



Society



- A society, or a human society, is a group of people involved with each other through persistent relations, or a large social grouping sharing the same geographical or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.
- Human societies are characterized by patterns of relationships (social relations) between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institutions; a given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent members. In the social sciences, a larger society often evinces stratification and/or dominance patterns in subgroups.

- More broadly, a society may be illustrated as an economic, social, or industrial infrastructure, made up of a varied collection of individuals. Members of a society may be from different ethnic groups.
- A society can be a particular ethnic group, such as the Saxons; a nation state, such as Bhutan; or a broader cultural group, such as a Western society. The word society may also refer to an organized voluntary association of people for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes.
- A "society" may even, though more by means of metaphor, refer to a social organism such as an ant colony or any cooperative aggregate such as, for example, in some formulations of artificial intelligence.

Etymology and usage



- The term "society" came from the Latin word *societas*, which in turn was derived from the noun *socius* ("comrade, friend, ally"; adjectival form *socialis*) used to describe a bond or interaction between parties that are friendly, or at least civil.
- Without an article, the term can refer to the entirety of humanity (also: "society in general", "society at large", etc.), although those who are unfriendly or uncivil to the remainder of society in this sense may be deemed to be "antisocial".
- Adam Smith wrote that a society "may subsist among different men, as among different merchants, from a sense of its utility without any mutual love or affection, if only they refrain from doing injury to each other.
- Used in the sense of an association, a society is a body of individuals outlined by the bounds of functional interdependence, possibly comprising characteristics such as national or cultural identity, social solidarity, language, or hierarchical structure.

Conceptions

- Society, in general, addresses the fact that an individual has rather limited means as an autonomous unit.
- The great apes have always been more (Bonobo, Homo, Pan) or less (Gorilla, Pongo) social animals, so Robinson Crusoe-like situations are either fictions or unusual corner cases to the ubiquity of social context for humans, who fall between presocial and eusocial in the spectrum of animal ethology.
- Human societies are most often organized according to their primary means of subsistence. Social scientists have identified hunter-gatherer societies, nomadic pastoral societies, horticulturalist or simple farming societies, and intensive agricultural societies, also called civilizations.
- Some consider industrial and post-industrial societies to be qualitatively different from traditional agricultural societies.

→ In political science

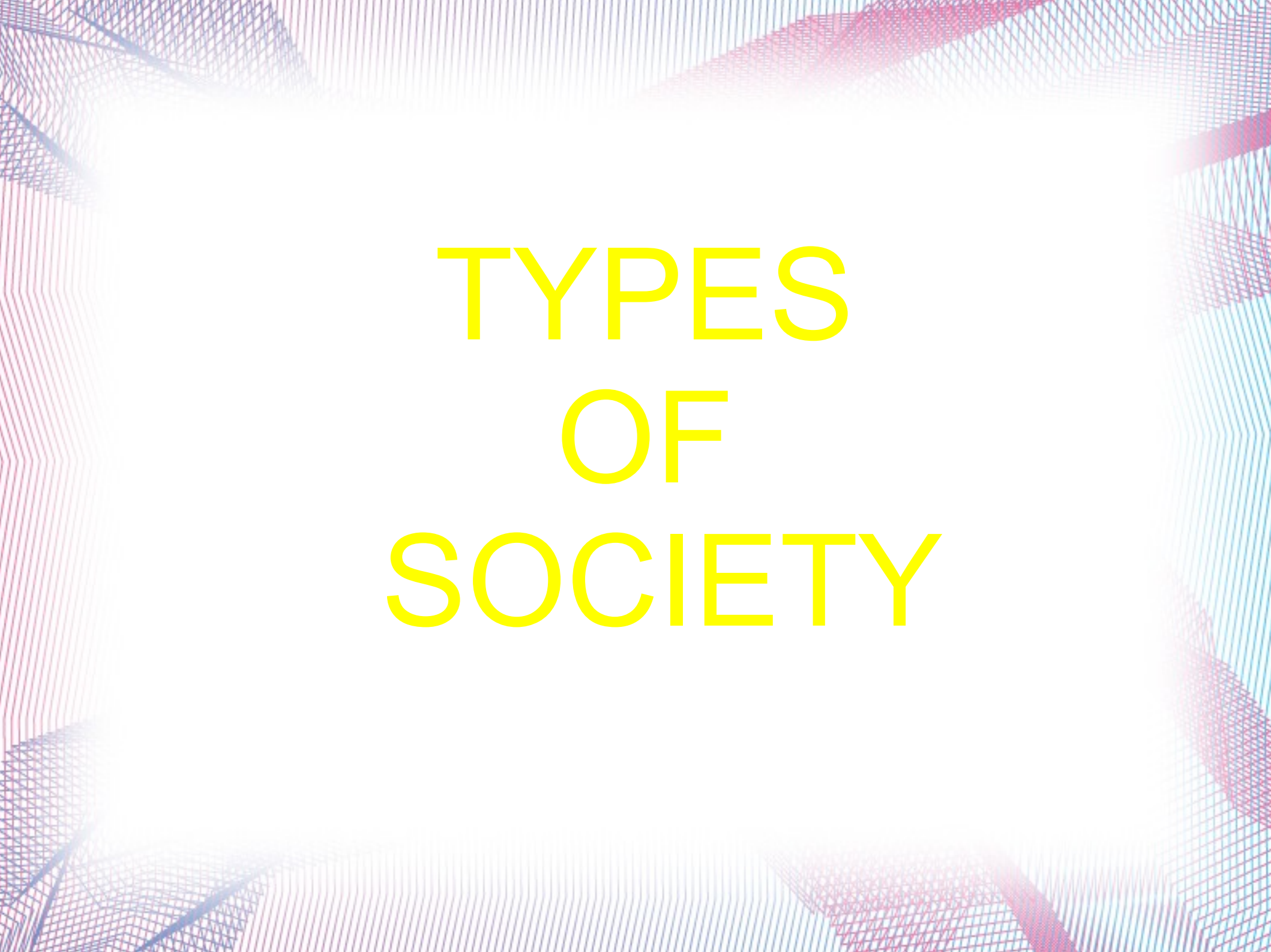
- Societies may also be structured politically. In order of increasing size and complexity, there are bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and statesocieties.
- These structures may have varying degrees of political power, depending on the cultural, geographical, and historicalenvironments that these societies must contend with.
- A society that is unable to offer an effective response to other societies it competes with will usually be subsumed into the culture of the competing society.

