



tm TRUSTED MEDIA BRANDS | InsightsLab

KANTAR CONSULTING

THE MODERN FAMILY

THE DIGITAL CONNECTION

BRINGING FAMILIES TOGETHER

Part three in a three-part series



“With category-leading brands such as *Reader’s Digest*, *Taste of Home*, and *Family Handyman*, Trusted Media Brands has always been at the forefront of understanding changing family dynamics—across generations, attitudes, values, and priorities. As modern families continue to evolve, so too should brands’ marketing approach, and this study identifies the unified themes that impact how modern families spend their time and money.”

BONNIE KINTZER
TRUSTED MEDIA BRANDS PRESIDENT AND CEO



INTRODUCTION

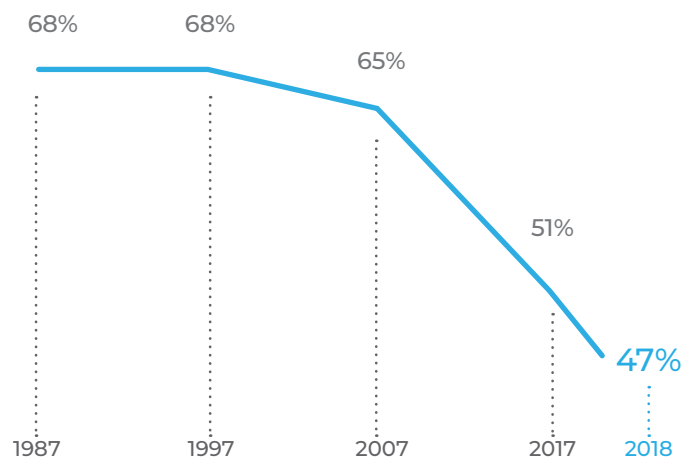
Why Study the Modern Family?

American family life today is in a state of flux like few times in its history. Once the norm, the traditional family unit now makes up [less than half](#) of all families in the U.S. In its place, thousands of different household arrangements have arisen, making the “typical” American family impossible to define. Meanwhile, a variety of factors – changing gender dynamics, the emergence of disruptive in-home technologies, rising numbers of Millennial-led and multicultural families, among others – are changing the look, feel, and even the very nature of family life. Finally, with Americans feeling less connected to their fellow citizens than any time in recent history, people are turning to smaller circles, and longing for a greater sense of belonging to their community, friends, and, above all, family (see fig. 2.1).

In short, American family life is nearly unrecognizable compared to even just a decade ago.

Fig 2.1

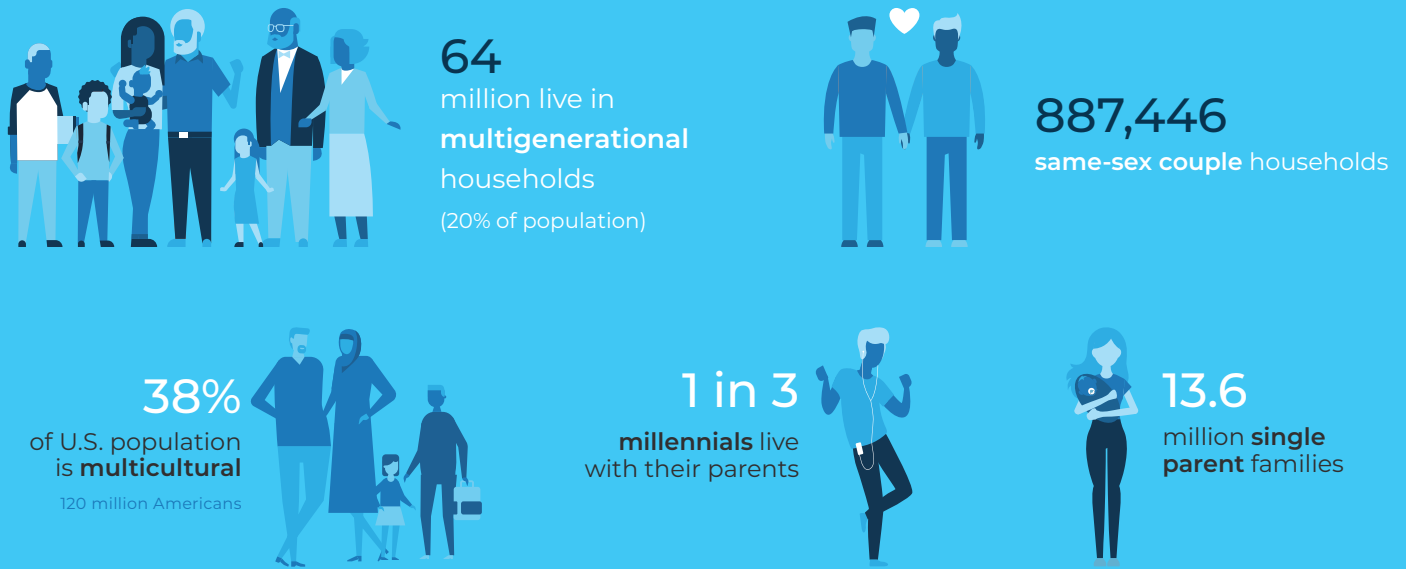
IN GENERAL, I FEEL THAT MY PERSONAL VALUES AND POINT OF VIEW ARE SHARED BY MOST AMERICANS TODAY



