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*Descriptive Finding*

**Household structure across childhood in four  
lower- and middle-income countries**

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## Contents

1	Introduction	144
2	Methods	146
3	Results	148
4	Discussion	155
5	Acknowledgments	156
	References	157

## **Household structure across childhood in four lower- and middle-income countries**

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### **Abstract**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Using data from developing countries, we determine the proportion of children in these samples that experience stable household composition over childhood and the proportion of children that experience each stable household type. We also describe the most frequent household structure trajectories among children who have experienced household transitions.

#### **METHODS**

We apply sequence analysis to data from the Young Lives longitudinal study implemented in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam. This study follows over 1,800 children in each country and provides information on adult household members' relationships to the focal child at five time points between ages 0 and 15 years.

#### **RESULTS**

In all countries, less than half of children had a stable household structure throughout childhood. Coresidence with a grandparent is typical in early childhood, with a later transition into household types without grandparents, although this pattern was not as prominent in Ethiopia. In all countries, households with stepfathers were least prevalent of the various household structures considered.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Future research and family policies supporting child development in developing countries should consider family complexity and household transitions in a longitudinal framework.

#### **CONTRIBUTION**

Research indicates that household structure is influential to child development, yet little has been quantitatively documented from non-Western countries about the trajectories of household structure that children experience.

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## **1. Introduction**

Research from Europe and the United States shows that household composition (presence of mothers, fathers, grandparents, stepparents, and other adults) influences childhood outcomes such as education, cognition, and behavior (Amato and Gilbreth 1999; Bzostek 2008; Bzostek and Berger 2017; Ganong and Coleman 2017; Låftman 2010; McLanahan, Tach, and Schneider 2013; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Sadruddin et al. 2019). Previous descriptive literature on family complexity focuses on parental partnering (Andersson 2002; de Vaus and Gray 2004; Thomson 2014), but the household transitions of nonparent family members (e.g., grandparents) can have impacts as important as parental transitions on child education (Harvey 2020; Perkins 2019). In addition, there is less focus on stable household structures with multiple rounds of data collection, meaning households with the same family member structure over time (Olson 2011). Transitions involving extended family are likely to be high in developing country settings where intergenerational coresidence is common (Ruggles and Heggeness 2008). However, children's household structures and their changes over childhood have not been widely explored in lower- and middle-income settings, particularly since longitudinal surveys spanning childhood are rare in these contexts.

Using data from the Young Lives survey, we examined children's household structure at five time points between birth and age 15 years in four low- and middle-income settings: Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam. The samples are not representative but depict diverse experiences and have the benefit of being a large panel with low attrition rates. The four countries were selected by international researchers coordinated by the University of Oxford to highlight a broad array of issues facing children in developing nations; these diverse countries capture a breadth of familial, societal, and geographical contexts. Table 1 briefly describes the national contexts that influence how family is organized. Though all countries have been impacted by falling fertility and mortality and increasing urbanization (World Bank 2022), differences remain in family organization. For example, Peruvians are rather accepting of single motherhood, which is less common in India. Vietnam abolished arranged marriage in 1959; however it still occurs in some regions in Ethiopia, so youth 'escape' to the cities to avoid these practices.