→ In sociology

Gerhard Lenski differentiates societies based on their level of technology, communication, and economy:

- 1) hunters and gatherers,
- 2) simple agricultural,
- 3) advanced agricultural,
- 4) industrial, and
- 5) special (e.g. fishing societies or maritime societies).

- This is similar to the system earlier developed by anthropologists Morton H. Fried, a conflict theorist, and Elman Service, an integration theorist, who have produced a system of classification for societies in all human cultures based on the evolution of social inequality and the role of the state.
- This system of classification contains four categories:
 - ✓ Hunter-gatherer bands (categorization of duties and responsibilities).
 - ✓ Tribal societies in which there are some limited instances of social rank and prestige
 - ✓ Stratified structures led by chieftains.
 - ✓ Civilizations, with complex social hierarchies and organized, institutional governments.

The background features a complex, abstract pattern of thin, overlapping lines in shades of blue and red. These lines form a grid-like structure that appears to be receding into the distance, creating a sense of depth and perspective. The overall effect is reminiscent of a digital or architectural wireframe.

TYPES OF SOCIETY

→ Pre-industrial

- In a pre-industrial society, food production, which is carried out through the use of human and animal labor, is the main economic activity.
- These societies can be subdivided according to their level of technology and their method of producing food.
- These subdivisions are hunting and gathering, pastoral, horticultural, agricultural, and feudal.

Hunting and gathering

- The main form of food production in such societies is the daily collection of wild plants and the hunting of wild animals. Hunter-gatherers move around constantly in search of food. As a result, they do not build permanent villages or create a wide variety of artifacts, and usually only form small groups such as bands and tribes.
- However, some hunting and gathering societies in areas with abundant resources (such as the Tlingit) lived in larger groups and formed complex hierarchical social structures such as chiefdoms. The need for mobility also limits the size of these societies. They generally consist of fewer than 60 people and rarely exceed 100. Statuses within the tribe are relatively equal, and decisions are reached through general agreement. The ties that bind the tribe are more complex than those of the bands
- Leadership is personal—charismatic—and used for special purposes only in tribal society. There are no political offices containing real power, and a chief is merely a person of influence, a sort of adviser; therefore, tribal consolidations for collective action are not governmental.
- The family forms the main social unit, with most societal members being related by birth or marriage. This type of organization requires the family to carry out most social functions, including production and education.



Pastoral

- Pastoralism is a slightly more efficient form of subsistence. Rather than searching for food on a daily basis, members of a pastoral society rely on domesticated herd animals to meet their food needs.
- Pastoralists live a nomadic life, moving their herds from one pasture to another. Because their food supply is far more reliable, pastoral societies can support larger populations.
- As a result, the division of labor becomes more complex. For example, some people become craftworkers, producing tools, weapons, and jewelry. The production of goods encourages trade.
- This trade helps to create inequality, as some families acquire more goods than others do. These families often gain power through their increased wealth.
- The passing on of property from one generation to another helps to centralize wealth and power.
- Over time emerge hereditary chieftainships, the typical form of government in pastoral societies.

