



Family Diversity



- ***Traditional nuclear family***
- ***Unmarried couples***
- ***Bicultural families***
- ***Foster families***
- ***Adoptive families***
- ***Single parent families***
- ***Same-sex partnerships***
- ***Stepfamilies/Patchwork families***

There is often a certain nostalgia in discussions about the family: «Families used to be a lot closer and bigger, people stayed together, families held together...» We can't say whether this is really true. But we do know that family structures and the way people live have changed considerably.

We are always influenced by images of the ideal family. Today, there are two dominant images: In the traditional nuclear family, the husband is the breadwinner, the housewife and mother is responsible for raising the children and house keeping . There are several other «new» types of family: the nuclear family where both parents work, adoptive families, bicultural families, single-parent families, same-sex partnerships, unmarried parents, large families, foster families, or stepfamilies/patchwork families.

But no matter what type of family we consider, basically they are all striving for stable and harmonious relationships with each other. However, roles are changing.



The gender-specific division of labour, which has given men more wealth and power, is slowly being replaced by shared responsibilities.

Traditional nuclear family

The father is the breadwinner, working full time. The mother takes care of one or two or maybe more children and does the housework. This is the old ideal of the family dating back to the period of industrialisation in the 19th century. Other cultures don't share this ideal. Even in our western culture, it was common to share the work involved in keeping a family. For example, in agricultural societies, all members of the family contributed to growing crops and taking care of animals. A man can only be the family's sole breadwinner if his job pays well enough to sustain the whole family. In most cultures, this has never been the norm. Even in Switzerland today, it is hard to live according to the old ideal. Many mothers have no choice but to get a job. Besides, many women choose to stay in their job after giving birth, because they want to pursue their own career, too.

Every family should have a choice of how they want to organise their lives. There is no right or wrong way of life, but it must be renegotiated again and again over time, as the children grow older.

Unmarried couples

Young couples often live together without getting married. However, there are several major legal disadvantages to this arrangement – except for the fact that in Switzerland, married couples pay more taxes than unmarried ones. There are no

laws governing the partnership of unmarried couples, so there is no legal certainty about what happens if the couple separates or one partner dies. It may be helpful to draw up a common-law agreement that defines rights and obligations of both partners in the case of separation or death. Important issues to think about are rent/mortgage, children, child-support, pension funds or a will. You can find more information on such agreements on the websites listed at the end of this chapter.

Bicultural families

Half of the couples getting married in Switzerland today come from two different countries. Binational relationships and culturally diverse families are quite common.

When two people of different nationalities get married, they must integrate two different cultures and two sets of values into their everyday life. This can be quite tricky.

The «Beratungsstelle für binationale Paare und Familien» (Information Centre for binational couples and families) offers advice on:

- legal issues (i.e. international marriage laws and rights of the child, Swiss immigration law)
- social security in Switzerland
- schools, education and working in Switzerland
- social, cultural and religious issues in Switzerland and abroad, before and after marriage.

You will find a lot of information online. However, a personal consultation is advisable.



Foster families

Foster families take in children who, for whatever reason, cannot live with their biological parents. Fostering a child is a long-term commitment that will change the lives of everyone involved.

It is important that foster parents be prepared to cooperate closely with Social Services and the child's parents. Even if the child becomes part of the new family, the child will always have a special role, being a member of two families. The child has to find his or her place in new surroundings, find security in new relationships and maintain a close bond with the biological parents. Foster children need a lot of support and understanding from the new parents. They need time to come to terms with the new situation. Even after many years in the foster family, the children may want to discuss the situation again and again. Both children and foster parents must be patient and willing to discuss difficult questions openly.

Families interested in fostering a child need to meet certain personal and legal requirements. Please contact the competent authority for your canton for more information. You will find the address at the end of this chapter.

Foster parents of children under the age of 15 need a licence issued by the canton, irrespective of whether or not the family is remunerated for fostering a child. No licence is needed to become a provider of day-care.

Adoptive Family

If you are thinking about adopting a child, consider it very carefully. You must be

prepared to care for the child as you would for your own. Your biological children must accept a new brother or sister. An adoption will change the life of everyone involved – do not take it lightly.