**Table 1: National family structure context and recommended readings**

Ethiopia
<p>Rural regions of Ethiopia place a strong value on kinship, and tribes tend to have more close-knit villages whose members benefit from the morally required within-group sharing that comes with living with or close to extended family members. In contrast, family sizes are smaller in urban areas. Often there are also fewer extended family members to rely on. While arranged marriage is still common in Ethiopia, there is a rising pattern of young couples migrating to and cohabitating in urban areas to avoid customary marriage practices. Young men do not always remain in the partnership when informally coupled, but it is harder for women to repartner than men, especially with children.</p>
<p>Di Falco, S. and Bulte, E. (2013). The impact of kinship networks on the adoption of risk-mitigating strategies in Ethiopia. <i>World Development</i> 43: 100–110. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.10.011.</p> <p>Gibson, M. and Mace, R. (2005). Helpful grandmothers in rural Ethiopia: A study of the effect of kin on child survival and growth. <i>Evolution and Human Behavior</i> 26(6): 469–482. doi:10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2005.03.004.</p> <p>Tafere, Y., Chuta, N., Pankhurst, A., and Crivello, G. (2020). Young marriage, parenthood and divorce in Ethiopia. (Research Report). Oxford: Young Lives.</p>
India
<p>Extended-family coresidence is common in India as there are economic and social benefits to having grandparents and other extended family members present in the household. Traditionally, this coresidence has been patrilocal. Due to industrialization and changes in economic structure, India is currently trending toward nuclear family structures. However, people living in rural areas often continue to reside in extended-family households as kinship assistance is often relied on for farming. Furthermore, it is more common for younger women and general-caste Hindu women to live in patrilocal extended-family households.</p>
<p>Allendorf, K. (2013). Going nuclear? Family structure and young women's health in India, 1992–2006. <i>Demography</i> 50(3): 853–880. doi:10.1007/s13524-012-0173-1.</p> <p>Chadda, R.K. and Deb, K.S. (2013). Indian family systems, collectivistic society and psychotherapy. <i>Indian Journal of Psychiatry</i> 55(Suppl 2): S299–S309. doi:10.4103/0019-5545.105555.</p> <p>Roy, P.k. (1974). Industrialisation and 'fitness' of nuclear family: A case study in India. <i>Journal of Comparative Family Studies</i> 5(1): 74–86. doi:10.3138/jcfs.5.1.74.</p>
Peru
<p>Family structure in Peru has been similarly diverse at least since the 1960s. Though the most common unit is the nuclear family, it varies in size depending on location of residence, with more children per household in rural areas due to the importance of kin for social and work life in those areas. Extended families, especially the maternal grandparents, tend to live within close proximity when not living with their children. One recent change, however, is the rise of single-mother families, perhaps due to urbanization, which allows for recent increases of female labor-force participation. Yet dependence on grandparents persists as unemployment is high among youth, and Peruvian social protection provides elderly pensions.</p>
<p>Cabrera, V.E., Hildebrand, P.E., and Jones, J.W. (2005). Modelling the effect of household composition on the welfare of limited-resource farmers in Coastal Cañete, Peru. <i>Agricultural Systems</i> 86(2):207–222. doi:10.1016/j.agsy.2004.08.009.</p> <p>Lees C. The Nature of Migration and Its Impact on Families in Peru. Published online June 1, 2009. Accessed November 4, 2020. <a href="https://www.younglives.org.uk/content/nature-migration-and-its-impact-families-peru">https://www.younglives.org.uk/content/nature-migration-and-its-impact-families-peru</a></p> <p>Reynolds, S.A. (2022). Household transitions between ages 5 and 15 and educational outcomes: Fathers and grandparents in Peru. <i>Demographic Research</i> 46(14): 397–440. doi:10.4054/DemRes.2022.46.14.</p>
Vietnam
<p>North–south regional differences in patrilocal and matrilocal coresidence may differ based on historical cultural influence: Northern Vietnam is closer to China (generally patriarchal) while other cultures from Southeast Asia have influenced southern Vietnam with their bilateral kinship models. Furthermore, in northern Vietnam newly married couples often immediately establish separate households, while those in southern Vietnam tend to reside with the husband's parents. This difference may be due to availability of housing stock as the socialist government in northern Vietnam proactively divided larger dwellings to accommodate more (but smaller) families.</p>
<p>Belanger, D. (2000). Regional differences in household composition and family formation patterns in Vietnam. <i>Journal of Comparative Family Studies</i> 31(2):171–189. doi:10.3138/jcfs.31.2.171.</p> <p>Hirschman, C. and Loi, V.M. (1996). Family and household structure in Vietnam: Some glimpses from a recent survey. <i>Pacific Affairs</i> 69(2): 229–249. doi:10.2307/2760726.</p> <p>Van Luong H. (1989). Vietnamese kinship: structural principles and the socialist transformation in Northern Vietnam. <i>Journal of Asian Studies</i> 48(4): 741–756. doi:10.2307/2058112.</p>

