

What is Sociology?

AQA A Level Sociology 7192 • Families & Households • L001 • PowerPoint v1.4

CONNECT & CHECK | SHARE | PRESENT | APPLY | RECALL & REVIEW

Your learning journey

Connect & Check → Share → Present → Apply → Recall & Review

By the end, you should be able to explain what makes an explanation sociological, use foundational concepts accurately, distinguish structure from agency and apply sociological thinking.

Starting-point diagnostic

Statement	Your view	Why?
People who are poor are usually poor because of the choices they make.	Agree / unsure / disagree	
School rewards the most talented and hardworking students.	Agree / unsure / disagree	
Families are private matters and society has little influence on them.	Agree / unsure / disagree	
What counts as 'normal' behaviour is mostly obvious.	Agree / unsure / disagree	

From everyday explanation to Sociology

Everyday explanations often begin with individuals: personality, effort, preference, luck or decisions. Sociology looks for patterns and asks how relationships, institutions, culture, inequality and expectations shape those patterns. It does not assume people have no choice. It examines how choice operates within social conditions.

Core concepts

Concept	Meaning	Your example
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Society	Networks of social relationships and institutions.	
Culture	Shared meanings, values, practices and ways of life.	
Norm	A social expectation about appropriate behaviour.	
Value	An idea about what is desirable, important or worthwhile.	
Status	A recognised social position.	
Role	Expected behaviour associated with a social position.	
Structure	Patterns and institutions that create opportunities and constraints.	
Agency	The capacity to act, interpret and choose.	
Socialisation	The process through which people learn culture and ways of participating in social life.	

Make the familiar strange

Choose a lift, new class, restaurant, group chat or job interview.

Lens	Your observation
Two norms	
Value behind them	
Status or role	
Agency choice	
Structural influence	
What happens if the norm is broken?	

Access scaffold: A norm is _____. People may follow it because _____. A person could choose to _____, although _____ may shape that choice.

Common sense or Sociology?

Teenagers use social media because they like it.

Rewrite as a sociological question:

Retrieval check

What is a norm?

What is a value?

Give one social institution.

Distinguish structure from agency.

What is socialisation?

Why does evidence matter?

Think Higher: is choice ever completely free?

Prompt	Your thinking
What social conditions could shape the pattern?	
Where can individuals still act?	
Which influence appears strongest?	
What evidence would you need?	

From everyday to sociological

Developing: “People choose careers based on what jobs they like. Some people work harder than others.”

What is missing?

Stronger: “Career choice involves agency, but education, class, gender norms, labour markets and family resources can structure opportunities.”

Why is this stronger?

Prove it

Explain two ways in which a person's choices may be influenced by society. Use at least two sociological concepts. [6 marks]

Before you submit

- ☐ Two distinct ways
- ☐ Accurate concepts
- ☐ Developed explanation
- ☐ Relevant example
- ☐ Agency not ignored

Exit ticket

What makes an explanation sociological?

Give one example of structure influencing a choice without determining it.

Write one question you now want Sociology to help you answer.
