

More than one-third of American kids have lived in extended family households

January 15 2019, by Mandira Banerjee



Credit: University of Michigan

About 35 percent of children in the United States have lived with a relative other than their parent or sibling at some point by age 18, says a

University of Michigan researcher.

Overall, about 17 percent of kids, or about 12 million, currently live in an extended [family](#) household, according to the most recent data from 2014.

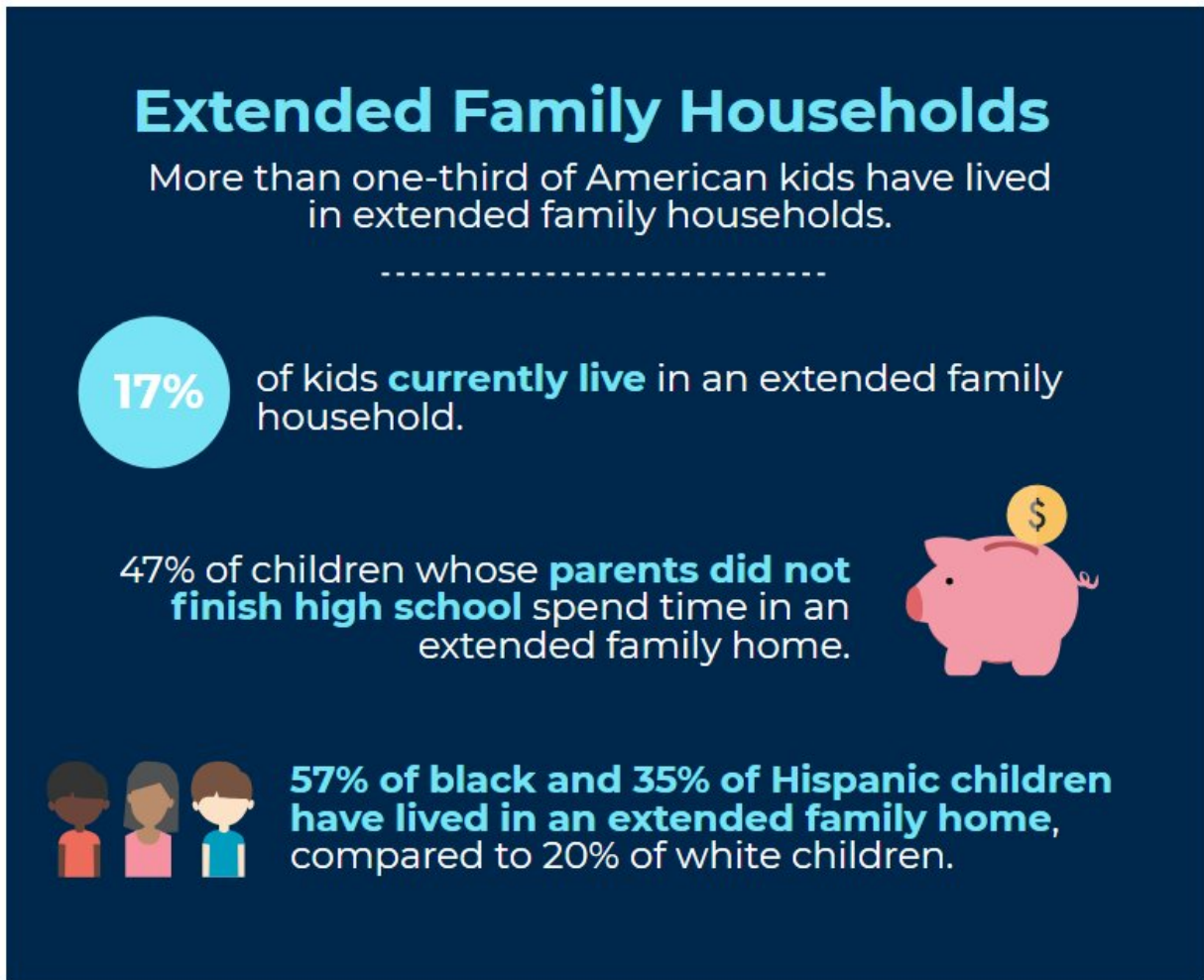
"It's important to understand it because research shows strong associations between [children's](#) living arrangements and their psychological, behavioral and educational outcomes," said Christina Cross, a doctoral candidate at U-M's Ford School of Public Policy and the U-M Department of Sociology. "The results allow us to better understand the potential breadth of influence of the extended family households on child well-being."

An extended family household is formed when a child is living with any relative beyond the child's parent or sibling. It could be a grandparent, aunt or uncle, or other relatives.

In her research, Cross sought to understand if extended family households have become more common over time. She also looked at various factors contributing to extended family households. She found that:

- Socioeconomic differences make a big difference: 47 percent of children whose parents did not finish [high school](#) spend time in an extended family, compared to 17 percent of children whose parents earned a bachelor's degree or higher.
- The differences are substantial when broken down by race: about 57 percent of black and 35 percent of Hispanic children have lived in an extended family, compared to 20 percent of white children.
- Of the extended family households, about 24 percent lived with a grandparent, 18 percent with an aunt or uncle, and 24 percent

with another relative.



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"These findings are important given that nuclear family households have long been considered the standard and normative household in the U.S.," Cross said. "A narrow focus on the nuclear family overlooks the diverse ways in which families, particularly those from minority and/or low-income backgrounds arrange family life."

The study is published in the journal *Population Studies*. It used data from the 1988-2013 waves of Panel Study of Income Dynamics to examine extended family households at the U-M Institute for Social Research.

More information: Christina J. Cross. Extended family households among children in the United States: Differences by race/ethnicity and socio-economic status, *Population Studies* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/00324728.2018.1468476](https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2018.1468476)

Provided by University of Michigan

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