

Available evidence, however, suggests that there have been changes in the following socio-cultural aspects overtime:

- The age at marriage appears to have increased, though minimally. It is still relatively low in rural settings and higher in urban settings.
- Use of modern contraception has increased. In particular, the use of condoms has risen in the wake of HIV/AIDS.
- The traditional values placed on child bearing. The emphasis on the need to bear many children especially as a means of support in old age has decreased owing to improved education especially of women. Education also gives women prestige, identity, legitimization, recognition and security that earlier depended on having children.
- There are, however significant urban-rural variations in the value of children despite aggregate fertility declines (Research conducted among the Kikuyu of Central Province, Kenya). As a result, high fertility rates persist in the more rural communities where social institutions and cultural practices continue to dominate and where there are fewer educational opportunities and limited use of contraceptives.
- A gradual transformation of African marriage and family organizations from corporate kinship and extended families toward nuclear households.

Consequently, research conducted using data from the World Fertility Surveys (WFS) and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) reveals that in many African countries:

- Most families had lost on average about 25% (about 2 children per family) of original fertility levels by 1995.

While most African women still marry young, the proportion of women marrying before the age of 20 has declined rapidly in most countries. This trend has been noted in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Togo and Uganda.

Where nuclear households have solidified, there have equally been significant shifts from high to low fertility rates in African families. The shift towards smaller family sizes has further been strengthened by:

- The rapid expansion of educational opportunities. Female education and consequent autonomy (through gaining knowledge, greater ability to make decisions, self reliance and control over resources), have particularly been instrumental towards this process.
- Availability and access to contraceptive methods.
- Reduction in child mortality that assures that parents need not have many children in order to maintain their desired family size.
- Urbanization and rural- urban migration
- The monetized economy, wage labour, unemployment and underemployment.
- The slow rates of economic growth and the high costs of living.
- The discarding of institutional structures of the extended family owing to resource constraints and economic decline.
- Socioeconomic changes, notably the decline in traditional agricultural systems of production.
- Delayed or forgoing marriage and childbearing.