

# Sociology



Victorian Certificate of Education [VCE]

Unit 1: Youth and family

Unit 2: Deviance and crime

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# Sociology

VCE Units 1 and 2

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Social Education Victoria

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Please note that this publication includes the images and words of First Nations people who have died.

## Preface and acknowledgements

On behalf of Social Education Victoria (SEV), we are so pleased to share our textbook for students and teachers of VCE Sociology (Units 1 and 2) with you.

This text was produced and printed on the lands of the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations in Naarm (Melbourne). We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and express our gratitude for the continuing cultures and knowledge of First Nations people and their enduring connection to Country, including lands, waters and animals. First Nations peoples were the first educators on this land, which always was, and always will be, theirs.

Our outstanding team of authors, editors and designers have endeavoured to make every decision regarding this text with students and teachers in mind – striking a balance between accessibility, structure, academic rigour, the study design and assessment standards. Translating the often highly conceptual elements of sociological inquiry into content that is engaging and accessible for students is no mean feat – this is a challenge we have been able to take on together.

The production of any textbook is a complex task subject to very tight timeframes. We congratulate the authors, researchers, design team, editors, proofreaders and printers for their commitment, diligence, patience and deftness of skill exhibited over the course of this journey. This team also includes those who, like us, have the privilege of working within and on behalf of Social Education Victoria on an ongoing basis; their unwavering commitment to delivering this textbook (on time, no less!) has been truly incredible. We are also grateful for the support of our executive, our management committee and our textbook and resource subcommittee.

We consider that we have an ongoing commitment to you when you purchase this text. We strongly encourage you to check in regularly with the online library of supplementary resources we provide using the URL provided below.

[sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc34](http://sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc34)

We trust that this text and its accompanying online resources will play a part in your enjoyment and understanding of this subject, and we wish you all the best with your studies.

**Laura Newman**

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Social Education Victoria

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# Introduction

## Working with skills

Each chapter of this text corresponds to one of the four areas of study in the study design, and summarises the relevant key knowledge and key skills at the start. The key knowledge list is what the study design indicates you should know; the key skills list is what you should be able to do. All key skills include a verb that describes an action – this is your ‘command term’.

## Command terms used in this subject

Developing a good understanding of command terms is crucial for students’ ability to apply their knowledge and answer questions correctly. An outline of the command terms referenced within the VCE Sociology Units 1 and 2 course is provided below.

The VCAA provides students with a general glossary of command terms on its website that students should familiarise themselves with (note, however, that not all command terms used in VCE Sociology are defined in this document):

[vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx](http://vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/Pages/GlossaryofCommandTerms.aspx)

The following table includes all of the command terms used in VCE Sociology Units 1 and 2.

Term	Explanation	Our advice for VCE Sociology
Analyse	Describe the elements or components you are going to analyse. Interpret the information, elements or components; describe what they mean. Show the relationships between them. Make a connection to their implications, or link back to the framework you are analysing.	Start by describing the relevant information. What does this information mean? How does it relate to each other? Make a brief comment that summarises the implication (impact) of your interpretation.
Apply	Use; employ in a particular situation or context.	This often means applying a theory to an example. Focus on thinking about how the theory might apply (or not apply) to the given example.
Compare	Recognise similarities and differences, as well as the significance of these similarities and differences.	Try to connect the ideas within sentences, rather than just describing the ideas one after the other.
Describe	Provide characteristics, features and qualities of a given concept, opinion, situation, event, process, effect, argument, narrative, text, experiment, artwork, performance piece or other artefact in an accurate way.	Describing is about giving enough detail for someone else to understand the thing you are describing. Think about detail, evidence and the important elements that need to be included.

Term	Explanation	Our advice for VCE Sociology
Discuss	Present a considered and balanced argument that identifies issues and shows the strengths and weaknesses of, or points for and against, one or more arguments, concepts, factors, hypotheses, narratives and/or opinions.	This requires you to understand the topic including different perspectives, or points of complexity. Try to write a clear statement that summarises your point of view and link back to it as you write.
Evaluate	Ascertain the value or amount of; make a judgement using the information and/or criteria supplied, along with your own knowledge and understanding. Use these to consider a logical argument supported by evidence for and against different points, arguments, concepts, processes, opinions or other information.	Try to demonstrate your ability to think critically and apply sociological concepts, and your understanding of the relevant perspectives offered in the course that relate to the substance of the question.
Examine	Consider an argument, concept, debate, data point, trend or artefact in a way that identifies assumptions, possibilities and interrelationships. Describe the idea, object or representation. Identify assumptions, relationships and relevant details.	This is about looking at something from a variety of perspectives – in other words: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe the thing</li> <li>• identify complexities</li> <li>• be specific.</li> </ul>
Explain	Give a detailed account of why and/or how with reference to causes, effects, continuity, change, reasons or mechanisms; make the relationships between things evident.	Make sure you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe the thing</li> <li>• give evidence and details</li> <li>• compare and contrast</li> <li>• make an overall point.</li> </ul>
'Gather and use'	Research a topic by finding and selecting appropriate sources. Learn about the topic by reading, analysing, evaluating and synthesising your source material. These command terms may not be on the end of year assessments but your research skills will be put to the test repeatedly!	You'll want to determine the scope of your research first. What questions are you hoping to answer? Think about appropriate perspectives and sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find a combination of different perspectives.</li> <li>• Include sources from the perspective of the group you're writing about.</li> <li>• Include reportage and commentary from reliable news sources.</li> <li>• If it exists, consider using reputable government and/or NGO research and reports (known as grey literature).</li> </ul>
Identify	Recognise and name and/or select an event, feature, ingredient, element, speaker and/or part from a list or extended narrative or argument, or within a diagram, structure, artwork or experiment.	This often involves labelling or naming a particular element. Make sure that your notes include examples of concepts or groups so that you can identify them more easily.



Term	Explanation	Our advice for VCE Sociology
Outline	Provide an overview of the main features of something, which may be an argument, point of view, text, narrative, diagram or image.	Focus on knowing and showing the key information – it shouldn't be as detailed as 'describe' and should be efficient.
Synthesise (we'll drill down further into synthesis in the last chapter of this text)	Combine various elements to make a whole or an overall point; do so by collecting and presenting sources, factors and/or evidence.	This builds on comparing (showing understanding of similarities and differences). Which sources are most relevant for each perspective or example? If there are conflicting sources, how do you balance them? – are some perspectives fairer, better researched or more relevant than others? If you're summarising this synthesis as a conclusion, what is the most important reflection that should be included? Don't pretend things aren't complex (this will be tempting); your conclusions should be balanced and specific, rather than relying on oversimplification.



## How to analyse a VCE Sociology assessment question: The KLC model

The following model can help you to interpret and plan assessment questions. It involves identifying and thinking about the following interrelated components:

### Key knowledge words

Each assessment question focuses on different parts of the course material – key knowledge). For example, questions may relate to ethical methodology, or the concept of youth, or the media. When answering each question, your response needs to show that you understand the ideas, theories and concepts explored.

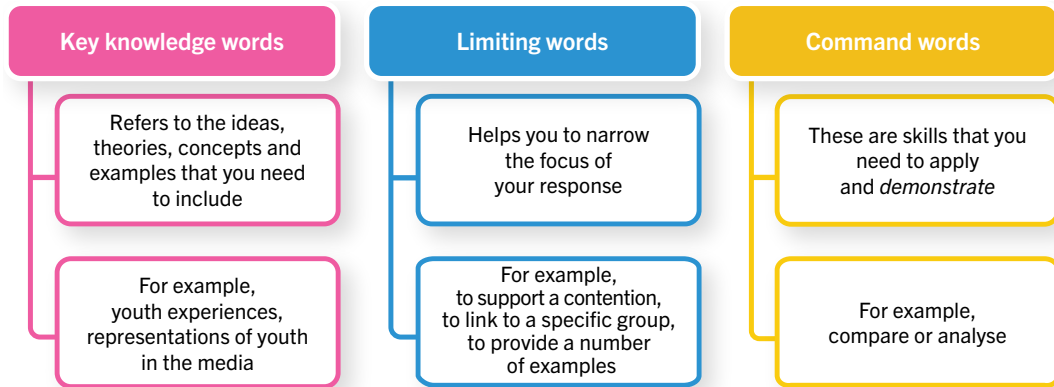
### Limiting words

Limiting words help you narrow the focus of your response. They will often reference a specific sub-topic (e.g. only the *social* factors leading to differences in the experience of being young). They may also specify how many examples are required (e.g. two or positive and/or negative examples). Sometimes they might exclude examples, for instance asking for the most important example or a recent example.

### Command words

A good understanding of the VCAA command terms is important when planning a response. It will ensure that you answer the question accurately. For example, there is a significant difference between a question asking you to *describe* the experiences of two groups and one asking you to *compare* the experiences.

### The KLC model



**Explain** how sociologists use **ethical methodology** to study human behaviour. Refer to **two ethical guidelines** in your response.

