

Knowledge organiser

AQA A Level Sociology 7192 • Families & Households • L022 • v1.0

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Why do lone-parent families differ?

Concept	Meaning
Lone-parent family	A parent living with one or more children without a co-resident partner in the statistical family unit.
Household	One person or people sharing an address and the specified living facilities.
Route into a status	The sequence of events through which a person enters a social category.
Separation	Partners ending a relationship or shared life, with or without a later legal divorce.
Bereavement	The experience of a person's death; it can change a household's composition.
Life-course transition	A move between arrangements within a continuing biography.
Support network	People or organisations providing practical, material or emotional help.
Co-residence	Living at the same address; it does not capture every meaningful tie.

Explain resources, not stereotypes

Concept	Meaning
Income source	An origin of financial resources, such as earnings, transfers or public support.
Care constraint	A responsibility or lack of care provision that limits feasible activities.
Social policy	State decisions and provision affecting people's conditions and opportunities.
Structural explanation	An account connecting experiences to patterned institutions and resource inequalities.
Stigma	Social discredit attached to a characteristic or category.
Within-group variation	Differences among people placed within the same broad category.
Dependent child	A child meeting a source's age and education criteria for dependency.
Non-dependent child	A child living with a parent who falls outside the source's dependency criteria.

Worked explanation

Maya receives care and travel support across homes; Dev has supportive friends. Neither case justifies equating lone parenthood with no support.

Avoid these confusions

ONS UK 2025 estimates released 17 April 2026: lone-parent families 16.0% of all families, versus 16.2% in 2015. ONS reports the difference is not statistically significant. The denominator is families, not children, and the category includes non-dependent children. A parent without a co-resident partner may live within a larger household; the statistical family unit and household are not interchangeable. No absence, abandonment, poverty or lack of care should be inferred solely from the label. Do not solicit personal information about separation or bereavement; use the supplied cases and institutional support procedures if concerns arise.

Retrieve later

Tomorrow: define lone-parent family and household. In one week: explain a case mechanism and one limit without notes.