Kantar Consulting, 2018 U.S. MONITOR

TODAY'S MODERN FAMILY

Fig 3.1



Trusted Media Brands, the publisher of *Reader's Digest*, *Family Handyman*, and *Taste of Home*, in partnership with Kantar Consulting, undertook a multi-phased study of today's modern families. Instead of focusing upon the variety of ways that modern families *differ* from one another, we set out to illuminate the attitudes, values, and priorities that are *shared* across families regardless of age, household income, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. To accomplish our objective, we applied a mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques – including fielding a robust survey of 3,500 American families as well as 250 digital interviews with more than 50 family households across the country -- and explored the following critical questions:

- 1 What is the state of American families today?
- 2 How are shifts in household structures changing the look and feel of family life in America?
- 3 How are families adjusting and reacting to the vast cultural and technological change occurring in the U.S. today?

Ultimately, we found that there is no singular definition of today's modern family. However, we did find new trends that are redefining common perceptions of quality time, the evolving meaning of home, desired experiences, and the role of diversity in the family.

The following is the third release in a three-part series identifying three prominent trends that are shared across today's modern families:

1. **The Home-basing Trend**
2. **Cultural Exchange**
3. **Digital Connection**

91%
My family is the most important thing
in my life

2018 Trusted Media Brands Modern Family Study

Fig 3.2



THE DIGITAL CONNECTION

BRINGING FAMILIES TOGETHER

The national dialogue about the effects of digital technology on family life has taken a decidedly negative turn as scholars and the media alike continue to critique technology's impact on our privacy, attention spans, mental health, and relationships. As a result, terms such as "digital detox," and "unplugging" are now mainstream.

However, this narrative misses the ways in which families are positively embracing digital technology in their homes and everyday lives. In fact, as Trusted Media Brands' new research on the modern American home and family shows, digital technologies play an essential, even indispensable role in family life. And, while it's true that many families are seeking sensible cutbacks to "screen time", our research suggests that what has been overlooked are the ways in which technology is also improving family life and connection.

Our research reveals that:

Fig 4.2

By 2021, there will be almost as many voice-activated assistants on the planet as people

Source: Ovum Research

1 Modern families *don't* perceive technology as hindering family relationships:

The stereotypical perception is that of distracted family members with eyes glued to their screens, idly scrolling through their social media newsfeed instead of interacting with their friends and loved ones. Yet, our research found **that just 15% of families say technology has made their family less engaged** with one another when they're together, and just **9% say it negatively affects their family's social skills**.

Fig 4.1

86%

of families use technology to regularly communicate with other family members.