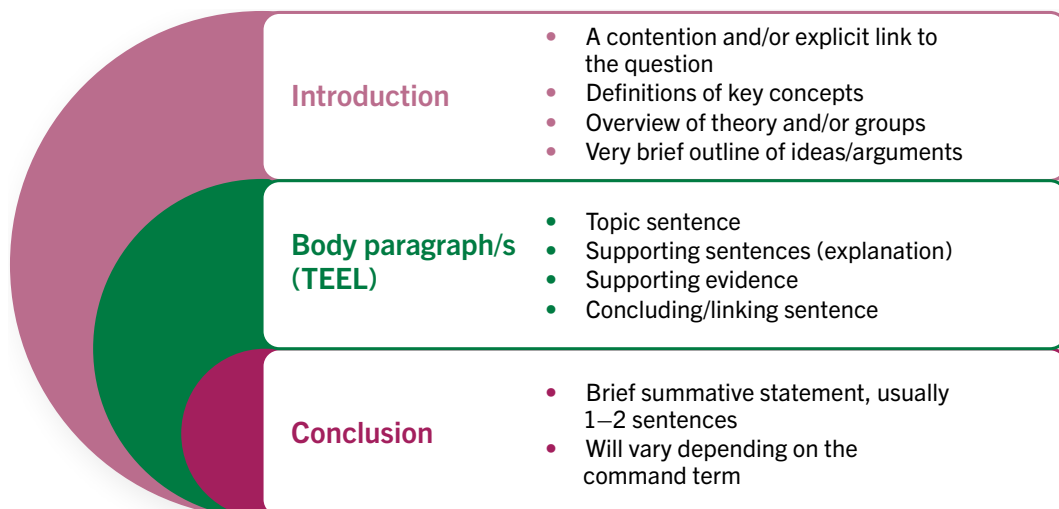
#### Assessing this question

- The **key knowledge** required for this question is the nature of ethical methodology. This includes the different types of ethical guidelines (e.g. privacy and confidentiality of data).
- This question **limits** the answer to two examples of ethical guidelines. Also, it is only focused on ethics, and not on analysis of data or the sociological imagination.
- The **command term** (word) is *explain*. For this question it means to show how ethical methodology guides human research.

### How to structure a VCE Sociology response: The TEEL model

Another useful method for structuring your responses is the TEEL model (this stands for topic, explanation, evidence, link – we’ll return to this throughout the text). This helps to ensure each paragraph includes relevant components in a way that flows logically. Note – this model is only provided as a guide – as you practice your responses and develop your writing ability, you may be able to structure your responses more creatively.

#### The TEEL model



# 1.1

## Unit 1, Area of study 1:



**Youth**

## “Unit 1, Area of Study 1: Youth

On completion of this unit the student should be able to describe the nature of sociological inquiry and discuss youth as a social category.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

### Key knowledge

- 1 the nature of sociological inquiry:
  - 1.1 the observation, collection and analysis of data
  - 1.2 how sociologists use ethical methodologies to study human behaviour
  - 1.3 the use of the sociological imagination
- 2 the social category of youth and how the definition has changed over time
- 3 representations of youth in the media
- 4 cultural, social, economic and technological factors leading to differences in the experience of being young.

### Key skills

- i explain and apply sociological concepts
- ii describe the nature of sociological inquiry
- iii discuss the concept of youth as a social category
- iv explain how the definition of youth has changed over time
- v identify and analyse representations of youth in the media
- vi identify and explain factors leading to different experiences of being young
- vii gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
- viii evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others' approaches to understanding the social world
- ix synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

### Preface

In this area of study, students are introduced to the discipline of sociology and the nature of sociological inquiry through the study of youth. This includes an introduction to the sociological imagination, a critical thinking tool used to explore the social world from multiple points of view, free from assumption and bias. The sociological imagination, a term coined by Charles Wright Mills (1959), allows us to make links between personal behaviours and public issues. Additionally, the Australian sociologist Evan Willis suggests that the sociological imagination is best put into practice by addressing four interrelated facets of any social phenomena: historical, cultural, structural and critical factors.

The experience of being young has varied and continues to vary across time as well as across space; for example, the experience of being young in an isolated rural environment is different from that of being young in a large city. In their exploration of youth, students consider examples from Australia and, where useful in providing a comparative perspective, examples from other societies.

Students examine how Australians have thought about youth as a social category, and the range of experiences of young people. The concept of a social category refers to a group of people who share at least one similar characteristic, but who do not necessarily interact with each other. For example, grouping based on age or gender-based attributes. Students consider a range of factors that influence the lives of young people. These may include cultural factors such as ethnicity, religion, gender roles and coming of age rituals; social factors such as age, class, residential location, gender, sexual orientation, parental relationships, peer pressure and participation in sub-cultures; economic factors such as unemployment, education, demographic shifts and intergenerational inequity; and technological factors such as the introduction of new technologies, use of information and communications technology and social media and participation in online communities.

Students examine how social categories are used to convey ideas about young people and how the definitions of these categories have changed over time. In their examination of the concept and experience of youth, they explore media representations across print, digital and social media. Students consider the types, accuracy and impact of these representations, including instances of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

On completion of this unit the student should be able to describe the nature of sociological inquiry and discuss youth as a social category. ”

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). 2023.  
'VCE Sociology Study Design, 2024–2028'.  
[vcaa.vic.edu.au/documents/vce/sociology/2024SociologySD.docx](https://vcaa.vic.edu.au/documents/vce/sociology/2024SociologySD.docx)



# Youth

Welcome to VCE Sociology. This course offers you a wonderful opportunity to learn and reflect on ways to make the world a better place. Sociologists, through studying society and social interactions, seek to understand why we behave the way we do, how our society works, and the influences that shape our lives. This study at times overlaps with psychology but is distinct from it. Psychology focuses on understanding how individual behaviour is shaped by the functioning of our brains. Sociology aims to understand how social, economic and cultural factors influence the individual.

Sociologists are interested in a wide range of areas, such as family relationships, inequality, education, **culture** and **social change**. Sociologists want to understand how these factors shape our behaviours, **beliefs** and opportunities. They look for explanations and insights that can help us to improve our communities, address social inequities and create a fairer society.

Sociologists study aspects of everyday life, such as sport, to gain insights into social dynamics. For example, they may observe the interactions among players, coaches, referees and spectators. They might explore how sport shapes identity or investigate how players adopt particular social roles and cultural **values**. Consider a sports team you have been connected to. What have you noticed?

Studying sociology allows you to develop your critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills are very important in the modern world. By looking at different points of view and questioning commonly held beliefs, you can learn to better understand information and make more informed decisions. For instance, examining media portrayals of youth, such as **stereotypes** in movies or biases in news coverage, will reveal how these representations shape public views. By developing critical thinking skills, you can approach complex issues with an open mind and make well-informed decisions.



**Culture** is the beliefs, values, customs and behaviours of a particular group or society, encompassing the ways of life, traditions and knowledge transmitted between generations.

**Social change** means adjustments or fluctuations in the views, values, norms or structures of society

A **belief** is trust, faith or confidence in something; beliefs can be religious, cultural or moral.

**Values** are the beliefs and principles an individual or society considers to be important and desirable.

**Stereotypes** are assumptions about individuals based on their social group membership rather than individual characteristics.

## The nature of sociological enquiry <sup>1.1.1</sup>

**Sociology** is the scientific study of human groups and social life. It investigates the causes and impacts of human behaviour. Sociologists research social interactions at a variety of levels to understand how societies are organised, develop and change.

**Sociology** is a field of study that draws on scientific methods to understand how and why people behave the way they do when they interact in a group; it looks at how society's develop, how they are structured and how they function.

Sociologists have observed that human behaviour occurs within a societal context. That is, there are a range of factors, such as culture, religion, education, family life, gender and sexuality, that shape people's life experiences. Sociology provides insights into the ways these factors impact on people's wellbeing and opportunities.

Sociologists use a range of different research methods to investigate social experiences and gather data. They are objective, thorough and ethical in their approach. As researchers, they carefully design research studies to explore and understand the complexities of human behaviour, social interactions and the structures that shape society.

### The observation, collection and analysis of data 1.1.1.1

Sociologists employ a diverse range of **theories** and **perspectives** to objectively study social issues and provide explanations for various **concepts**. Objectively studying society means approaching social research without allowing personal opinions or beliefs to influence this process. Instead, this type of study uses evidence and careful analysis to gain an accurate and unbiased understanding of the research topic.

Instead of a singular sociological theory, there are multiple 'schools of thought' that guide thinking and facilitate the systematic collection of data in this field.

In sociology, a perspective is a framework or approach that encompasses a collection of theories sharing a common lens or viewpoint. Three well-known sociological perspectives are functionalism, Marxism and feminism.

### Functionalism

**Functionalism** is a sociological theoretical perspective that emerged from the work of French social scientist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). According to the functionalist perspective, each part of society is interdependent and contributes to the overall functioning of society as a whole. This theory views society as a living organism, similar to a human body, with different parts such as families, education systems and government, each with its own function that contributes to the overall stability of society. For example, the government provides education to children, who will, in turn, pay taxes to support society when they are adults. As children receive an education, they learn to obey laws and acquire skills needed in the workforce. Once employed, they contribute taxes that support the government. When this social system functions well, society remains stable and productive. However, if issues arise, society must adapt to restore stability, which may involve actions such as reducing welfare support programs or changing laws.

**Theories** are explanations or models that describe or predict the way the world works based on evidence and logical reasoning; the role of sociological theories is to explain social behaviour in the real world.

