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Revision

Revision practice

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In this issue, you are given some tasks based on two articles in the magazine. These tasks are intended to give you some ideas about how the information in the articles could be used in an exam to demonstrate the required skills that examiners are looking for. It is, of course, important to remember that you should use the information in a way that is relevant to the demands of the specific question asked. The tasks here are based on the topic area of Families and Households.

Understanding Families

1 The article mentions several concepts, some of which you may know, while others may be new to you. Write a brief definition of each of the concepts below, making sure that you are quite clear of its meaning. Try to use your own words, rather than copying from the article. The ability to use appropriate sociological concepts demonstrates good knowledge of a particular topic.

- Family structure
- Family roles
- Functionalist views of the family
- Companionate and symmetrical relationships
- Different family types emerging from the 1960s
- Negotiation within families
- Family practices
- Individualisation
- Queer families
- 'Personal life'

2 Look at the paragraph headed 'Causes' in the discussion of individualisation. A number of factors are cited as among the proposed causes of individualisation. For each of these, explain and analyse how it might have contributed to individualisation within the family.

3 Write a few lines for each of the concepts of:

- (i) functionalist views of the family
- (ii) individualisation
- (iii) personal life

showing how each may be criticised for our understanding of family life. The ability to do this for any concept, theory or method shows the important skill of evaluation.

Exam relevance

The work you have done in completing these tasks could be used in answering questions about changing sociological views of the family, changes in how sociologists study contemporary families, and the increasing diversity of family structures in the UK. As with many topics, it is important to emphasise that in a culturally and ethnically diverse population, there will be differences in family structures and roles based on social class, ethnicity, religion and wealth.

Families, children and inequality

Look carefully at Figure 1. Suggest two explanations for the difference in 'Married, Cohabiting and Other' births between those with the most and those with the least savings. You might think about factors such as tradition, inheritance, cost and cultural norms. Whichever factors you choose, explain how this might operate to influence the circumstances of births.

Exam relevance

You could use this information to show how wealth (or lack of it) exerts an influence on family structures. The same pattern is also shown by levels of education, which are, of course, also linked to the degree of wealth.

Quantitative data on the family

Below are some findings from 2024 on families and households from the Office for National Statistics. It is often helpful to quote some relevant statistics to illustrate a point. A round number or percentage will suffice – no need to fret over decimal points. Underneath each point is a suggestion as to how this might be used – always provided that it is relevant to the question asked. You can access this data at:

www.tinyurl.com/4r67xmf8

- There were 28.6 million households in the UK in 2024, 66.9% contained one family (a couple with or without children or a lone parent living with at least one child) and 29.5% contained a single person.
- Almost three in ten households contained only one person. Think of the different types of person who might live alone, and the reasons for their doing so.
- More people lived alone in 2024 (8.4 million) than in 2014 (7.6 million), and a larger proportion of them were aged 65 years or over (51.1% in 2024, 45.5% in 2014).
- Why might the proportion of over-65s have increased?
- One third (33.7%) of men aged between 20 and 34 years lived with their parent(s) in 2024, compared with less than a quarter (22.1%) of women.
- More than three in ten young men were living with their parents. What reasons might there be for this? Why might the proportion of young men in this category be higher than that for women?
- Married couples (with and without children) made up the largest proportion of families (65.1%), but this decreased from 67.1% in 2014, this is because of more couples living together without getting married.

- Note that married couples still make up the largest proportion of families, although this has declined. The reason for this is provided.
- Lone parent families were less likely to contain dependent children in 2024 (62.5%) than in 2014 (66.1%) as more lone parent families contain only adult children.
- Despite the reduction, over 62% of lone parent families contain dependent children.
- In 2024, 16.7% of lone parents were lone fathers, an increase from 13.1% in 2014.
- Note the growing proportion of lone parents who are fathers. What reasons might there be for this?