For each country, we answer the following questions: What proportion of children experience stable households over childhood, and what proportion experience each stable household type? Among children experiencing transitions in household structure, what are the most frequent household structure trajectories? Because some stratifications may have similar implications for all countries, we also tested for differences in distributions across household trajectory types by factors known to be associated with household volatility: wealth (above or below the median wealth index), location (urban or rural), and birth order (first-born or later-born). Wealth is associated with stability in marriage, with couples of higher socioeconomic status having a lower likelihood of separation (Conger, Conger, and Martin 2010). Additionally, poorer families may need to rely on ‘doubling up’ as strategy to share limited resources (Ruggles and Heggeness 2008; Wiemers 2014). The lower population density of rural areas suggests fewer options for shifting households. For example, research from China suggests rural populations with higher fertility rates may have more nuclear households since the parents’ household cannot support all progeny (Tsui 1989). Finally, children of earlier birth order may experience more household transitions: Mothers may learn childrearing techniques in their parents’ household and later move when they (and/or their partners) are able to support an independent household where later-born children are subsequently raised.

Our findings suggest some commonalities in patterns, including the prevalence of the nuclear family and grandparent coresidence with young mothers, but overall there is a broad range of household types in which children in lower- and middle-income countries reside, and a large proportion of children do not have a stable household structure across childhood.

## 2. Methods

The Young Lives study is an ongoing longitudinal study in Peru, Ethiopia, India, and Vietnam that follows approximately 2,000 children per country. In India, children were recruited from only the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which have an above-average GDP per capita and were a single state when data collection commenced. To avoid overgeneralization, we qualify India in the text with AP/TG. In each country, 20 sites<sup>3</sup> were selected to include a range of cultures and locations, and children were sampled randomly within those sites. Comparisons with representative datasets (e.g.,

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<sup>3</sup> Sites differed by country depending on geopolitical organization. For example, Peruvian sites were districts while in India communes were considered. The survey designers selected the 20 sites from the set of non-wealthy sites, often using a combination of randomization and stratification to ensure a broad variety of contexts. Specific details on the process in each country is available in the technical document [http://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk/doc/5307/mrdoc/pdf/5307methods\\_guide\\_sampling.pdf](http://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk/doc/5307/mrdoc/pdf/5307methods_guide_sampling.pdf).

Demographic and Health Surveys [DHS]) confirm Young Lives captures the broad diversity of childhood experiences (Escobal and Flores 2008; Kumra 2008; Nguyen 2008; Outes-Leon and Sanchez 2008). In Ethiopia, a larger representation of urban children in the Young Lives sample resulted in this selection being wealthier than the average Ethiopian child. In India AP/TG, the Young Lives sample seemed wealthier than the population of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, but human capital measures (mother's education, health care) suggested the Young Lives sample was more disadvantaged. The Peruvian sample is nationally representative, excluding the wealthiest 5% of districts. The Vietnamese sample was poorer than average.

Data were collected in 2001 on children ages 0 to 1, with subsequent data collection around ages 5, 8, 12, and 15 years. We included children who completed all five rounds of data collection: over 1,800 children for each country and 90%, 93%, 88%, and 94% of the original samples in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam, respectively. In all countries, excluded children were wealthier and more likely to live in an urban setting in comparison to children in the analysis. Sensitivity analyses using larger samples that substituted children's missing household structure from a particular round with the structure from the previous or subsequent rounds yielded similar patterns to the main findings. Sensitivity analyses using smaller samples that excluded children who were married by the fifth round (19 in Ethiopia, 43 in India AP/TG, 29 in Peru, 36 in Vietnam) yielded similar results.

