

Knowledge organiser

AQA A Level Sociology 7192 • Families & Households • L020 • v1.0

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Why does divorce happen, and what changes afterwards?

Concept	Meaning
Separation	Partners ending their relationship or shared life; this need not involve a legal divorce.
Divorce	The legal ending of a marriage.
Dissolution	The legal ending of a civil partnership in this lesson's statistical comparison.
Divorce count	The number of legally ended marriages in a specified period and area.
Divorce rate	Divorce events relative to a specified married population and period.
Secularisation	A decline in religion's social influence, potentially affecting attitudes to separation.
Stigma	Social discredit attached to a characteristic, practice or status.
Economic independence	Access to resources that can reduce reliance on another person's income.

Consequences need a mechanism

Concept	Meaning
Relationship expectation	A belief about what a partnership should provide or involve.
Prior conflict	Disagreement or tension already present before a later transition.
Material consequence	An effect on income, housing, work or other tangible resources.
Care arrangement	The organisation of support and responsibilities for others.
Life-course transition	A change in arrangement within a person's continuing biography.
Mediation	A process through which an initial change affects a later outcome.
Confounding factor	A further variable that can help explain an apparent relationship.
Causal claim	An assertion that one factor produces a change in another.

Worked explanation

Reduced conflict may improve daily experience, while maintaining two homes tightens budgets. The case allows different effects to coexist.

Avoid these confusions

ONS release 23 September 2026 covers England and Wales 2024 and 2025. 2025: 105,002 divorces plus 959 civil partnership dissolutions = 105,961 legal partnership dissolutions, including nullity orders. Opposite-sex divorce rate 8.4 per 1,000 opposite-sex married people; 1993 peak 14.2. The 2025 rate denominator is age 18+, versus age 16+ for earlier published rates; report that comparability caveat. Do not call 8.4 a percentage or a lifetime probability. No-fault reform began 6 April 2022 in England and Wales. The 20-week minimum is to the conditional-order stage, not completion of the entire process. Legal timings can affect annual counts. No claim is made about which family form is superior.

Retrieve later

Tomorrow: define separation and divorce. In one week: explain a case mechanism and one limit without notes.