In her book for prospective adoptive parents, Barbara Steck says that adoption is a «lifelong process»: «Adoptive parents and adopted children will be faced with different challenges along the path they walk together. Many adoptive parents go through very difficult phases with their children. Some situations can be quite stressful for everyone involved.

An adoption is a complex situation for all members of the adoptive family. Adopted children must accept the fact that although they are not growing up with their biological parents, they get just as much love. Everybody must find their own way of dealing with the situation. Adoption is an extraordinary and challenging project, for it changes a family completely, and also changes the family's history.»

There is a legal distinction between the adoption of an under-age child, the adoption of a stepchild or international adoptions. You will find all relevant details on the website of the competent authority, such as the legal requirements for adoption, all necessary forms and international agreements.

Single Parent Family

Single parents need to shoulder the responsibility for their children on their own. In the past decades, the number of single parents has grown considerably, most of them women. There are around 160'000 single-parent families in Switzerland. Many



single parents have gone through a tough divorce or have had to come to terms with their partner's death. It takes time to settle into the new situation. What is more, single parents are juggling the roles of breadwinner, parent and housekeeper – which can be very hard to manage.

The biggest issue for most single parents is work-life balance. Single parents are at greater risk for poverty than other families. Even so, most of them manage – because they are energetic and resourceful when it comes to organising help from neighbours, friends and relatives.

Single parents should be careful to spend enough time with their children and also find time for themselves. «eifam», the association for single-parent families in the Basel region, organises regular Sunday brunches and other events. At these informal get-togethers, single parents can meet friends and talk about their worries, while the children can run about and play. You can find the dates online. Similar associations for single parent families can be found in the other cantons of Northwestern Switzerland.

When parents separate or get divorced, it is common for one parent to get custody, while the other gets visiting rights. These visits can provide some space and free time for the main carer. But they can also be stressful, especially if the parents are still arguing or even fighting in court. A counsellor or mediator can help you negotiate visiting times. In extremely difficult situations, or if the other parent is unable to care for the child, parents can make use of accompanied visiting days (Begleitete Besuchstage).

Same-sex partnerships

Married or not, a couple is obliged to support each other and to share their life together. They are responsible for each other in good times and bad times.

Some mothers or fathers find out they are gay quite late in life, even if they have been in heterosexual relationships for years. This is always a shock for their partner. Quite often, marriages break up if one partner decides to come out.

Sometimes, a homosexual parent starts a new relationship and moves in with his or her new partner. The new partner will become a new caregiver to the children, so he or she should be involved in decisions regarding everyday issues (such as school, day-care, medical care).

Obviously, some homosexual men and lesbian women may wish to have children, even if they've never been in a heterosexual relationship. However, in Switzerland, the federal law on the registration of partnerships for same-sex couples prevents them from adopting a child or using any other method of reproductive medicine. Also, it is not possible to adopt the partner's children.

Stepfamilies

The members of a step or patchwork family may not have the same name or share blood relations, but they are a family. Stepfamilies are becoming more popular and common, although they can be quite complex. It takes time for all members to find their place in the extended family and create a bond with everyone. Even if there are different types of stepfamilies, they all have one thing in common: It is the



adults' decision whether or not a family lives together or separates. The children have no choice but to go along and get used to the new stepparent, brothers and sisters. This may mean taking on a new position among more children, fewer privileges and new responsibilities. The new partner also has to learn to assume a new role, even if he or she is still in conflict with the ex-partner.



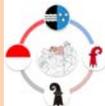
Family Diversity: addresses and links

Please note: Most of the described services and links are in German. If a service is explicitly offered in English this is marked by a *