For each survey round, information was collected about who lived in the home at the time of the interview and their relationship to the focal child. Tabulations revealed the most common household members, and considering these results along with family structures frequently studied in demographic literature (Olson 2011), we generated categories of family structure. For each round, we categorized the child's household structure into one of the following types: nuclear, two-parent + grandparent(s), mother + grandparent(s), lone-mother, mother + stepfather or non-grandparent extended family member, two-parent + non-grandparent extended family member, and no-mother families. Two-parent families and mothers were always biological parents. The single-mother + grandparent(s) category could include stepfathers, but stepfathers were only present in 0.22%–2.39% of such cases. The focal child's adult siblings were not counted as other adults present in the household, but their spouses were. Non-grandparent extended family could include nonrelatives but not servants. Almost all children living without mothers coresided with other family members. For each country we calculated the proportion of children who had been in each of the household types for all five rounds as well as the proportion of children who had ever been in each household type. We also calculated the proportion of children who transitioned across categories.

Once each child's household structure was determined in each round, the SQ package for Stata 14 was used to label each child's household structure trajectory and

determine sequences with the highest frequency (Brzinsky-Fay, Kohler, and Luniak 2006; Kohler 2016; StataCorp 2015). Using terminology from previous research (Craigie et al. 2012; Olson 2011), a child's household structure is classified as stable if it is the same type of household in every survey round. A transition, in contrast, occurs when the child's household structure is distinct in different rounds. We grouped transitions with same-order sequences; an ABAAA sequence and an AABAA sequence would both be labeled as an A to B to A transition.

Our labeling does not consider the identities of individuals: A household could be classified in two subsequent periods as two-parent + grandparent(s), but a grandparent could have died between rounds. Similarly, a household could be classified as single-mother + stepfather, but the identity of the stepfather could have changed between rounds. This approach, in addition to the limitation of five time points, suggests we are understating the household transitions that children experience. We also note that our definition of transitions does not include moving location: The same household structure could have moved between rounds, but this would not have been counted as a transition. This approach has been used elsewhere (Craigie et al. 2012; Reynolds 2022). Finally, we do not examine the cause of the transition: In the majority of cases, grandparent separation is due to the household splitting rather than death (authors' calculations).

For each country we complemented visual inspection and qualitative comparisons with the chi-squared test to examine if the distribution of the stable structures and number of transitions differed across strata known to be associated with household volatility: wealth index (below or above country median at baseline), location (urban or rural), and birth order (first-born or not). All children had information on location, and birth order was determined by ages of the focal child's siblings. The wealth index, constructed by the Young Lives team, consisted of three subindices measuring housing quality, access to services, and assets (*Wealth Index* 2017). Ten households were missing data on the first-round wealth index in Peru, so we substituted values from the second round.

### **3. Results**

The percent of children with stable household structures ranged from 40% (Peru) to 50% (Vietnam) (Table 2). A smaller proportion (28%–44%) of children lived in a nuclear household structure in all five survey rounds. Two parents coresiding with grandparents was a prevalent stable structure in India AP/TG (12%) and Vietnam (7%). Most other categories had less than 1% of children consistently in the structure. Exceptions were two-parents + grandparents or mother + grandparents for Peru (2%) and lone mother for Ethiopia (3%). Because many studies focus on parental stability, we also confirmed that 59% of children in Ethiopia, 77% in India AP/TG, 60% in Peru, and 76% in Vietnam

coresided with both biological parents in all survey rounds, irrespective of other household members.

