

Why do lone-parent families differ?

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

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

Connect & Check → Share → Present → Apply → Recall & Review. Explain routes into lone parenthood, interpret the category accurately and connect resources with varied experiences. Use fictional examples; no personal family disclosure is required.

Recall and connect

Missed the preparation? Why does legal status not establish everyday family practices? Care and meaningful ties can extend beyond the people included in a legal category. What does intersectionality add to a broad family label? It asks how class, gender, age and other social positions combine rather than assuming one uniform experience. Why must a causal explanation include a mechanism? It must explain how a factor could affect an outcome rather than merely naming an association.

Retrieve the previous lesson, then record a view you can revisit.

R1

Why does legal status not establish everyday family practices?

R2

What does intersectionality add to a broad family label?

R3

Starting judgement: “A lone-parent family is necessarily isolated and has only one source of support.” Explain your view.

A category is not a biography

Lone parenthood can follow separation, bereavement or having a child without living with a partner. The route and duration may differ, and a later transition may change the arrangement again. The statistical category concerns who lives together; it does not tell us whether another parent is involved across addresses or whether relatives and friends provide support. Lone-parent families may contain dependent or non-dependent children. Treating every case as the same biography obscures both life-course change and differences in responsibility.

D1

Give two different routes into lone parenthood.

D2

Why does one co-resident parent not mean only one caring adult?

Read the scale accurately

ONS estimates lone-parent families at 16.0% of all UK families in 2025, compared with 16.2% in 2015. ONS does not identify this difference as statistically significant. These are family units, not the proportion of all children living with one parent. Some contain adult children living with a parent. The measure describes composition; it does not measure isolation, the quality of care or total support. Those questions require additional evidence about relationships, resources and practices.

D3

What exactly does the 16.0% figure describe?

D4

Why cannot the 16.2% to 16.0% comparison establish a reliable decline by itself?

Explain resources, not stereotypes

Care responsibilities can interact with paid-work hours, childcare availability, transport and housing costs. One co-resident parent may face coordination pressures, but employment, transfers, services and wider networks can differ substantially. A structural explanation asks how institutions and resources shape those options. Claims that family form alone causes an outcome must consider prior circumstances and within-group variation. The aim is to examine mechanisms and test assumptions, using fictional cases rather than inviting personal disclosures or ranking families.

D5

Explain a mechanism linking childcare availability to paid work.

D6

What evidence would test a claim that lone parents are isolated?

Apply the evidence

Fictional comparison: Maya lives with a school-age child after separating from a partner. The other parent shares care from a nearby home, and a relative helps with travel. Maya's employer offers predictable hours. Dev lives with a teenage child after bereavement and has supportive friends, but changing shifts and limited late childcare make work difficult to coordinate. An observer labels both 'unsupported single-parent homes'. The accounts are invented to compare circumstances, not to represent every route or outcome.



Observe the visible activity and identify what further evidence is needed. This photograph also appears on slide 19.

A1

Describe what is visible in the photograph. What further evidence would be needed to apply this lesson's concepts?

Apply the case evidence

Fictional comparison: Maya lives with a school-age child after separating from a partner. The other parent shares care from a nearby home, and a relative helps with travel. Maya's employer offers predictable hours. Dev lives with a teenage child after bereavement and has supportive friends, but changing shifts and limited late childcare make work difficult to coordinate. An observer labels both 'unsupported single-parent homes'. The accounts are invented to compare circumstances, not to represent every route or outcome.

A2

Correct the observer's claim using two case details.

A3

Explain a structural difference affecting work and care.

Optional scaffold: Name the concept → select a precise case detail → explain the connection → state what the detail cannot establish. Rehearse aloud, then write independently.

Challenge and judge

Make a precise claim, connect it to evidence and state its limits.

C1

What would a comparison need before attributing outcomes to family form?

C2

Improve: One parent in the home means no support beyond it.

Prove and improve

Complete retrieval, then write independently for eight minutes.

P1

Explain two reasons why lone-parent families may have different experiences. [6 marks]

P2

Identify the two points in your response. Improve one missing explanation or example.

P3

Return to R3. Give a qualified judgement and identify one piece of evidence still needed.

Prepare for Lesson 23

Read the three short passages and answer the preparation questions.

Two dimensions can overlap

Reconstitution concerns relationships formed through repartnering involving children from an earlier relationship. Extension concerns kin beyond a parent-child unit. They are different dimensions, so one family can have both step relationships and important grandparent ties. Neither requires all meaningful members to share an address. ONS categories serve a statistical purpose and use explicit rules; personal definitions may include additional ties. Explain the rule being used before deciding who belongs to a category.

Two connected concepts

Reconstituted family: A family formed through repartnering where at least one partner has a child from an earlier relationship. Extended family: Kin beyond a parent-child unit, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins.

A question to bring

Distinguish reconstitution from extension. Reconstitution concerns repartnering involving children from earlier relationships; extension concerns kin beyond a parent-child unit. The dimensions can overlap.

F1

Summarise the main idea in the first passage in one or two sentences.

F2

Define reconstituted family and give an original fictional example.

F3

What evidence would you need to test the opening claim? Retrieve two current-lesson concepts tomorrow and next week.

Retrieval check for self study

Complete before the extended response. Cover the key while answering. One mark per correct answer; total 6. Correct insecure ideas and retry tomorrow. Extended writing needs teacher review.

Q1

Which meaning best fits lone-parent family?

A A move between arrangements within a continuing biography. B A parent living with one or more children without a co-resident partner in the statistical family unit. C A responsibility or lack of care provision that limits feasible activities.

Q2

Which meaning best fits bereavement?

A A responsibility or lack of care provision that limits feasible activities. B Differences among people placed within the same broad category. C The experience of a person's death; it can change a household's composition.

Q3

Which meaning best fits co-residence?

A Living at the same address; it does not capture every meaningful tie. B Social discredit attached to a characteristic or category. C A parent living with one or more children without a co-resident partner in the statistical family unit.

Q4

Which meaning best fits social policy?

A A child living with a parent who falls outside the source's dependency criteria. B State decisions and provision affecting people's conditions and opportunities. C Partners ending a relationship or shared life, with or without a later legal divorce.

Q5

A parent lives with a child but has no co-resident partner. Does this prove no wider support?

A Yes: household composition records every source of help. B No: support may cross household boundaries. C The question can be answered from a person's appearance alone.

Q6

What can the supplied fictional case establish?

A It proves what all UK families do. B It establishes a causal law without further evidence. C It illustrates a mechanism to examine with further evidence.

Self marking key

Q1: B. Q2: C. Q3: A. Q4: B. Q5: B. Q6: C.