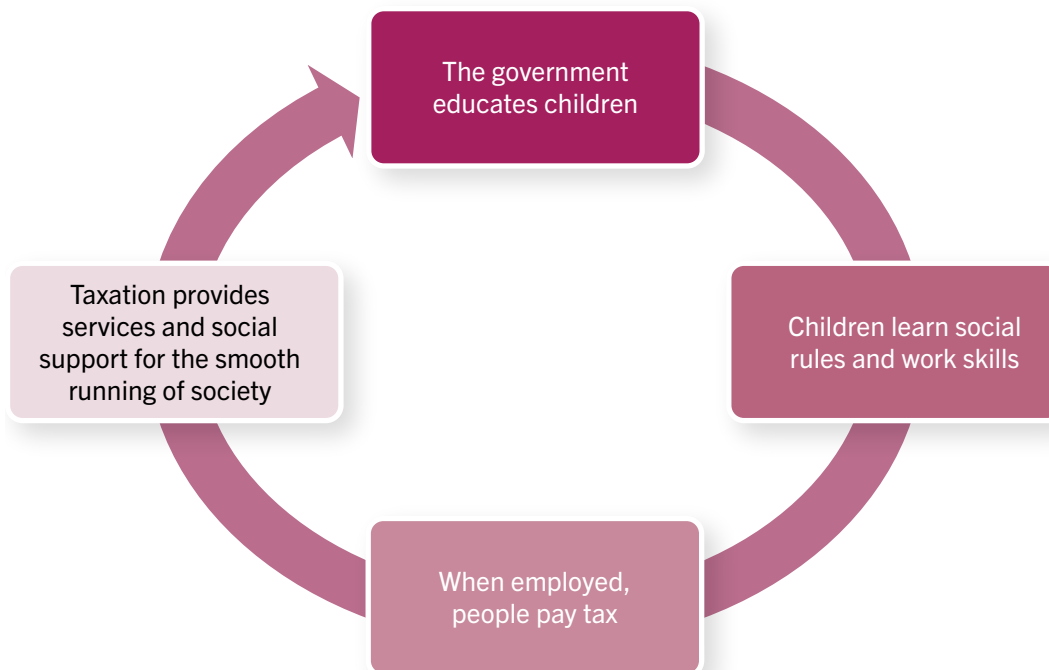
**Perspectives**, in sociology, are collections of theories that provide researchers with models to analyse and interpret the world around us.

**Concepts** are abstract ideas or general notions that represent something in the world.

**Functionalism** is a sociological perspective that views society as a system of interconnected parts that work together to meet the needs and demands of individuals.



### Functionalism in action



## Gambling

Australians lose billions of dollars each year through legal forms of gambling. This has significant consequences for individuals and families, including financial distress and various psychological and relationship difficulties. The rise of sports betting, in particular, has led to increased rates of gambling addiction among young males. Sports betting advertisements target young people during TV broadcasts of AFL football, cricket and basketball, as well as via social media. Frequently receiving these messages increases the risk of gambling addiction. Critics have observed that the gambling industry preys on vulnerable communities, such as those experiencing poverty, homelessness and psychological issues, who are more vulnerable to gambling addiction.



Credit: Michael Weldon (mweldoncreative.com)/  
Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.  
[responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/gambling-victoria/gambling-advertising](https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/gambling-victoria/gambling-advertising)

Many support agencies advocate for more government assistance for individuals affected by problem gambling and question the government's reliance on the gambling industry as a source of financial resources. However, some people argue that gambling contributes to the Australian economy by generating employment opportunities and tax revenue that can be used to fund social services. Others believe that individuals should have the freedom to determine how they spend their money and see gambling as a form of entertainment.



## Activity A – Functionalism

- 1 With reference to the gambling case study provided, answer the following questions.
  - a What is meant by the functionalist perspective?
  - b Based on the case study, explain how problem gambling affects the overall functioning of society.
  - c Explain how functionalist theory could be used to justify the existence of gambling in Australian society.
  - d Outline the recommendations that a sociologist might make to ensure that problem gambling does not disrupt the smooth running of society.



Karl Marx (1818–1883)

### Marxism

**Marxism** is a theory developed by Karl Marx, a German political philosopher and economist, who observed that in **capitalist** societies the wealthy and powerful often exploit the poor. This exploitation is centred around the access to, creation of and distribution of valuable resources, leading to class conflict.

According to the Marxist perspective, the primary source of conflict in society is centred around the production of material goods. Marx argued that a society's economic system shapes people's values, beliefs, customs and norms. Furthermore, the economic system also influences the structure and functioning of political, government and education systems. Marx criticised a wealthy and powerful group known as the **bourgeoisie**, who own and control the capital of society, such as factories, resources and money. In contrast, the **proletariat**, the working-class labourers, lack capital and are compensated by the bourgeoisie for their time and labour. Marx believed that the relationship between these two groups was exploitative, as the proletariat were paid less than what they deserved in order to maximise the bourgeoisie's profits. Marx believed that ultimately the proletariat would overthrow the bourgeoisie, leading to a society without social classes. In this *class-free* society, individuals would work according to their abilities and receive resources according to their needs.

In modern Australia, class conflict is apparent in the context of housing and healthcare accessibility.

**Marxism** is a sociological perspective which argues that social conflict occurs in society due to tensions between the bourgeoisie (upper class) and the proletariat (working class); it considers how resources are distributed and maintained.

**Capitalism** is a social and economic system where privately owned and operated businesses produce goods and services for a profit; it usually features systems of private property, wage labour, market competition and the accumulation of capital (wealth).

**Cosmetics company Lush admits to underpaying Australian workers by \$4.4m**

Company's Australian arm underpaid 3,130 employees from 2010 to 2018 and breached three awards

**Healthcare giant Australian Unity underpaid staff \$7.3m**


Thousands of workers were short changed and owed up to \$23,000 with the company saying it deeply regrets the errors.

**Woolworths investigated after admitting it underpaid 5,700 staff up to \$300 million**

Woolworths has admitted underpaying thousands of its works as much as \$300 million over the past decade.

Rising housing costs and the limited availability of affordable housing disproportionately affect people with lower incomes. Similarly, in the healthcare system the wealthy can afford to avoid lengthy waiting lists by using private rather than public hospital systems. These are some of the ways the economic system maintains inequalities between social classes.

You can read the following article to learn more:

-  Christopher Pollard, 2022. 'Karl Marx: his philosophy explained'. The Conversation. [theconversation.com/karl-marx-his-philosophy-explained-164068](https://theconversation.com/karl-marx-his-philosophy-explained-164068)



## Activity B – Marxism

- 1 Karl Marx theorised about the conflict between social classes more than 170 years ago. In small groups, discuss whether Australia currently has wealth-based social classes.
- 2 Use the following questions to help you reflect on what you've learnt so far.
  - a Explain the nature of the Marxist perspective in two to three sentences.
  - b What benefits do people with greater financial resources have?
  - c What difficulties do people with less wealth have?
  - d List some examples of workers (proletariat) who are vulnerable to exploitation by business owners (bourgeoisie).
- 3 Carry out your own research to find a case where workers (proletariat) have challenged a business owner (bourgeoisie) due to exploitation. Use the headlines on the previous page as examples to help start your research. Write a summary of your chosen case, incorporating the following elements:
  - a Date and source of the information you used
  - b Identity of the workers (proletariat) involved
  - c Identity of the employers (bourgeoisie) in the case
  - d How the individuals were exploited, including supporting quotes from your source
  - e The outcome or resolution of the case.

## Feminism

The perspective of **feminism** encompasses various theories that examine the impact of gender differences on social experiences, all of which recognise that women, living in a **patriarchal** (male-dominated) society, often face wide-ranging inequality due to having relatively less **power** as a group.

Feminist theorists have observed that gender discrimination intersects with other forms of inequality, such as a person's culture, place of birth and sexuality.

These sociologists study how social structures and processes contribute to inequality. In doing so, they listen to the experiences of women and marginalised groups to understand and address these concerns.

For example, when researching from a feminist perspective, sociologists might explore how gender-based stereotypes in children's education affect a child's future relationships and career decisions.

**Feminism** is a political and social movement that advocates for the rights, equality and liberation of women.

A **patriarchy** is a social system or culture in which men hold more power and privilege than women.

**Power** is the ability to impose one's will on others, even if they resist in some way.



## The waves of feminism

The feminist movement has experienced different waves (phases), each shaped by different goals, challenges and achievements.

**First-wave feminism** emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The focus was on achieving women's suffrage (the right to vote) and legal rights, such as property ownership and education. For example, the Australian suffrage movement successfully campaigned for the right of women to vote. South Australia was the first state to grant women suffrage, in 1895, with the other states following soon after.

**Second-wave feminism** formed in the 1960s and 1970s and focused on social and cultural issues, such as reproductive rights, workplace discrimination and family violence. For example, women successfully lobbied for the landmark 1975 *Sex Discrimination Act*. This act banned discrimination based on a person's sex in areas such as employment, education and access to government services.

**Third-wave feminism** evolved in the 1990s. Its focus was on society being more inclusive of women of colour, LGBTIQ+ people, and women from socially and/or financially disadvantaged backgrounds. The movement encouraged women to be assertive and to feel that they had a right to full participation in all aspects of society.

For example, in 1995, the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act* was amended to outlaw sexual harassment. The amendment made it unlawful to 'sexually harass or treat someone unfairly because of their age, carer status, disability, industrial activity, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental status, physical features, pregnancy, **race**, religious belief/activity, or sex'.

**Race** is the categorisation of group of people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, eye shape, hair type and bone structure.

For more information about how Victoria's *Equal Opportunity Act* has changed over time, view the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission timeline:

[humanrights.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-history/equal-opportunity-timeline](https://humanrights.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-history/equal-opportunity-timeline)

**Fourth-wave feminism** emerged in the late 2000s and continues today. It focuses on the use of social media and other forms of information and communications technology to encourage and share feminist perspectives. It draws attention to and challenges a broad range of concerns, including sexual harassment and assault, the importance of body positivity and the nature of intersectionality (i.e. the interrelated

nature of social categories such as race, gender and **socioeconomic status**). An example of fourth-wave feminism is the ongoing fight for transgender rights and inclusion. This includes efforts to protect transgender people from discrimination in schooling, housing and employment, and when participating in social activities.