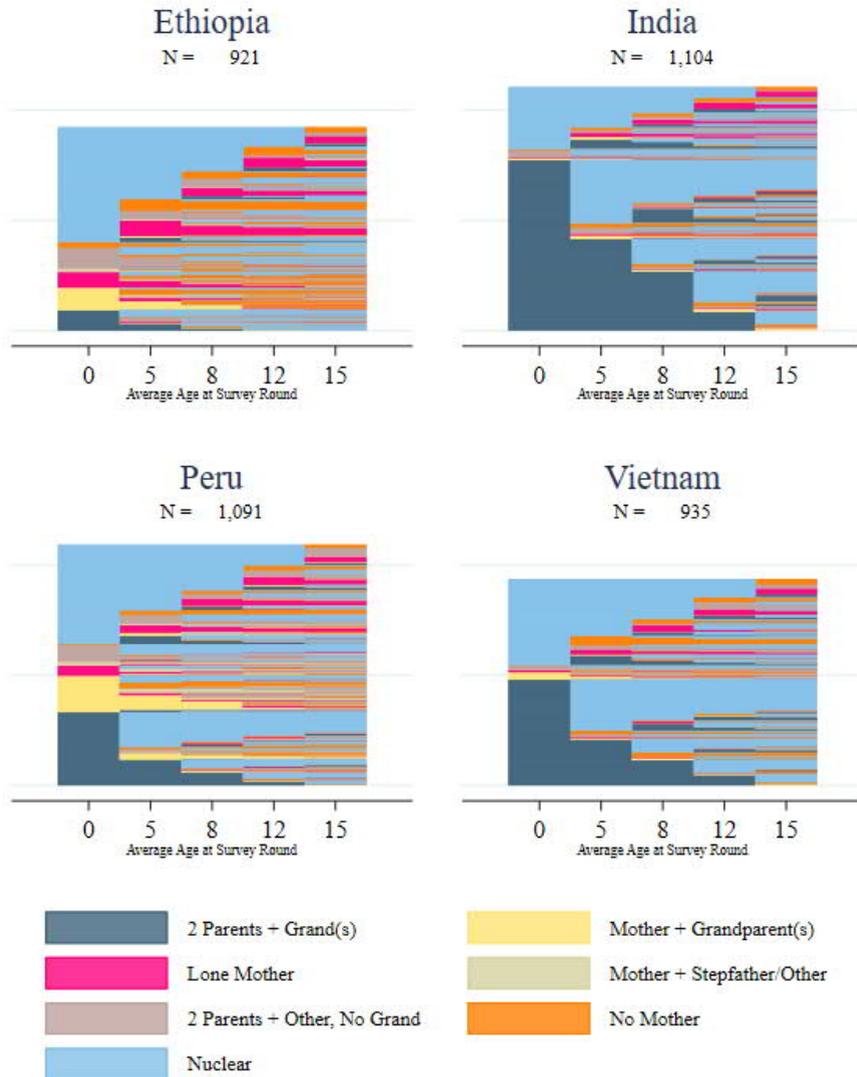
The majority or near majority of children in each country experienced at least one household structure transition (49%–60%, Table 2), with the majority of this subset experiencing one transition. Figure 1 illustrates the household trajectories of all children who ever experienced a household transition, grouped by household structure at the first survey round; each horizontal line is a child's trajectory. Visual inspection reveals the transitioning patterns of India APTG and Vietnam were the most similar, with two-parent + grandparent(s) households often transitioning into nuclear. Few children remained coresiding with grandparents past age 8. Peru and Ethiopia shared similarities, such as a larger percentage of single mothers with grandparents, but Peru had a higher share of two-parent families with grandparents while Ethiopia had a much larger proportion of single-mother families at all time periods. In contrast to the other countries, Ethiopia had more children living separate from their mothers over time.

