



Australian families

In Australia there are many different types of families and they might be very different to the type of family you are used to.

Australian families have many combinations. This may include the traditional family of a father, mother and children but many families may consist of step-parents and stepchildren; foster parents and children; siblings caring for each other; parents of the same gender and even grandparents caring for their grandchildren. It is becoming increasingly common to have families that are single-parent families.

Australian families can be any size. Many families have two children or less while others may have three or four children. Many women have their first child when they are in their thirties and some couples choose not to have children at all.

Not all Australians live in extended families. Ageing parents may often live alone or in special homes that care for older people (often called 'retirement homes').

Men and women may live together without being married. This is called a common-law or 'de facto' relationship and is both socially and legally recognised.

Australians are free to marry people from different ethnic, religious or racial groups. You need to be over 18 to get married, however the courts can approve marriages in exceptional cases if one of the people is aged 16 or 17.

Arranged marriages are acceptable in Australia, but forced marriages are illegal. As long as both people are willing to marry each other and they are over 18 years of age they can marry. No one can be forced to marry.

It is against the law to have more than one husband or wife at the same time.

Divorce is common and acceptable in the community. It is common for people to get married again after a divorce.

Most Australian women work outside the home. Many men take an active role in helping at home, for example by shopping for groceries, cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children. In some cases a man may stay at home to look after the children and the house while the woman goes to work.

Teenagers often have part-time jobs to earn money and learn new skills. This provides them with valuable experience and the chance to earn money for themselves and, if necessary, to help the family households pay the bills.



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