**Socioeconomic status** is an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation.

You can learn more by visiting the following websites:

- 🔗 'About Us'. Council of Single Mothers and their Children. [csmc.org.au/about](https://csmc.org.au/about)
- 🔗 'Gender Equality Timeline'. Victorian Women's Trust. [vwt.org.au/gender-equality-timeline-australia/](https://vwt.org.au/gender-equality-timeline-australia/)
- 🔗 'Women's Suffrage'. National Library of Australia. [nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/senior-secondary/shoulder-shoulder-feminism-australia/womens-suffrage](https://nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/senior-secondary/shoulder-shoulder-feminism-australia/womens-suffrage)
- 🔗 Olivia Guy-Evans, 2023. 'Four waves of feminism explained'. Simply Sociology. [simplysociology.com/four-waves-feminism.html](https://simplysociology.com/four-waves-feminism.html)

**Individualism** is a set of ideas emphasising the importance of the individual, individual freedom and individual choice.

	Date period	Focus
First wave	1848–1920	Voting rights, property rights, political candidacy
Second wave	1963–1980s	Liberation from structural inequalities (both legal and 'de facto') in relationships, family, labour, family, reproduction and sexuality
Third wave	1991–2010	Embracing <b>individualism</b> , diversity and inclusivity
Fourth wave	2012–	Combating sexual harassment, assault and misogyny



## Harmful gender stereotypes kick in early

Laura Scholes and Sarah McDonald, 2021. 'Caring or killing: Harmful gender stereotypes kick in early – and may be keeping girls away from STEM'. The Conversation. [theconversation.com/caring-or-killing-harmful-gender-stereotypes-kick-in-early-and-may-be-keeping-girls-away-from-stem-169742](https://theconversation.com/caring-or-killing-harmful-gender-stereotypes-kick-in-early-and-may-be-keeping-girls-away-from-stem-169742)

Gender stereotypes begin in early childhood. Bright pink 'toys for girls' and blue 'toys for boys' are sold on store shelves around the world.

In the boys' section you'll find science, construction and warfare toys – perhaps a motorised robot, or a telescope. In the girls' lane you'll get toys related to cleaning, prams, dolls, kitchens, makeup, jewellery and crafts.

Our research, published this week, shows by the early years of primary school, gender stereotypes from a variety of sources have already influenced children – leading them to aspire to 'traditional' male and female vocations.

This flows into lower numbers of girls taking STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects at school. In turn, this means fewer women are going on to work in the sciences. Women make up only 28 per cent of the STEM workforce.

The gender gap is particularly high in the fastest-growing and highest-paid jobs of the future, such as computer science and engineering.

### Gender-related aspirations are concerning

We spoke with 332 students (176 girls and 156 boys) from 14 schools and found 7- and 8-year-old children have already made up their minds about what jobs they want in the future. Girls overwhelmingly aspire to traditionally 'feminine' jobs, while boys are attracted to 'masculine' pursuits.

For example, the top three choices for boys include careers in professional sports, STEM-related jobs, and policing or defence. Meanwhile, girls either want to be teachers, work with animals, or pursue a career in the arts.

There are obvious patterns in girls' and boys' career choices which can be linked to gender stereotypes. Many girls talked about 'feminine' ideas such as caring or helping others. They told us:

*I want to work in a zoo because I want to take care of the animals – Sophie*

*I want to be a nurse because I want to help people if they are hurt and take care of my Dad, and other people – Kate*

They also talked about love, another traditionally 'feminine' ideal.

*I want to be a mother because I love babies – Maddi*

*I want to be a teacher because I love little kids – Sara*

On the other hand, the boys' reasoning for their career choices heavily featured 'masculine' themes, such as making money and having power over others. For instance, they wanted to work in the police force because:

*I get to arrest people – Dan*

*I want to shoot guns – Harry*

*I can put people under arrest – Josh*

Or they wanted jobs that highlighted traditionally masculine attributes such as strength, dominance and physicality.

*I want to be an assassin so I can kill people – Matt*

*I want to be an army commando because you can shoot tanks – Ben*

Clearly, boys' and girls' career aspirations are very different, even at this young age. And young people's career aspirations are a good indication of job trajectories as they transition to adulthood.

### **But it's not just about gender**

We also found differences in opinion that seemed to correlate with social class. Boys from affluent school communities (30 per cent) aspired to STEM careers more than boys from disadvantaged school communities (8 per cent), while girls from disadvantaged school communities had a greater desire to 'help' and 'care'.

These values can be more important for female students whose families have more traditional work- and family-related gender beliefs. If these girls go into STEM, they may go into the medical and life sciences, rather than fields such as physics or engineering, which are viewed by society as masculine.

Our findings help explain how gender-related trends continue to be visible in workplaces and industries, and why men from more socioeconomically advantaged communities are more likely to become employed in STEM jobs.

### **Challenging old and outdated ideas**

We have to challenge problematic beliefs about the roles of men and women in society. And we have to challenge them early. One way to do this is to end the sale of gendered and stereotypical toys, which research has shown can give young children the wrong ideas about gender roles.

Some stores and toy companies are finally under pressure to make this change. Due to a law passed last month, department stores in California are now required to display childrens' products in a designated gender-neutral section.



There's a noticeable link between young boys' reported career aspirations, and the themes they're exposed to through the toys that target them. Credit: Ryan Quintal/Unsplash.



While LEGO is often touted as a gender-neutral toy for kids, the reality is many people still associate it with play for boys. Credit: Ryan Quintal/Unsplash

Although the law stopped short of entirely outlawing separate sections for ‘boys’ and ‘girls’, it makes California the first US state to work against reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes.

If you’re thinking there are plenty of gender-neutral toys available already – hello, LEGO? – think again. One study found 76 per cent of parents said they would encourage their son to play with LEGO, but only 24 per cent would recommend it to a daughter.

LEGO, the world’s largest toy-maker, this week announced its future products and marketing will be free of gender bias and harmful stereotypes.

The company’s recently launched Ready for Girls campaign will celebrate girls who rebuild the world through creative problem-solving. This is a start. Hopefully more companies will follow suit.

We should stop telling children that what constitutes acceptable play depends on their gender. Let’s let girls be scientist and boys be carers, if that’s what they want.



## Activity C – Feminism

- Using the following sources, create a mind map or dot point summary/table of key ideas about the feminist perspective. Use the ideas in the table below to guide your summary.
  - ABC’s BTN video ‘What is feminism?’ (7 min) [abc.net.au/btn/high/what-is-feminism/102063904](http://abc.net.au/btn/high/what-is-feminism/102063904)
  - rosie.org.au’s article ‘What is feminism?’ [rosie.org.au/our-world/womens-rights/what-is-feminism/](http://rosie.org.au/our-world/womens-rights/what-is-feminism/)
  - actor and feminist Emma Watson’s 2014 speech titled ‘HeForShe’, delivered in her capacity as a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador (13 min) [youtu.be/gkjW9PZBRfk](https://youtu.be/gkjW9PZBRfk)  
Transcript: [unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/9/emma-watson-gender-equality-is-your-issue-too](http://unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/9/emma-watson-gender-equality-is-your-issue-too)

Characteristics of feminism	Feminism’s observations of society
When and why did the Australian feminism movement commence?	What is the relevance of this perspective today?
What were the main concerns?	What change is desired?

- Read the case study ‘Harmful gender stereotypes kick in early’ and then answer the following questions.
  - a According to the article, how do gender stereotypes develop in childhood? Provide examples from the article to support your answer.
  - b How do gender stereotypes, particularly those related to toys, shape children’s career aspirations and choices?
  - c What are the primary differences in career aspirations between young boys and girls, and how do traditional gender roles affect these aspirations?

- d What is the goal of LEGO's 'Ready for Girls' campaign?
- e How might researchers who employ a feminist approach respond to the concerns highlighted in the article?
- f What measures can be taken to challenge and confront gender stereotypes to promote more varied and inclusive career aspirations for children?

## Sociological research

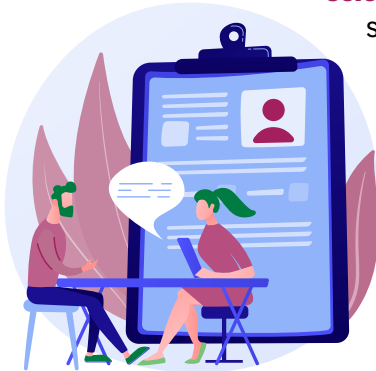
Sociology is considered a science because it uses

**scientific methods** to

systematically collect and analyse data relating to social groups and human behaviour. The research process involves accurate collection of data, precise measurement, accurate recording and analysis of findings, interpretation of results and the generalisation of findings.

Sociological research involves collecting data using various research methods. Commonly used research methods in sociology include:

**Scientific methods** are the systematic gathering and analysis of data based on theories about social groups and human behaviour.



<b>fieldwork and participant observation</b>	Used to observe social behaviours in a natural or controlled setting. Sociologists take notes and/or make recordings of their observations. For example, watching how young people dress and interact in different social settings.
<b>surveys</b>	The collection of data from a large group of people by asking a set of questions about attitudes, beliefs and/or behaviours. For example, questions about young people's views relating to socialising via different types of social media applications.
<b>interviews</b>	In-depth meetings with individuals or small groups to gain a richer understanding of their personal and/or social experiences. For example, asking young people how they feel about older members of their communities' actions towards addressing climate change.
<b>document analysis</b>	The detailed review of written and/or visual documents, such as newspapers, historical records or social media posts, to understand human experiences. For example, using historical material such as diaries and newspaper articles stored at the Victorian State Library to investigate life as a teenager in the early 1900s.
<b>experiments</b>	Controlled research that involves testing the effect of one <b>variable</b> on another variable, usually by comparing results from a control group to an experimental group. Due to ethical considerations, this form of research takes place at universities rather than during secondary school. For example, examining whether the amount of time young people spend interacting with social media increases feelings of anxiety.