**Table 2: Percentage of children in stable structures and transitioning**

	Ethiopia	95% CI	India <sup>1</sup>	95% CI	Peru	95% CI	Vietnam	95% CI
Stable (no transitions)	48.7%	(46.4%-51.0%)	41.2%	(39.0%-43.5%)	39.6%	(37.3%-41.8%)	50.6%	(48.3%-52.8%)
Nuclear								
Two-parent + grandparent(s)	44.0%	(41.7%-46.3%)	28.4%	(26.4%-30.5%)	34.7%	(32.5%-36.9%)	42.4%	(40.2%-44.6%)
Mother + grandparent(s)	0.3%	(0.0%-0.5%)	12.3%	(10.8%-13.8%)	1.7%	(1.1%-2.3%)	7.4%	(6.2%-8.6%)
	0.5%	(0.2%-0.8%)	0.1%	(0.1%-0.2%)	1.8%	(1.2%-2.4%)	0.3%	(0.1%-0.6%)
Lone mother	2.6%	(1.9%-3.4%)	0.1%	(0.0%-0.3%)	0.8%	(0.4%-1.2%)	0.2%	(0.0%-0.4%)
Mother + stepfather or non-grandparent extended family	0.2%	(0.0%-0.4%)	0.0%	(0.0%-0.0%)	0.1%	(0.0%-0.3%)	0.1%	(0.1%-0.2%)
Two-parent + non-grandparent extended family	0.2%	(0.0%-0.4%)	0.1%	(0.1%-0.2%)	0.1%	(0.0%-0.3%)	0.1%	(0.0%-0.3%)
No mother	0.8%	(0.4%-1.3%)	0.3%	(0.1%-0.6%)	0.3%	(0.0%-0.5%)	0.1%	(0.1%-0.2%)
At least one transition	51.3%	(50.3%-52.3%)	58.8%	(57.8%-59.8%)	60.4%	(59.4%-61.5%)	49.4%	(48.4%-50.5%)
One transition	27.0%	(24.9%-29.0%)	32.5%	(30.3%-34.6%)	31.6%	(29.4%-33.7%)	27.9%	(25.8%-29.9%)
Two transitions	15.8%	(14.1%-17.5%)	16.6%	(14.9%-18.3%)	19.8%	(17.9%-21.6%)	13.7%	(12.1%-15.2%)
Three transitions	6.8%	(5.6%-8.0%)	8.0%	(6.8%-9.2%)	7.6%	(6.4%-8.9%)	6.9%	(5.8%-8.1%)
Four transitions	1.8%	(1.2%-2.4%)	1.7%	(1.1%-2.3%)	1.4%	(0.9%-2.0%)	1.0%	(0.5%-1.4%)
N	1,795		1,879		1,805		1,891	

Note: <sup>1</sup>The India sample comes from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.  
Source: Young Lives 2001–2016.

**Figure 1: Household trajectories among children who have experienced a household transition**



*Notes:* Each horizontal line represents the trajectory of one child. Children are grouped by household structure in the first survey round. The India sample comes from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.  
*Source:* Young Lives Survey 2001–2016.

Sequence analysis confirmed that in all countries except Ethiopia, the most frequent transition sequence was two-parents + grandparent transitioning to nuclear (Table 3). In Ethiopia, nuclear to lone mother was most common. This pattern also appeared in the top five transition types in Peru and Vietnam. A transition from nuclear to households without a biological mother was among the top five transition trajectories in all countries. However, the top five transitions included only about one-third to one-half of all transitions.

