

Knowledge organiser

AQA A Level Sociology 7192 • Families & Households • L019 • v1.0

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

Why do couples cohabit?

Concept	Meaning
Cohabitation	Living together as a couple without being married or civil partnered to each other.
Trajectory	The path of experiences and transitions across time.
Transition	A change from one social arrangement or status to another.
Alternative	An arrangement used instead of another available option.
Stage	A phase within a sequence; later phases are not guaranteed.
Commitment	An intention or practice of maintaining a relationship or responsibility.
Norm	A socially shared expectation about behaviour.
Stigma	Social discredit attached to a characteristic or practice.

Choice and constraint together

Concept	Meaning
Constraint	A condition that limits available options.
Negotiation	Working through meanings, expectations or arrangements with others.
Cross-section	Information describing a population at one point in time.
Longitudinal study	Research following the same people or units over time.
Childbearing	Having children, which need not follow one partnership sequence.
Statistical significance	An assessment of whether an estimated difference is unlikely to reflect sampling variation alone.
Selection effect	A difference linked to who enters a group rather than simply the effect of membership.
Legal status	A position recognised by law, distinct from personal meanings or daily practices.

Worked explanation

Alex and Remy describe preparation for marriage; Sana and Kit describe a continuing alternative. Their current category is shared but their stated trajectories differ.

Avoid these confusions

ONS UK 2025 estimates, released 17 April 2026: cohabiting-couple families 17.6% of all families, versus 17.0% in 2015; 0.6 percentage-point difference, not statistically significant. Do not claim established growth over this interval or substitute households, people or children for the denominator. The statistical family category includes couples with and without children. Marriage and civil partnership are distinct legal statuses; cohabitation does not automatically confer identical rights. This lesson does not give personal legal advice or infer relationship quality from legal status. Named theory is an interpretation to test.

Retrieve later

Tomorrow: define cohabitation and trajectory. In one week: explain a case mechanism and one limit without notes.