## Qualitative and quantitative data

Each sociological research method has its own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to the type of information gathered. For instance, a survey asking young people about their favourite streaming services,

A **variable** is any characteristic, trait or attribute that can be measured or manipulated.



ranked from most to least popular, may not provide insights into the reasons behind their preferences. However, conducting a small group interview could help to uncover the 'why' behind their choices. For this reason, sociologists often draw on a combination of **qualitative** and **quantitative** data in their research.

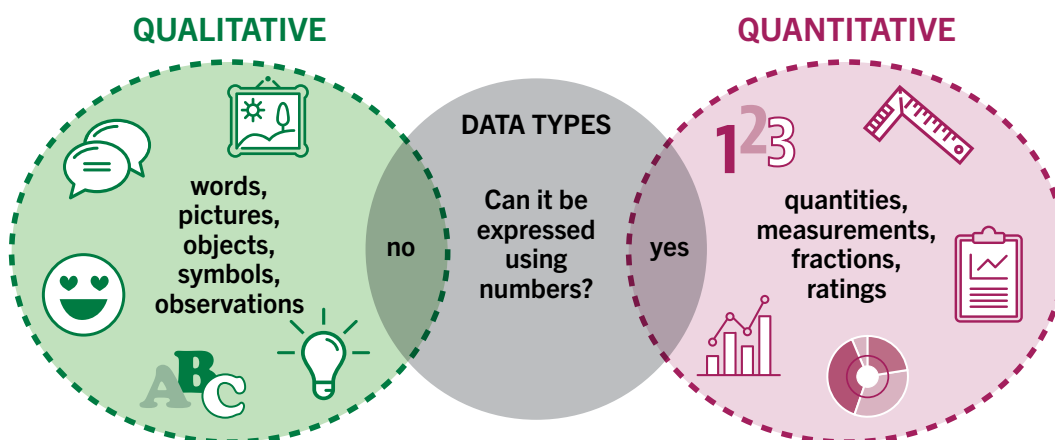
**Qualitative methods** include procedures that generate descriptive data, capturing lived experiences and personal perspectives on social issues. These methods explore the richness and depth of people's stories, allowing for a nuanced understanding of complex experiences.

**Qualitative methods** are processes that generate descriptive data, including lived experiences and personal perspectives about social issues.

In a qualitative study, data is gathered in words, narratives (stories) and impressions that would lose their meaning or value if converted into numbers. For example:

- an interview study involving an hour-long interview with first- and second-generation Australian migrants, to explore how youth experiences have evolved over time and across cultures
- participant observation where the researcher joins a group of people in different public spaces to make sociological observations about their interactions
- a document analysis involving comprehensive research on a specific place and time, such as the experiences of First Nations youth before **colonisation**, to gain insights into their historical context and perspectives.

**Colonisation** is the process of settling among and establishing control over an indigenous group.



**Quantitative methods**, on the other hand, involve processes that generate data in numerical form, enabling statistical analysis and measurement. These methods focus on objective measurement and the quantification of variables, often allowing for broader generalisations and comparisons across different groups or contexts.

**Quantitative methods** are processes that generate data as, or that can be translated into, numbers.

In a quantitative study, data is gathered as or translated into numbers. Examples of quantitative data include:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data (e.g. household or personal income and unemployment rates)
- NAPLAN test scores
- gender (female 2, male 1, non-binary 0)
- self-esteem (How confident are you? 2 = very confident, 1 = somewhat confident, 0 = lacking confidence).



## Activity D – Qualitative and quantitative research

- 1 Identify whether the research methods in the table below are qualitative or quantitative methods.

	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
In-depth interviews with LGBTIQ+ youth about their experiences of discrimination and affirmation.		
An ABS graph (bar chart) showing the percentage of homeless people according to age		
A survey question that ranks least popular to most popular music styles		
An observation study of Year 7 students on their first day of secondary school		

- 2 In small groups, discuss and document the different ways sociologists could research the following topics:
- how secondary school students feel about the final year of education
  - the relationship between individual learning styles and test scores
  - the impact of **racism** on the lives of Australian children
  - the difference that assessment adjustments make to the learning outcomes of teenagers with learning disabilities.

**Racism** is discrimination against a group of people based on their shared physical characteristics and/or culture.

## How sociologists use ethical methodologies to study human behaviour 1.1.1.2

When conducting research, sociologists gather their information and data from people. This raises important issues about the rights of those being observed or participating in surveys, questionnaires or interviews.

**Ethics** refers to the moral dilemmas researchers face when conducting and reporting on their research.

All sociological research should always protect the safety and wellbeing of research participants. This can be achieved using **ethical methodology**, which is a set of ethical principles and guidelines a sociologist follows when conducting research and analysing and interpreting findings. The focus is on protecting the rights and wellbeing of the participants involved in the research.

**Ethics** refers to the moral dilemmas researchers face when conducting and reporting on their research.

**Ethical methodology** refers to the process used to conduct socially responsible research. The focus is on protecting the privacy, consent and confidentiality of the people who have agreed to participate in the research.

The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) is the official professional body of sociology in Australia. It has issued guidelines for ethical procedures that all sociologists and students are expected to follow. Researchers must follow the code of ethics at every stage of planning, conducting and reporting on research.

Some important features of TASA's ethical guidelines for conducting research include:

- treating participants with respect, including protecting their wellbeing and privacy
- putting methods in place to prevent harm to participants. This includes ensuring the physical, emotional and psychological safety of participants.

- establishing informed consent procedures, including making explicit the purpose, nature and implications of the study.
- ensuring participants are aware of their rights, including the right to refuse to participate in a research project without giving a reason
- seeking informed consent
- ensuring the wellbeing of very young or vulnerable participants by adapting research methods to meet their unique needs, and ensuring a caregiver consents to them participating
- ensuring privacy by disguising personal identities in written and oral reports
- reporting results honestly and making results available to the participants
- debriefing participants and making referrals to support services as required.

Visit the TASA website for comprehensive information on its Code of Ethics.

 [tasa.org.au](http://tasa.org.au)

Within VCE Sociology, the following ethical guidelines are emphasised: informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy and the confidentiality of data.

## Informed consent

Any person or group being studied, wherever possible, should give their **informed consent** to being the subject of research. This involves participants being provided with an explanation about the key features of the research – its purpose, procedures, risks and benefits – and the future use and storage of the information gathered.

For consent to be given fully, respondents must understand the purpose of the research and how their privacy and confidentiality will be respected in the reporting of results. Information about the study should be provided in a language participants can understand, allowing them to identify any questions or concerns more easily.

According to TASA's code of ethics, parental or guardian permission is required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants under 18 years of age. It is recommended that an informed consent form be created and given to those participating in primary research.



**Informed consent** is the formal agreement of an individual to participate in research.

## Voluntary participation

**Voluntary participation** refers to the willing involvement of research participants. Involvement in research needs to be based on a participant's awareness of their right to refuse to participate without having to give a reason or justification for their position.

Participants should not be forced, deceived or manipulated into participating in research. It is important these rights are explained in accessible language and documented for research participants.

**Voluntary participation** is the willing involvement of research participants, including awareness of their right to refuse to participate in a research project without having to give a reason or justify their decision.

## Privacy

Any research into people's lives carries the risk of invading their **privacy**. It is critical that the information obtained through social research does not breach the privacy of the person being studied. Privacy involves the establishment of rules governing the collection and handling of personal data. Personal data might include information about beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and experiences. Research participants have the right to control the extent, timing and circumstances of the release of personal data.

Protecting participants' privacy means taking steps to ensure their personal information is obtained and used in a way that minimises the release of sensitive or personally identifying information. For example, when a survey is conducted, the data should be coded to protect the anonymity of participants, and for interviews or observations anonymity can be maintained by using aliases (fake names).

**Privacy** is ensuring personal information (data) is held securely and is not available to the public.



## Confidentiality of data

**Confidentiality of data** refers to the responsibility of researchers to protect the identity and personal information of participants from unauthorised disclosure or use. Researchers must take steps to prevent the disclosure of participants' personal information: for example, a person's name, age, address and role within a social group.

Maintaining confidentiality involves storing data securely – for instance, using password protection and locking office doors. Participants should be informed about any legal obligations to report certain types of information: for example, where there are fears for the physical safety of a research participant.

**Confidentiality of data** means protecting data (information) gathered from research participants and storing it carefully and securely.



## Scenario: Broadside SC's homelessness study

Broadside Secondary College's VCE Sociology class recently conducted a study into the impact of youth homelessness on academic test scores. Their research centred on the experiences of 12 homeless youth aged between 14 and 17 years. All participants receive support from the City of Melbourne's Youth Homeless Agency. This group was chosen because their teacher, Ms Williams, has a friend who is a social worker at this organisation, so it was easy to find people to interview.

To recruit participants, Ms Williams approached the teenagers on their way into a homelessness support meeting. She then quickly asked them to be involved before rushing off to go to an appointment. Ms Williams encouraged the homeless youth to be interviewed by offering to buy them lunch and give them a valuable gift bag.

