

Knowledge organiser

AQA A Level Sociology 7192 • Families & Households • L004 • v1.0

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What do we mean by family?

Concept	Meaning
Family	A contested category of relationships involving kinship, partnership, care or belonging; its meaning depends on the definition used.
Household	A residential unit: one person alone, or people sharing an address, cooking facilities and a living/sitting/dining space under the current ONS rule.
Kinship	Relationships socially recognised through descent, marriage, adoption or other culturally recognised ties.
Co-residence	Living at the same address; it does not establish the nature of a relationship.
Nuclear family	Usually a couple and their children; definitions and usage vary, so state the intended meaning.
Extended family	Kin beyond a parent–child unit, such as grandparents, aunts or cousins; they may live together or separately.
Lone-parent family	One parent living with at least one child under the ONS statistical definition.
Reconstituted family	A family formed when a new partnership includes a child from a previous relationship.

Research rules and their limits

Concept	Meaning
Cohabitation	Living together as a couple without being married or in a civil partnership with each other.
Chosen family	Relationships people identify as family through enduring care and belonging rather than conventional kinship alone.
Operational definition	A stated rule for deciding what a study will count or measure.
Unit of analysis	The entity being studied, such as a person, family or household.
Validity	How well a measure captures the concept it is intended to study.
Reliability	The consistency of a measurement or classification procedure.
Comparability	How far results can meaningfully be compared across studies, groups or dates.
Boundary	The line a definition draws between what is included and excluded.

A worked classification

Case B shares an address and the required facilities, so it is one household. With no couple or parent living with a child, it contains no ONS family. A study of chosen care would need additional evidence of relationships and belonging.

Avoid these confusions

Family is not synonymous with household. An ONS classification is a statistical rule, not a verdict on whether a relationship is meaningful. Extended kin can live apart. One-family household can include other residents. Appearance does not establish kinship.

Retrieve later

Tomorrow: define family, household and kinship without notes. In one week: classify a new fictional case, state the rule and explain what it might miss.