugely over the last twenty-five years. This is even starker as a comparison with the entrenched marital commitment in the Islamic families I teach, and in some more fundamental Christian groups too*
- *A traditional marriage is no longer life-long and therefore cannot be always held as the best option*

Other organisations referred to a range of changes with negative consequences impacting on people of all ages:

- *More and more single parent families. More evident domestic abuse. More mental health issues*
- *An increasing number of elderly are being put in care homes than before. We have seen a lot more children from Muslim families going into care, an increase in the number of fatherless households, many more young girls ending up in care. All these changes are exacerbated by a lack of culturally-sensitive facilities in the community to house the elderly with dignity and a shortage of suitable foster carers and adopters from the same faith and cultural background*
- *Young people exposed to increasing pressures to conform to online images of perfection and popularity. This leads to isolation, fear, non-engagement with the natural world and social network formations*
- *The pressure that the hostile environment, racism, misogyny, gender based violence puts on the family*



Recent changes

The organisations who responded to the Call for Evidence focused more than the individual responses on recent changes in family life. For example, an organisation that began in 2012 described the changes they had seen in the past nine years:

- *During those years we have been aware of significant changes to family life in the UK. As we know from 2020 Government research on families and households, while married and civil partnered couple families remain the most common family type, this is a declining trend in the UK, as more people choose to live together before, or without, getting married. We know too that the UK has amongst the highest family breakdown rates in Europe, with a huge percentage of teenagers not living with both parents (<https://care.org.uk/news/2015/10/family-breakdown-10-statistics-that-make-grim-reading>) ... We also hear regular stories of problems faced by families – be it mental health problems, volatility and child-to-parent violence, and serious concerns about the impact of social media on the next generation. However, while there have been negative changes to family life, there have also been some fantastic initiatives to support parents, far more public conversation around mental health and some innovations within the church to serve families, for example Food Banks ...*

Other organisations pointed to:

- *An increase in mental health problems among children and young people*
- *Less and less teaching about marriage, increased acceptance of sexual intimacy outside of marriage often as a one-off recreational activity, increasing cohabitation and divorce*
- *Same-sex and LGBTQ+ family members are more noticeable. Also autistic families where the adults have become diagnosed because their children were and they realised they were missed when they were young. There are more recognised young carers*
- *In the past 9 years: parents are now more aware of the need to be in control of children's screen usage; more referrals to CAMHS; and there seems to be increased awareness of anxiety/stress in children*
- *We are a new organisation, opening in 2018, but already noticing much more discussion and more concerns in young people about transgender issues*

The impact of poverty

A number of organisations highlighted the impacts of poverty:

- *The impact of poverty in the modern day is still not fully understood and there is a lot of invisible people affected negatively, but their stories are unheard as in 1891 when we were founded*



- *Those living in poverty - Lack of life skills passed down generations e.g. cooking, budgeting etc. Rise in extended families sometime confusing through multiple break ups Loneliness. Lack of confidence, fear of asking for food in case the children will be taken away. The way schools now double up to a degree as social workers. Affluent families are very money driven ... creating an expectation for children that will be difficult to maintain when they reach adulthood*

Changes in the church

Several organisations referred to the role that churches can play and the changes they have observed:

- *Fewer people ask to get married in church. Fewer people get married at all and many who would wish to marry aren't allowed to do so in church due to being in same sex relationships.*
- *Higher rate of single parent families in church and more openly LGBT couples, who need to be supported; the recognition of those who are trans*
- *There is a disparity between what the church offers to families and where their needs have shifted and changed over the decades. We also have a major challenge in the lack of interest in religion as we might perceive it from a traditional sense and more of a shift towards developing ways that families can engage in a faith journey that is right for them.*
- *Fewer families attending church. Less priority given to church attendance*

Summary

The responses from organisations mirrored those from individuals but with greater emphasis on the more recent changes in family life. There were also comments about the importance of volunteers to support families and the increasing difficulty of recruiting them.

In your experience, how have household patterns and living arrangements changed during your lifetime?

This question asked people to think specifically about the changes they had experienced in household patterns and living arrangements. Not surprisingly, many of the responses delved more deeply into describing the changes in their family life that were reported in the previous question.