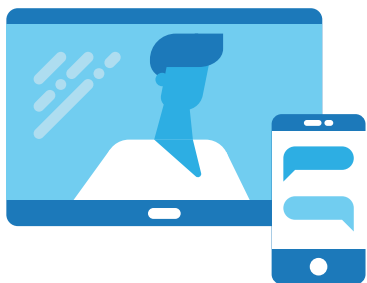
2018 Trusted Media Brands Modern Family Study





Fig 5.1

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS CONNECTING FAMILIES (among those who use social media)



- 95%** Facebook
98% of Empty-Nesters
- 29%** Instagram
42% of Multicultural Families
- 19%** Snapchat
33% of multi-generational families

2018 Trusted Media Brands Modern Family Study

2 Modern families appreciate technology's fun and time-saving attributes:

Contrary to reports on the time-sucking aspects of personal technology, our research found that **64% of modern families believe technology has given them more, not less, leisure time.**

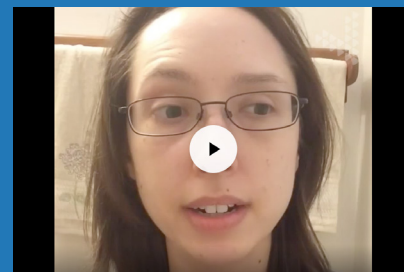
"I believe technology has improved family life; I don't doubt it one bit, the positives far outweigh the negatives."

MELANIE, 58

The growing popularity of voice-activated speakers such as Amazon Echo and Google Home promises to enhance family life in the coming years: **44% of smart speaker owner families say that having the device in their homes has helped them spend more time with other people.** (fig. 6.1) Taking on domestic duties such as compiling grocery lists and scheduling appointments, these

voice-activated devices free up families so they can focus on other, more important tasks and pastimes. In addition, smart speakers are emerging as a facilitator for family fun. Companies such as [Volley](#), which produces voice-controlled games, is growing its user base by 50%-70% month over month.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



PLAY VIDEO

THE DIGITAL CONNECTION IN THE MARKETPLACE

Samsung's "This is Family"

Samsung's "This is Family" advertisement captures the essence of The Digital Connection trend by showcasing the various ways that its technologies—such as voice-activated and screen-enabled Family Hub refrigerator and "Dinnertime mode" on its Smart TV—fit seamlessly in the home and brings families together.

PLAY VIDEO



3 Modern families value technology's ability to keep them connected:

Overall, today's modern families are highly appreciative of the role technology plays in maintaining closeness between far-flung family members: **61% of family members say technology helps families stay in close touch.** As Kevin, 27, told us, "Technology has definitely positively affected interactions between myself and my family. My wife was living in Japan while I was working in Wyoming, and through the magic of Skype we were able to keep communicating every day and keep our relationship going." Social media is a strong connector for families; and among those who say they use social channels to stay connected, 95% use Facebook and 29% use Instagram (42% among Multi-cultural families). (Fig. 5.1).

Just over 10 years after Apple first introduced the iPhone, it's clear that American families are recalibrating their relationship with technology in the home. Our research clearly illustrates the ways in

which digital technologies will continue to engage, entertain, and enthrall modern families of all types.

Fig 6.1

44%

Smart Speaker owner families say the device helps them spend more time with others

Fig 6.2

64%

of family households agree, "Technology has given me more leisure time."

2018 U.S. MONITOR

TRUSTED MEDIA BRANDS INSIGHTS LAB

HOW SHOULD THE MARKETPLACE RESPOND TO DIGITAL CONNECTION?

BE TECH-POSITIVE

As Americans look more closely at how their technology habits are affecting their relationships, they're still far more positive than negative about its overall impact on family life.

KEEP THE HUMAN ELEMENT FRONT-AND-CENTER

Technological bells and whistles aren't what families are focused on today; they're looking for ways that these tools can enhance and deepen the relationships that matter most in their lives. Marketers should ask themselves: How can we use technology to bring families together?

FIND SHARE OF "VOICE"

As the predominant new personal technology in the home that is impacting family life, smart speakers' popularity continues to soar. Explore ways to relate to this cultural and technological shift.



METHODOLOGY

Research for the Trusted Media Brands Modern Family study came from the following three sources:

- A custom, online survey of 3,500 American adults 18+ in families conducted from July 18 to July 27, 2018. Note: "Family" was defined as two or more adults living in a household, with at least one being a family member or spouse.
- 250 qualitative interviews with 50 people through the Voxpopme platform.
- Annual and quarterly surveys from Kantar Consulting's U.S. MONITOR, an ongoing source of insights about the changing attitudes, values, and lifestyle of the American consumer.

Data analysis was conducted by Kantar Consulting.

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