During the interviews, the student researchers asked sensitive and personal questions about the participants' experiences of homelessness, family violence and personal health conditions. As it was not possible to find a private meeting room at school, the interviews occurred at a local cafe and a park.

At the end of the research, Ms Williams was contacted for an interview by Channel 9. A story then aired on the 6 o'clock news about the courage and achievements of the homeless young people; the participant's names and personal stories were shared without their permission.



## Activity E – Ethical methodology

- 1 Read the Broadside SC's homelessness study scenario provided and answer the following questions.
  - a What types of ethical concerns are involved in this scenario?
  - b What were the researcher's obligations? Why?
  - c How could you improve the research study's ethical methodology to better protect the safety and wellbeing of the participants?
- 2 A sociology student is conducting research with 3- to 4-year-old children who have profound hearing loss. The student has permission to observe the children at a playgroup run by a local medical centre. The student would like to observe, photograph and take notes of the children's play and social interactions.
  - a What are some unique concerns related to child participants?
  - b Write a consent form for the participants. Ensure that voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy and the confidentiality of data are considered.

### The use of the sociological imagination <sup>1.1.1.3</sup>

Sociologists engage in sociological investigation by using their **sociological imagination** to explore society, which involves thinking objectively about everyday actions and activities to reveal interesting assumptions and meanings, rather than being influenced by subjective personal experiences.

In 1959, American sociologist Charles Wright Mills introduced the idea of a sociological imagination. Mills saw it as the ability to see the impact of social forces on individuals' public and private lives. Mills used the example of unemployment to illustrate the concept of sociological imagination. According to Mills, when the unemployment rate is low, it may be seen as a personal problem related to an individual's weakness. However, when the rate is high, such as during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, it becomes seen as a **public issue** that requires collective responsibility to address at a societal level, rather than a **personal trouble**.

A sociological imagination is being used when:

- you can see the relationship between an individual and the wider society
- you can view society as an outsider rather than being influenced by personal biases
- you can describe the social patterns that influence individual and group behaviour.

In 2023, Australian sociologist Evan Willis suggested that the sociological imagination is best put into practice by addressing four interrelated facets of any social phenomena: historical, cultural, structural and critical factors.

The **sociological imagination** is an approach to thinking sociologically that involves looking at societal issues in a different way, removing biases and making links between personal troubles and public issues.

A **public issue** is a social problem affecting many individuals, stemming from the social culture and structure of society.

A **personal trouble** is an issue for which people blame an individual's personal or moral failings.



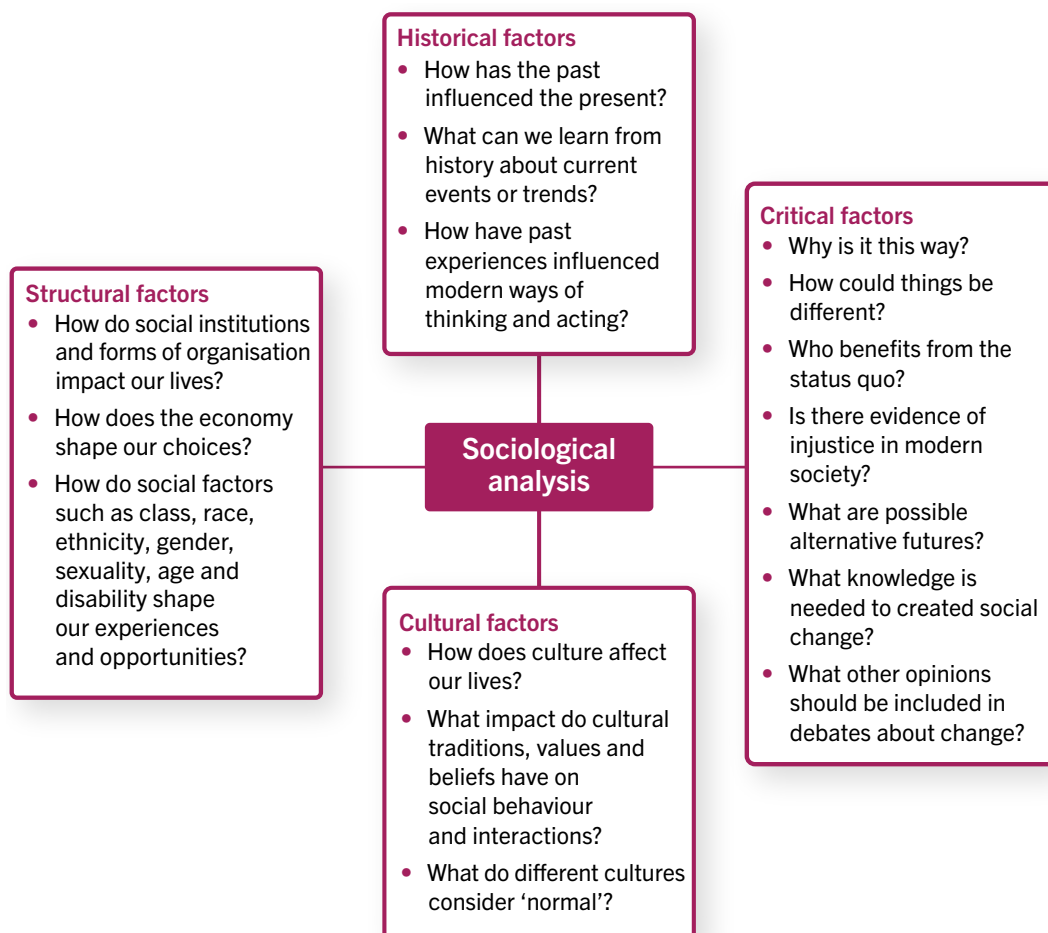
Charles Wright Mills  
(1916–1962)

Willis developed a sociological analysis framework (shown in the image below) that drew on the works of Mills (1959) and Giddens (1986). The framework is guided by a set of analysis questions. It encourages sociologists to consider four factors – historical, cultural, structural and critical – when conducting sociological analysis. This framework can be a useful tool for students of sociology as they investigate and attempt to understand different aspects of social phenomena.



Credit: Angelina Bambina/Shutterstock





### Sociological imagination framework



Collated using information from Dan Woodman and Steven Threadgold, 2021. *This is Sociology. A Short Introduction*. Sage; John Germov and Marilyn Poole, 2023. *Public Sociology. An introduction to Australian Society*. 5th edn. Routledge.

In the following table you can see an example of the sociological imagination framework being applied to a specific issue – in this case, youth unemployment.

**Globalisation** is the acceleration and intensification of exchanges of goods, services, labour and capital around the world, promoting global interdependence.

Factor	Explanation	Example
<b>Historical</b> 	How have past events influenced the present?	Past government policies, economic decisions and historical events such as the decline of manufacturing industries, the changing nature of work and the impact of <b>globalisation</b> have contributed to <b>youth unemployment</b> in Australia.
<b>Cultural</b> 	What influence do traditions, values, belief systems and cultural backgrounds have on the experience and understanding of people's lives today?	Attitudes towards education, training and work across different cultural groups, the role of family and community in shaping career aspirations and expectations, and gender stereotypes affecting career choices are among the cultural factors that may influence youth unemployment rates in Australia.
<b>Structural</b> 	How do social institutions and organisations affect people's experiences? Has this influence changed over time?	Structural factors that impact youth unemployment rates in Australia include the labour market and education system, with a shift towards a knowledge-based economy resulting in greater demand for advanced skills and reducing employment opportunities for those without higher education. In addition, government policies and social welfare programs may also contribute to youth unemployment rates.
<b>Critical</b> 	Why are things as they are? How could things be different? How does a sociological view help researchers to better understand how to create social change?	A critical analysis of youth unemployment in Australia may involve questioning higher unemployment rates among certain groups, such as First Nations youth and young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Additionally, examining the impact of government policies prioritising economic growth over social welfare could provide further insights into the rising youth unemployment rates.

Adapted from the models cited in Dan Woodman and Steven Threadgold, 2021. *This is Sociology: A Short Introduction*. Sage, p 4; and John Germov and Marilyn Poole, 2023. *Public Sociology: An introduction to Australian Society*. 5th edn. Routledge, p 8.



## Activity F – The sociological imagination

- 1 List five private troubles that have turned into public issues (e.g. homelessness, gambling). Select one of the private troubles and explain how it became a public issue. In your answer, consider what events or factors contributed to the change. For example, explain the causes of homelessness and how it has become a public issue.
- 2 Are the following statements true or false?
  - a According to Mills, personal problems are purely individual in nature and have no connection to society.
  - b The sociological imagination encourages individuals to question and critically examine societal structures and norms.
  - c The sociological imagination is relevant only to academics and sociologists, not the general public.
  - d The sociological imagination helps individuals understand the ways in which lived experiences and historical events overlap and influence each other.
  - e According to Willis, the sociological imagination is mainly concerned with the psychological wellbeing of individuals.
  - f The sociological imagination recognises that unemployment is influenced by social and economic factors, not just individual laziness or lack of skills.
- 3 You are a sociologist investigating food insecurity in the fictional town of Sunnydale. Food insecurity has been a long-term issue there. Two locals, Aisha and Ali, have shared their views about the issue with you. Aisha believes that the high cost of healthy food is one of the main reasons why people in Sunnydale struggle with food insecurity. Many people cannot afford to buy nutritious food on a regular basis. Ali, on the other hand, believes that the lack of affordable housing in the town is one of the main reasons why people struggle to afford food. When people are paying a large portion of their income on rent, there is not much left over for other expenses such as food and utilities.
  - a Complete a table or a concept map to illustrate the historical, cultural, structural and critical factors that a sociologist needs to consider when aiming to support the town of Sunnydale.
  - b Based on your analysis, what recommendations for social change should a sociologist make to the government?
- 4 Explain what is meant by the sociological imagination according to Mills.
- 5 Describe the four factors that can aid in using the sociological imagination during social research.
- 6 Write a 200-word summary of how using the sociological imagination can help to understand past and present experiences related to one of the following topics: pay inequality, child poverty, discrimination against older workers in the workplace, or the future of work.