**Table 3: Prevalence of top five household transitions among children in transitioning households**

Ethiopia (51.3% of cohort experienced transitions; N = 921)		95% CI
Nuclear → Lone mother	16.0%	(13.6%–18.4%)
Nuclear → No mother	12.5%	(10.4%–14.6%)
Nuclear → Two-parent + non-grandparent extended family → Nuclear	6.0%	(4.4%–7.5%)
Two-parent + non-grandparent extended family → Nuclear	5.6%	(4.1%–7.0%)
Nuclear → Two-parent + grandparent(s)	4.9%	(3.5%–6.3%)
<i>All other transitions</i>	55.0%	
India <sup>1</sup> (58.8% of cohort experienced transitions; N = 1,104)		
Two-parent + grandparent(s) → Nuclear	40.3%	(37.4%–43.2%)
Two-parent + grandparent(s) → Nuclear → Two-parent + grandparent(s)	10.3%	(8.5%–12.1%)
Nuclear → Lone mother	7.5%	(5.9%–9.0%)
Two-parent + grandparent(s) → Nuclear → Two-parent + grandparent(s) → Nuclear	5.5%	(4.2%–6.9%)
Nuclear → No mother	4.1%	(2.9%–5.2%)
<i>All other transitions</i>	32.3%	
Peru (60.4% of cohort experienced transitions; N = 1,091)		
Two-parent + grandparent(s) → Nuclear	16.7%	(14.5%–18.9%)
Nuclear → Lone mother	9.9%	(8.1%–11.6%)
Nuclear → Two-parent + non-grandparent extended family → Nuclear	6.0%	(4.6%–7.4%)
Nuclear → Two-parent + non-grandparent extended family	5.8%	(4.5%–7.2%)
Nuclear → No mother	5.6%	(4.2%–7.0%)
<i>All other transitions</i>	56.0%	
Vietnam (49.4% of cohort experienced transitions; N = 935)		
Two-parent + grandparent(s) → Nuclear	32.5%	(29.5%–35.5%)
Nuclear → No mother	9.1%	(7.2%–10.9%)
Nuclear → Lone mother	7.2%	(5.6%–8.9%)
Two-parent + grandparent(s) → Nuclear → Two-parent + grandparent(s)	6.8%	(5.2%–8.4%)
Nuclear → Two-parent + non-grandparent extended family	5.7%	(4.3%–7.2%)
<i>All other transitions</i>	38.7%	

Note: <sup>1</sup>The India sample comes from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Source: Young Lives 2001–2016.

To understand the diversity of the household structures children experience, we calculated the proportion of children who have ever experienced each household structure. An overwhelming proportion of children lived in nuclear households at some point (79%–86%, Table 3). We found around one-fourth to one-half of children experienced two-parent + grandparent coresidence at some point during childhood in India AP/TG, Peru, and Vietnam, and not quite one-fifth of children experienced single-mother + grandparent coresidence in Peru. In Ethiopia, grandparent coresidence was less common (around 10% for both two-parent + grandparent and single-mother + grandparent). Around 13% of children experienced a non-grandparent extended family member living with both of their biological parents and themselves at some point during childhood in Ethiopia and Peru; this figure was 8% in India AP/TG and Vietnam.

Almost one-fourth of children lived in a lone-mother household in Ethiopia (Table 4). In Peru, around one-fifth of children lived in a lone-mother household at some point, while in India AP/TG and Vietnam this proportion was around one-tenth. Additionally, around 10% of children had lived at some point in a household without their biological mother; the exception was Ethiopia, where this proportion was around 20%. Stepfather or other non-grandparent family was the least common household structure experienced by children in all countries.

We examined heterogeneity in distributions across stable household types and number of transitions. Children in households below the median wealth index had more stable families in both Ethiopia and Peru by over a 10% margin, but there were few differences in household stability in India AP/TG and Vietnam by wealth. In most countries, children experienced more household stability in rural areas than in urban areas, ranging from a margin of 6% (Vietnam) to over 25% (Ethiopia); India, however, had a 10% margin with urban children experiencing more stability. In India, a large proportion of rural children transitioned from two-parent + grandparent(s) families to nuclear families; urban children were more likely to live consistently in nuclear families. In Ethiopia, Peru, and Vietnam, first-born children experienced less stability by a margin of at least 10%. In all countries, household structures with grandparent coresidence was more common for first-born children and, in Ethiopia and Peru, the household composition of mother + grandparent(s) was much more present early in life among first-born children than later-born children.