Family constellations are more diverse

The changes in living arrangements most frequently recorded referred to an increase in single parent households, an increase in family separation and the fluidity of household composition. While some people regretted the changes that result in children not living with both their birth



parents, most people welcomed the greater choices today and the lessening of stigma around non-traditional family types:

- *More acceptable not to be married from when I was very young. Single-person households have undergone significant growth. Less multi-generational households in some areas, while more in others*
- *The traditional model of mother, father and children no longer dominates. Households are a combination of traditional, lone parent (through separation/divorce as well as by choice), same-sex couples and non-parental primary care-giver (such as grandparents)*
- *We have gone from over rigid structures to almost no structures at all*
- *Many, many more families no longer comprise the traditional two parents with children for whom both parents are biological parents. Many, many more families now also have both parents working, with all the challenges that brings*
- *There is much less judgment and more acceptance of different ways of living and creating households*
- *...in the 1970s ... Unmarried mothers were frowned upon and divorce carried social stigma. Now, families come in all manner of wonderful varieties. Where love is present, families flourish - regardless of how the family is constructed*
- *It is much more likely that there will be children from more than one partner living under the same roof. In some families relationships change more often, as one partner leaves and another moves in. This can leave some children of previous partners overlooked, or even overtly unwanted*

Changes in gender roles

These shifts have been accompanied by changes in gender roles, reported by a large number of respondents. The increased career opportunities for women, especially mothers, was welcomed by most people although working patterns have been seen by some as reducing the quality of family time:

- *With both parents working children don't get the support and guidance that they need. There is no time left for nurturing faith in the modern world*
- *Parents' working patterns mean that children spend less time in the company of parents, and single parent or split-parent living is far more common and accepted*
- *A lot of changes have happened for the good, women can now work outside the home and have equality of pay, but they still shoulder the vast majority of the household chores too. More men will help with childcare. Families though are often more*



fragmented as people change partners more often. They rarely eat together which has ongoing impact not only on family dynamics, but health as well

- *More women work full-time - this is good on one hand because many women want to work and have a career, but many feel pressurised to work when their children are at school because the cost of living is so high*

Daily life in the home

A number of respondents talked about what they regard as negative changes in daily living patterns, influenced by working patterns and by the prevalence of modern technology:

- *Gone are the days where the family would eat and spend quality time together on a regular basis. The old patterns have been replaced by adults and young people ordering take-away meals to be delivered to their own room. Instead of real face-to-face interactions people now use i-pads, tablets and smart-phones to do face-time calls with members of the family in the same household and engage in online chats with friends and strangers with ease*
- *Families do not share dinner together - parents live in separate houses - people spend more time communicating with others who are not in the same room with them than their own families*
- *Too many phones, they have taken over. Children not being talked to, but given an i-pad and left to play on it. Eating on the run, or in front of the TV, instead of together*

Pressures on housing

The changes in living arrangements were sometimes attributed to pressures in housing, including the inability of young people today being able to afford a home of their own. As a consequence they live at home with their parents longer than previously:

- *The make-up of households is mixed and varied and this can be great. Housing has become less secure and many people live in unsuitable housing or insecure housing. Private renting has become a costly. The cost of living is high, especially fuel and childcare*
- *House poverty has seen an enormous amount of over-crowding*
- *Increasingly harder for young people to leave home and move into quality accommodation. Far less home ownership and so more young people staying in family home. Households then having greater number of individuals living together*
- *More adult children are staying on living with parents due to cost of housing*



- *More young people attending university but returning to the family home due to high living costs or problems finding employment*

Some people also referred to increased mobility which creates greater distance between extended family members:

- *People move to new areas more frequently; adult children no longer live close to their parents; housing has become more expensive and housing estates have become larger and more impersonal*

Living alone

Respondents also talked about the increasing number of people living alone. This may be by choice, as a result of separation or divorce or the death of a partner, or people simply growing older and living longer:

- *Living alone is more accepted (although still viewed by many as 'sad' or lacking something - I am sharply aware of the social undesirability of being alone at Christmas for example)*
- *The most striking change is that more people are content to live alone now than previously*
- *People spending more time single (sometimes before a relationship, sometimes as a surviving partner, sometimes following a breakdown in a relationship)*
- *[There are] More single people. More people happy to have no children*
- *More older, single people who need support; more single never married*

Different expectations and changing ways of life

A few answers to this question included comments about changing expectations:

- *Expectations have increased. Children expect their own bedrooms and a host of material things. Adults expect all mod cons and at least two cars per family*
- *Working patterns have changed beyond recognition in my lifetime as have retail and shopping habits*

Summary

As in response to previous questions, a few people gave very personal accounts of the changes in living arrangements which had had an adverse impact on their growing up, usually as a result of parental separation and a lack of a consistent relationship with their father.

For the most part there was considerable consensus about the changes people had experienced, summed up in the following response:



- *The traditional model of mother, father and children no longer dominates. Households are a combination of traditional, lone parent (through separation / divorce as well as by choice), same sex couples and non-parental primary care-giver (such as grandparents). People have moved further away from where they grew up in search of better jobs / lifestyle which means families have become more nuclear and the influence and support from grandparents / the wider family have diminished.*

Professor Janet Walker
June 2022