The perception of homelessness as a personal trouble, or as public issue, influences the interventions provided. Credit: pimchawee/Shutterstock



## The social category of youth <sup>1.1.2</sup>

A **social category** is a group of anonymous individuals who share a social characteristic, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class or disability. These categories might not always have anything in common with each other. If the categories are correct, then it can be a helpful tool for meeting the needs of the people in these groups. However, if the categories are wrong or based on stereotypes, then it can cause difficulties and can make it harder to help people in these groups.

**Social category** refers to a group of people who share at least one similar characteristic but who do not necessarily interact with each other.

### Purpose of social categorisation

Social categorisation is a way of grouping people based on similarities they share, but this does not mean that all individuals within a group are the same. Social categorisation helps sociologists understand and respond to trends related to different groups, especially those who face disadvantage.

Age is one way that social categories are often used to classify people. For instance, we have different expectations of how children, young people, adults and the elderly behave, think and feel. However, societal norms, rather than biology, determine what is considered appropriate for different age groups. In recent years, a new social category has emerged in Western societies – ‘tweens’, for children aged nine to 12. Sociocultural changes have shifted traditional ideas about pre-adolescent children, leading to a new, distinct social category and a profitable consumer market.





## Benefits of social categorisation

Sociologists and government agencies can use social categories such as gender, age or income to investigate how these factors affect life outcomes. By analysing the data, they can identify social forces that influence behaviour and then make predictions about future outcomes.

For example, age-based categories can help in determining the number and types of services to provide in a community. For instance, if an area has a high population of elderly people, there may be a greater need for aged-care facilities and health services suited to their needs. Similarly, if an area has a high population of young families with children, there may be a greater need for schools, playgrounds and childcare centres.



## Limitations of social categorisation

Social categorisation can be problematic when large groups of individuals are inaccurately assumed to share the same characteristics. This can lead to the use of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, with assumptions made about individuals based on their group membership rather than individual characteristics. **Prejudice** refers to a positive or negative prejudgement (attitude) about an entire category of people, while **discrimination** refers to the unequal treatment of a category of people.

**Prejudice** is a positive or negative prejudgement (attitude) about an entire category of people.

**Discrimination** is the unequal treatment of a category of people.

For Australian youth, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination are not uncommon. For example, many young people have been labelled 'lazy' or 'entitled' by people from older **generations**. This negative stereotype can lead to prejudiced attitudes towards young people, such as the idea that they lack social or critical thinking skills. Consequently, discrimination against young people can occur in the workplace, where they may face age-based discrimination or struggle to find employment due to resistance to providing them with experience.

A **generation** is all the people born and living around the same time.



## Activity G – Social categorisation

- 1 Look around at the various people in your class. List all the social categories to which your classmates belong. Share these findings in pairs and/or as a class.
- 2 Identify the similarities and differences between two aged-based social categories, such as children and the elderly, or tweens and teens. What did you notice?
- 3 Given the complications of social categorisation, why do you think sociologists continue to use social categories in their research?
- 4 Provide an example of social categorisation from your own or a family member's experience. Refer to the concepts of stereotype, prejudice and discrimination in your answer.

## How the definition of youth has changed over time

The concept of youth is a relatively recent phenomenon. While historically there were only adults and children, puberty has always signified the physiological change from childhood to adulthood. However, the stage of 'youth' is a modern, socially constructed category. Initially, youth was seen as a period of preparation for adulthood, where young people were expected to learn the necessary skills and knowledge to become responsible members of society.

During the Industrial Revolution (1760–1840), when new manufacturing processes transformed society, the vulnerability of people between the childhood and adulthood stages was identified. As such, it became a distinct phase of life, as economic changes created new roles and expectations for young people. Young people were seen as a source of cheap labour and were often forced to work long hours in factories or mines. This led to concerns about the exploitation of youth and the need for legislation to protect their rights.

The idea of **adolescence** as a distinct phase in the human lifecycle emerged in the early 20th century, as childhood began to extend into the teenage years. In 1904, American psychologist G. Stanley Hall argued that adolescence (or youth) was marked by hormonal, physical and emotional changes that could cause conflicts with **social norms**. This 'crisis-prone' nature of adolescence led to young people being viewed as naturally irresponsible and difficult to manage during this period.

**Adolescence** is the period of life following the beginning of puberty, during which a young person develops from a child into an adult.

**Social norms** are shared expectations or rules for behaviour within a particular social group or culture.

Recent advances in neuroscience and psychology have enhanced our understanding of brain development during adolescence (youth). Studies have shown that the brain continues to develop well into an individual's twenties, with areas such as decision-making, impulse control and long-term planning undergoing significant changes during this time. This new understanding challenges earlier notions of youth as a time of irrationality and immaturity and has significant implications for how Australian society views the specific needs and abilities of young people (Raising Children Network, 2023).

At the time of writing this textbook, another factor has emerged that influences how we might categorise youth. Australia is currently experiencing historical cost-of-living pressures. Economic factors, such as rising food and utility costs, limited availability of rental properties and increased transport costs, have led to an extended period of dependency and delayed transition to adulthood. Young Australians often face financial challenges, leading to longer periods of education, delayed career starts and continued reliance on family and/or guardian support.

## So what is a sociological definition of youth?

Modern definitions of **youth** note that it is a Westernised, socially constructed, age-based period when a person examines life choices, considers their future and recognises opportunities that may exist. Often young people are participating in education or training programs and are dependent on their parents. In the early stages of youth, individuals are coping with physiological changes taking place within their bodies. It is also a time when roles, relationships and attitudes about life are being questioned, and as a result independence is usually established.

**Youth** is an age-based socially constructed category in Western societies, usually defined as being between the ages of 12 and 24.



## Why teenagers aren't what they used to be

Richard Fisher, 2022. 'Why teenagers aren't what they used to be', BBC.  
[bbc.com/future/article/20220124-why-teens-arent-what-they-used-to-be](https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20220124-why-teens-arent-what-they-used-to-be)

You know the trouble with young people these days? The *younkers* think they're better than the rest of us, the *ephebes* are growing up too fast, and the *backfisch*? Well, they are far too precocious.

If you don't recognise these words, you wouldn't be alone. They are all old terms for adolescents that have fallen out of common usage.

A *younker* was a word used pre-1900 stemming from the Dutch and German terms for a young nobleman – a little lord – and was also used to describe a junior sailor. An *ephebe* was a young Athenian in Ancient Greece, aged 18 to 19, who was training to be a full citizen. And a *backfisch* – literally 'baked fish' – is a German word that popped up in coming-of-age novels published around the turn of the 20th century. It described a giddy, spontaneous, adventurous girl who had an adult's independence paired with a child's reckless approach to risk.

Across history, the words and categories we use to describe young people have evolved significantly, driven by transformations in culture, work, education and scientific insight. How have these factors shaped the terms we use for adolescents today – like 'teenager'? And as societal norms shift and new discoveries are made, how might our categories for the young change again in the future?

One of the most culturally significant inventions of the past century was the teenager. It's difficult to imagine that we ever existed without our adolescent years as we experience them now, but if you could time-travel back a few centuries, people would find the modern idea of the teenager to be something of an alien concept.

Back in the 1500s, for example, most Western adolescents would have been workers, recruited into the world of adult labour from as early as seven years old, according to the historian of childhood Hugh Cunningham of the University of Kent.

In rural economies, this may have involved farm work to support the family's agricultural income, but as industrialisation spread in the 18th and 19th centuries, many teens became factory workers, grafting alongside their adult peers. In the late 1800s, writes Cunningham, children in the US were contributing around a third of family income by the time their father was in his 50s.



These young women subverted the conservative expectations around women's swimwear that dominated in the early 1900s.



The place of young people in society has changed hugely, driven by shifts in culture, work, education and scientific insight.

There was no universal schooling, and only the wealthiest could tap into a 'bank of mum and dad' to provide food and shelter.

As developed-world living standards and education policies began to change in the early 20th century, however, young people were increasingly able to live fully under the wings of their parents or guardians for longer, supported financially and emotionally. But even then, the invention of the modern teenager wouldn't happen immediately.

Before World War Two, the term teenager (or teen-ager) had occasionally been used, but it was only in the late 1940s and 1950s that it became more common. Around this time, a number of different forces converged to make that happen.

In rich countries, it became much more likely for a young person to stay in school for their teenage years. In the late 1940s, schooling in the UK was made compulsory up to the age of 15. And in the US, high school graduation rates grew from less than 10 per cent at the start of the century to around 60 per cent by the mid-1950s.

Post-World War Two, historians also note that social attitudes towards the rights of young people shifted in many Western nations: the sense that young people had a duty to serve their parents weakened, and their own wishes and values began to be listened to more.

And one sector of society that was listening to these needs the most? Commerce. In the 1950s, companies realised that teenagers could also be influencers. They were capable of setting trends and spreading fashions, and therefore could be marketed to for great profit. As a writer for the *New Yorker* noted in 1958: 'To some extent, the teenage market – and, in fact, the very notion of the teenager – has been created by the businessmen who exploit it.'