**Table 4: Percentage of children ever in household type**

Household Structure	Ethiopia	India <sup>1</sup>	Peru	Vietnam
Nuclear	83.8%	78.8%	81.1%	85.8%
Two-parent + grandparent(s)	10.6%	58.9%	26.9%	38.7%
Mother + grandparent(s)	9.4%	5.5%	17.6%	5.7%
Lone mother	22.3%	9.7%	18.0%	9.2%
Mother + stepfather or non-grandparent extended family	8.1%	1.2%	11.0%	2.3%
Two-parent + non-grandparent extended family	13.6%	7.5%	13.6%	7.6%
No mother	20.2%	10.2%	13.4%	12.2%
N	1,795	1,879	1,805	1,891

Note: <sup>1</sup>The India sample comes from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.  
Source: Young Lives 2001–2016.

## 4. Discussion

Characterizing the household trajectories of children from ages 0 to 15 years in four low- and middle-income countries reveals important similarities. In all countries, most children lived in nuclear families at some point, and the most common stable household structure in every country was that of the nuclear household. Nevertheless, there is still significant diversity in household structure, even in India AP/TG and Vietnam, where there are low rates of father absence. Half the children in all countries experienced at least one change in the composition of adult household members. Moving from a household structure with grandparents to a nuclear structure was common in India AP/TG, Peru, and Vietnam. In all countries, first-born children experienced less stability in household structure than later-born children. We also note that a very low proportion of children in these samples coresided with stepfathers; this finding suggests that future research on mothers who are no longer partnered with their children's biological fathers should include grandparents and other extended family in addition to stepfathers when exploring family support networks.

Differences were found between countries, reminding demographers that context remains important. Ethiopia had a higher prevalence of lone-mother families and extended families with additional adult members but not grandparents. This result may be related to a trend for young couples to move to cities to cohabit outside of wedlock and then separate, leaving mothers alone without local extended-family support (Tafere et al. 2020). In contrast, young Peruvian women often live with maternal grandparents, possibly offsetting high unemployment rates with elderly pensions (Reynolds, Forthcoming). Thus, in Peru, more children were living in lone-mother + grandparents households than in any other country. While India AP/TG and Vietnam both had a high proportion of nuclear families + grandparent(s) at some point in a child's life, India AP/TG had a higher proportion of children coresiding with grandparents throughout childhood than Vietnam had. Both of these countries have lower prevalence of parental separation than Peru and Ethiopia but still have cultural roots of intergenerational coresidence. The greater importance of patrilocality for inheritance laws may explain the consistency of intergenerational coresidence in India (Bhalotra et al. 2020), whereas in Vietnam, despite the general practice of bequeathing to sons, men perceived daughters' inheritance rights as fair (Nanda et al. 2012). Explanations of the drivers of differences across countries is outside the scope of this study, but it is a valuable area for future research.

These differences echo findings from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS): data from over 84 countries confirm household structure does not strongly correlate with the Human Development Index, unlike other factors related to family change such as fertility (Pesando 2019). This also aligns with other research highlighting that, although

it was predicted that economic growth globally would result in the predominantly Western style of nuclear family (Cherlin 2012), this has not been the case (Ruggles and Heggeness 2008). Future research should consider the impacts on children of these varied household structures and their transitions. The household members with distinct roles have different availability and usage of time and resources for children; evaluation of policies should consider family structure as a mediator.

Nevertheless, our study has limitations. Most samples are not representative but rather reflect the goal of including a wide diversity of children, sufficient for characterizing child poverty. Yet, we are unaware of other longitudinal, child-focused studies in lower- and middle- income countries with as many survey rounds spanning childhood. While this study focuses on types of transitions, we did not explore the timing of transitions, though our figures provide initial insight. Finally, our study underestimates the number of transitions since additional transitions could occur between survey rounds, and household types could include multiple household members who transition even though the categorized types remain the same. Our findings confirm that a multitude of children in a variety of settings across the world experience a diversity of household structures.

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