Switzerland	Aargau	Basel-Landschaft	Basel-Stadt	Solothurn
Traditional nuclear family				
Unmarried couples				
www.konkubinat.ch				
Bicultural families				
<p>Association of Counselling Agencies for Binational and Intercultural Couples and Families, Switzerland: www.binational.ch *</p> <p>Association of binational couples and families http://www.ig-binational.ch/</p>	<p>Aargau has no specialized counselling agency for binational couples and families. You can find general information on the following website http://www.binational.ch/ *</p>	<p>Counselling Agency for binational and intercultural couples and families in Basel: Steinengraben 69, 4051 Basel http://www.binational-bs.ch/ *</p> <p>Counselling is offered in German, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.</p>	<p>Counselling Agency for binational and intercultural couples and families in Basel: Steinengraben 69, 4051 Basel http://www.binational-bs.ch/ *</p> <p>Counselling is offered in German, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.</p>	<p>Frabina Counselling Agency for binational couples and families in Solothurn and Olten *</p> <p>http://www.frabina.ch/welcome</p>
Foster families				
<p>Pflegekinder Aktion Schweiz http://www.pflegekinder.ch/</p>	<p>Foster family placing, evaluation of prospective foster families and information on the topic:</p> <p>Departement Bildung, Kultur und Sport, Abteilung Sonderschulung, Heime und Werkstätte: https://www.ag.ch/de/bks/sonderschulen_behindertenbetreuung/familienplatzierung/familien</p>	<p>Foster family placing and information on the topic:</p> <p>Familea www.familea.ch</p> <p>Cantonal information about fostering : https://www.baselland.ch/Pflegefamilien.317403.0.html</p> <p>The „Kinder- und</p>	<p>Foster family placing and information on the topic:</p> <p>Familea www.familea.ch</p> <p>The „Zentrale Behörde Adoption und Pflegefamilien“ is responsible for delivering the cantonal fostering license. Prospective foster parents should call them on 061 267</p>	<p>Counselling and training for foster parents by Stiftung Arkadis http://www.pflegefamilien-so.ch/</p> <p>Cantonal information about fostering: https://www.so.ch/verwaltung/departement-des-innern/amt-fuer-soziale-sicherheit/familie-</p>



	platzierung.jsp The competent authority for foster families is the „Gemeinderat“ at your place of residence.	Erwachsenenschutzbehörde KESB“ is the competent authority in Baselland to apply for a fostering license. http://www.kesb-bl.ch/	68 12 for an evaluation.	generationen/pflegefamilien/
Switzerland	Aargau	Basel-Landschaft	Basel-Stadt	Solothurn
Adoptive families				
Schweizerische Fachstelle für Adoption: www.adoption.ch Schweizerischer Adoptiveltern-Verein: http://www.saev.ch The Swiss Authorities online, Information on adoption *: https://www.ch.ch/en/how-adopt/	The competent authority for adoptions in the Canton of Aargau is the „Departement Volkswirtschaft und Inneres“. You can find detailed information about the prerequisites of an adoption, the application and international treaties on the website: https://www.ag.ch/de/dvi/personliches_zivilstandswesen/adoption/adoption.jsp?sectionId=170797	The competent authority for adoptions in the canton Basel-Landschaft is the „Sicherheitsdirektion“. You can find detailed information about the prerequisites of an adoption, the application and international treaties on the website: https://www.baselland.ch/Adoptionen.273476.0.html	The competent authority for adoptions in the canton Basel-Stadt are the “Zentrale Behörden Adoption und Pflegefamilien” of the department for education. Please contact them directly for further information: http://www.jfs.bs.ch/fuer-familien/hilfen/adoption.html	The competent authority for the adoption of a child is the „Fachstelle für Familie und Generationen“ in the department for social security. You can find detailed information about the prerequisites of an adoption and the process on their website: https://www.so.ch/verwaltung/departement-des-innern/amt-fuer-soziale-sicherheit/familie-generationen/adoption/ The „Amt für Gemeinden, Abteilung Zivilstandesamt und Bürgerrecht“ is competent for adoption of a stepchild or an adult person. https://www.so.ch/verwaltung/volkswirtschaftsdepartement/amt-fuer-gemeinden/zivilstandesamt/