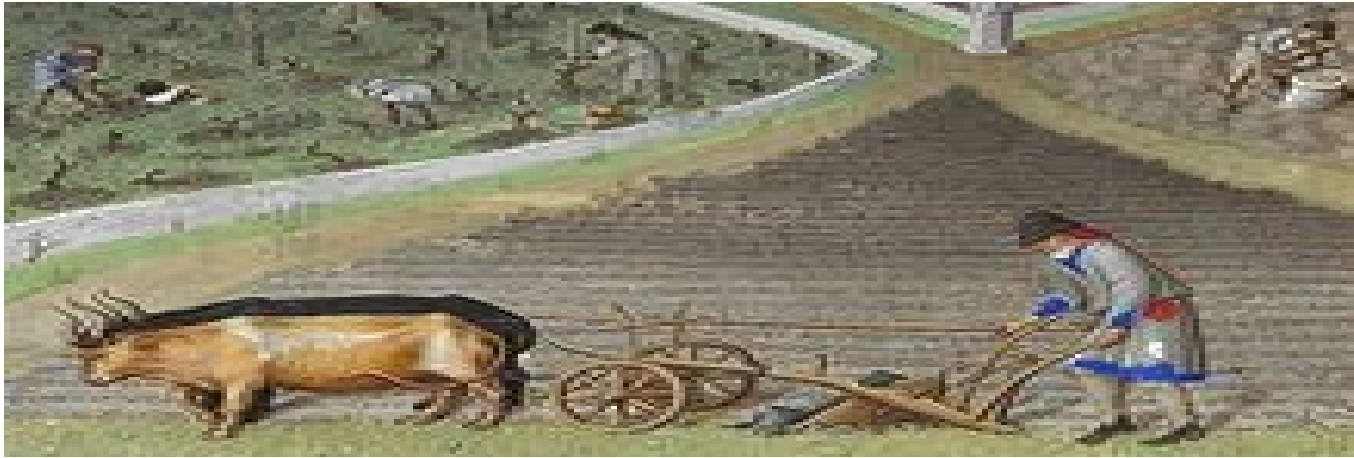


Horticultural

- Fruits and vegetables grown in garden plots that have been cleared from the jungle or forest provide the main source of food in a horticultural society.
- These societies have a level of technology and complexity similar to pastoral societies. Some horticultural groups use the slash-and-burn method to raise crops. The wild vegetation is cut and burned, and ashes are used as fertilizers.
- As with pastoral societies, surplus food leads to a more complex division of labor. Specialized roles in horticultural societies include craftspeople, shamans (religious leaders), and traders.
- This role specialization allows people to create a wide variety of artifacts. As in pastoral societies, surplus food can lead to inequalities in wealth and power within horticultural political systems, developed because of the settled nature of horticultural life.



Agrarian



- Agrarian societies use agricultural technological advances to cultivate crops over a large area.
- This meant a greater surplus, which resulted in towns that became centers of trade supporting various rulers, educators, craftspeople, merchants, and religious leaders who did not have to worry about locating nourishment.
- Farmers provided warriors with food in exchange for protection against invasion by enemies. A system of rulers with high social status also appeared.
- This nobility organized warriors to protect the society from invasion. In this way, the nobility managed to extract goods from “lesser” members of society.

Feudal

- Feudalism was a form of society based on ownership of land. Unlike today's farmers, vassals under feudalism were bound to cultivating their lord's land.
- In exchange for military protection, the lords exploited the peasants into providing food, crops, crafts, homage, and other services to the landowner.
- The estates of the realm system of feudalism was often multigenerational; the families of peasants may have cultivated their lord's land for generations.

Industrial

- Between the 15th and 16th centuries, a new economic system emerged that began to replace feudalism.
- Capitalism is marked by open competition in a free market, in which the means of production are privately owned. Europe's exploration of the Americas served as one impetus for the development of capitalism. The introduction of foreign metals, silks, and spices stimulated great commercial activity in European societies.
- Industrial societies rely heavily on machines powered by fuels for the production of goods. This produced further dramatic increases in efficiency. The increased efficiency of production of the industrial revolution produced an even greater surplus than before.
- Once again, the population boomed. Increased productivity made more goods available to everyone. However, inequality became even greater than before.
- The breakup of agricultural-based feudal societies caused many people to leave the land and seek employment in cities. This created a great surplus of labor and gave capitalists plenty of laborers who could be hired for extremely low wages.

→ Post-industrial

- Post-industrial societies are societies dominated by information, services, and high technology more than the production of goods.
- Advanced industrial societies are now seeing a shift toward an increase in service sectors over manufacturing and production.
- The U.S. is the first country to have over half of its work force employed in service industries.
- Service industries include government, research, education, health, sales, law, banking, and so on. It is still too early to identify and understand all the ramifications this new kind of society will have for social life.
- In fact, even the phrase "postindustrial" belies the fact that we don't yet quite know what will follow industrial societies or the forms they will take.

*A society grows great when old
men plant trees whose shade
they know they shall never sit in.*



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**"The further a society
drifts from the truth,
the more it will hate
those that speak it."**

-George Orwell



*Suspicion is the companion
of mean souls and the bane
of all good society.*
- Thomas Paine

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