Switzerland	Aargau	Basel-Landschaft	Basel-Stadt	Solothurn
Single-parent families				
Schweizerischer Verband der Alleinerziehenden Mütter und Väter (SVAMV) www.einelternfamilie.ch	Accompanied visiting days for separated or divorced parents in the Canton of Aargau (Begleitete Besuchstage): www.bbt-ag.ch IG Alleinerziehende Baden www.alleinerziehende-baden.ch Verein Alleinerziehende Aargau http://www.alleinerziehende-aargau.ch/	Accompanied visiting days for separated or divorced parents in the Canton of Baselland (Begleitete Besuchstage) : http://www.bbt-bl.ch Eifam- Alleinerziehende Region Basel www.eifam.ch	Accompanied visiting days for separated or divorced parents in the Canton of Basel-Stadt : http://www.begleitetebesuchstage-baselstadt.ch/ Eifam- Alleinerziehende Region Basel www.eifam.ch	The Association "Kompass" offers accompanied visiting days for parents and their child/ children. Please contact them directly for more information: http://www.kompass-so.ch/
Switzerland				
Same-sex partnership				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information on rights and duties in a registered partnership "https://www.ch.ch/en/registered-partnership/ ▪ Pink Cross- Schweizer Dachverband der Schwulen http://www.pinkcross.ch ▪ Lesbenorganisation Schweiz LOS 				



<http://www.los.ch/de/>

- Familyproject- Für Lesben und Schwule mit Kinderwunsch:

<http://www.familyproject.ch/>

- Dachverband Regenbogenfamilien:

<http://www.regenbogenfamilien.ch/>

Switzerland	Aargau	Basel-Landschaft	Basel-Stadt	Solothurn
Stepfamilies/patchwork families				
Websites for patchwork families: http://familie.ch/ http://www.patchwork- www.patchworkfamilien.c h/	Marriage and Relationship counselling in the Canton of Aargau is offered by Eheberatung Aargau: http://www.eheberatung-aargau.ch/	Marriage and Relationship counselling by the Catholic church: http://www.paarberatung-kathbl.ch/ Marriage and relationship counselling by the Protestant church (Reformierte Kirche) http://www.paarberatung-refbl.ch/index.php	Family- Couple- and Parenting counselling is offered by fabe (Familien-, Paar- und Erziehungsberatung) http://www.fabe.ch/	Beratungsstelle Scala offers counselling for couples and families. http://www.beratungsstelle-scala.ch/ The „Fachstelle für Beziehungsfragen“ also offers family and couples counselling http://www.velso.ch/



Book recommendations

Our book recommendations are generally for books that are available only in German. Where possible we've listed the English translation or an equivalent.

On the topic of family diversity

„Familienbande“

Von Christina Caprez, Limmat Verlag 2012

Das Buch von Christina Caprez zeigt in 15 Porträts von Schweizer Familien die Vielfalt der heutigen Familienkonstellationen auf. Die Porträts werden durch drei Experteninterviews ergänzt. Weitere Informationen über das Buch finden Sie auf folgender Webseite:

<http://www.limmatverlag.ch/programm/sachbuch/frauen/titel/89-familienbande.html>

On the topic of living together as an unmarried couple

„Paare ohne Trauschein- Was sie beim Zusammenleben regeln müssen“

von Karin von Flüe, Beobachter Edition, 2015.

On the topic of adoption

„Adoption – ein lebenslanger Prozess“

von Barbara Steck, Karger Verlag , 2007.

„Survival-Tipps für Adoptiveltern-2.Auflage“

von Christel Rech-Simon und Fritz B. Simon, Carl-Auer-Verlag, 2014.

On the topic of bicultural/binational families

Binational? Genial!: Der Ratgeber für Binationale Paare mit Kindern

von Christian Urech, Isabelle Schiess und Valentin Stucki, Atlantis Verlag, 2005



On the topic of single-parent families

„Allein erziehen - so schaff ichs!: Kinder, Rechtliches, Existenz sichern“

von Ruth Eigenmann, Beobachter Buchverlag, 2005.

On the topic of same-sex partnerships

„Regenbogenfamilien- Ein Handbuch“

von Stephanie Gerlach, Querverlag, 2010.

„Und was sagen die Kinder dazu?: Gespräche mit Töchtern und Söhnen lesbischer und schwuler Eltern“

von Uli Streib-Brzic und Stephanie Gerlach, Querverlag, 2005.

On the topic of stepfamilies/patchwork families

„Aus Stiefeltern werden Bonus-Eltern: Chancen und Herausforderungen für Patchwork-Familien“

von Jesper Juul, Kösel Verlag, 2011.

„Wie Patchworkfamilien funktionieren- Das müssen Eltern und ihre neuen Partner über ihre Rechte und Pflichten wissen“

von Cornelia Döbeli, Beobachter Edition, 2013.