In the 1950s, teenagers emerged as trendsetters in fashion, music, film and dance.

Back then it was all about capitalising on rebellion, hot-rods and rock n' roll. Today it's TikTok and . . . well, I wouldn't know, since I'm 41 years old. But the point is that the perception of teenagers as cool, trend-setting and influential was – and still is – just as much a creation of commerce and media as a reflection of reality. Teenage music, fashion and language ripples across the rest of society, supercharged by industries established to profit from them.

Around the 1950s, you can also find anecdotal evidence that cultural perceptions of teenagers as painfully adolescent were becoming more widely known, with complaints about the trials of parenting pubescent children. In 1955, for example, a woman called Mrs G wrote to Mary Brown, an agony aunt for the UK *Daily Mirror* newspaper, complaining about her son: 'He's cheeky and he's sulky . . . why should a boy change like this?' she wrote. 'He resents any questions. The best I get is a polite yes or no, the worst an angry look which clearly tells me to mind my own business.'

All this means that the teenager as we know it was very much a 20th-century invention. The question is, will these cultural perceptions shift again in the future?

Over the past decade or two, there have been some intriguing changes in the attributes of the teenager. The psychologist Jean Twenge of San Diego State University notes that

teens are growing up more slowly by many measures, compared with their 20th-century counterparts. A typical 17–18-year-old in the US, for example, is now less likely to have tried alcohol, had sex, or acquired their driver's licence, compared with similarly-aged teens only 20 years ago. A 13–14-year-old is less likely to have a job or to have gone on dates. Meanwhile other measures of early adulthood, such as teenage pregnancy, have reached historic lows in the US and Europe.

Twenge points to a number of reasons why growing up is slowing down. There's little doubt that technology and the Internet has played a major role, meaning more interaction with peers happens online and in the home, where sex, experimentation and trouble are perhaps less likely. For this reason, she calls this latest crop of young people the 'iGen' generation, and has written a book all about their characteristics. But she also points out that some of these trends were already beginning before the online culture of the 21st century, and so the Internet can't be totally blamed.

Her hypothesis is that teens behave differently depending on how hostile and unforgiving their local environment feels to them, an idea that social scientists called 'life history theory'. In tougher times in history, teens were forced to take a 'fast life strategy', growing up faster, reproducing earlier and focusing on basic needs. Now life in the west is generally more forgiving, and families are wealthier – at least on average – so it's possible for teens to take a 'slow life strategy', delaying the transition to more adult behaviours.

'At times and places where people live longer, healthcare is better, and education takes longer to finish, people usually make the choice to have fewer children and nurture them more carefully,' Twenge explains.

There may also be a greater emphasis on safety among this latest teenage generation, Twenge suggests, both physically and emotionally, which encourages young people and their parents or guardians to keep them insulated from the harshness of the adult world for longer.

So, what will this mean for our ideas about teenagers if these trends continue? It might suggest that the 20th-century notion of a teenage rebel-without-a-cause is becoming outdated. Whereas many teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s were driving their own cars, getting into trouble, and experimenting with drink and drugs, their similarly-aged counterparts today are often far more clean-living and safety-conscious. If there is reckless behaviour and an urge for independence, it's coming later.

A slower path to adulthood is not the only way that cultural perceptions of youth may need updating. In recent years, science has also shown that adolescence doesn't finish at the end of the teenage years. By 20 years old, a young person is usually considered an adult: their body size is fully grown, they can vote, get married, and many have already entered the workplace. But the evidence suggests that, by many important measures, adolescence continues until around the age of 24 to 25.

At the end of the teens, puberty may have finished but the development and maturation of the brain is far from complete. Brain imaging shows that white matter, for instance, continues to



In tougher times in history, teenagers had to grow up quickly and behave like older adults. This photo shows some of the young women attending an intensive vocational school in United States in 1914.

increase into the mid-20s, coupled with a rise in cortical complexity. Some researchers now also see these years as an important developmental social stage too, where young people are still learning about intimacy, friendship, family, self-expression, and political and social awareness, and so deserve more support and protection than they currently receive from society.

Could there therefore be a case that these older adolescents should become more clearly recognised as a distinct demographic group? Should we allow them to delay their entry into the fully adult world of life and work? It might seem like coddling to some, but then again, our ancestors might have said the same about how we treat teenagers.

Signs of this cultural change may be happening already. The ‘boomerang’ phenomenon describes recent rises in the number of young adults returning to the nest to live with their parents after higher education, or because they can’t afford their own property or rent. (Some never move out in the first place.) In the UK, around 3.5 million single young adults now live with their parents, which is a third more than a decade ago, according to research led by Katherine Hill of Loughborough University in 2020. Wealth imbalances between older generations and today’s young people have only strengthened this trend.

It’s possible that cultural changes brought by longer lifespans will soon begin to play a role too. As parents work for longer, they may be in a stronger financial position to support their older children, as opposed to retiring. But that’s not all. Lynda Gratton and Andrew J Scott of London Business School propose that greater longevity will also soon begin to make the ‘three-stage’ life of school, work and retirement feel outdated. And this, they argue in their book *The 100-Year Life*, may bring particularly big changes for cultural expectations of young people in their early 20s.

‘One difference we should consider is the assumption that in our 20s we are meant to go immediately from schooling to a career. In the 100-year life we should consider taking a period of our 20s and dedicating to a new stage, exploration,’ write Gratton and Scott. ‘Your decisions early in life impact the entirety of the rest of it . . . so it is rather absurd that we expect people in their late teens and early 20s to make decisions like what direction they want their lives to take. Instead they should have a period of exploring the world and trying different paths.’

What’s curious is that this specific period of life, post-teen, doesn’t have a commonly known name to describe it, at least in English. Perhaps it should. After all, pre-teens have their own moniker as ‘tweens’. Some researchers have labelled the period pre-25 as ‘prolonged adolescence’, but perhaps another name could be adolthood – spanning the teenage and adult worlds.

And if the idea of adolts doesn’t catch on, someone can surely find a better name: after all, from *ephebes* to *younkers* to *backfisch*, we have been coining new categories for young people for most of history.



## Activity H – Changes to the concept of youth

Read the article ‘Why teenagers aren’t what they used to be’ provided and answer the following questions.

- 1 Explain the role of young people in the past compared to today.
- 2 Describe some of the factors that led to the ‘invention’ of the modern teenager.
- 3 Explain how social attitudes towards young people shifted after World War II.
- 4 Describe the role that ‘commerce’ played in the creation of the modern teenager.
- 5 Outline some of the reasons why teenagers are growing up more slowly today.
- 6 Based on the information within this article, how would you define the concept of youth?

## Representations of youth in the media 1.1.3

**Media** representations, whether in print, digital or social media, have a significant impact on how people see the world around them. A **representation** is the way somebody or something is portrayed. Representations can be either positive or negative, depending on their accuracy, type and impact. For instance, the media can be used to promote positive messages of diversity, inclusion and social justice. However, media representations can also reinforce negative stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against certain social groups. Therefore, it is crucial to critically analyse media representations so as to better understand their impact.

The media is a tool that people can use to share information and ideas. It is important to be aware that the media is not neutral – it is influenced by people and society. One factor to consider is who holds power in the media. Think about who gets to decide what stories are told and how they are told. It is helpful to think about who is included and who is left out and the impact of the **inclusion** or **exclusion** of various points of view.

Sometimes, the media can present assumptions about people based on factors such as a person's race, age or gender. As previously discussed, these stereotypes can be harmful because they assume that everyone in a certain group is the same. It is important to recognise stereotypes and question them so that you avoid prejudice and/or discrimination. The media can also help to challenge stereotypes by presenting a wide range of people, perspectives and experiences.

Over the past 20 years, social media has changed how young people socialise, express themselves and access information. For example, the youth-led online social movement #SchoolStrike4Climate has challenged all of us to confront the urgent need to address climate change. The ease of access to social media has allowed young people to share their messages freely, instantaneously and globally in a way they could not in the past. Modern media tools have also helped to challenge outdated stereotypes that depict young people as apathetic and disengaged from political and/or social justice concerns.

You can explore these ideas further by reading:

- 📖 the 'Missing: Young people in Australian news media' report [fya.org.au/resource/missing-young-people-in-australian-news-media-series/](https://fya.org.au/resource/missing-young-people-in-australian-news-media-series/)
- 📖 the article 'Australian TV news has a long way to go with cultural diversity' [sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2022/11/22/australian-tv-news-has-long-way-to-go-with-cultural-diversity.html](https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2022/11/22/australian-tv-news-has-long-way-to-go-with-cultural-diversity.html)

“ Young people make up on a fraction of coverage in Australian news media. Between February 1 and July 31, 2020, young people featured in less than 3.3% of articles ...

Many media outlets use stereotypes in their coverage of young people. In analysing articles from six mainstream online news publications, this report found that all used ... stereotypes in their coverage of young people. The Australian used stereotypes in 75% of their coverage, and the Herald Sun used stereotypes in 61% of their coverage. ”

Foundation for Young Australians, 2020. 'Missing: Young people in Australian news media. Examining the representation of young people by Australian news media in the first six months of COVID-19'. [fya.org.au/app/uploads/2021/09/FYA2020\\_Missing-Young-People-in-Australian-News-Media.pdf](https://fya.org.au/app/uploads/2021/09/FYA2020_Missing-Young-People-in-Australian-News-Media.pdf)

**Media** refers to the various forms of communication used to transmit information, entertainment or ideas to a large audience: print, digital or electronic.

**Representation** refers to the way the 'reality' – of people, places, objects, events, cultural identities or intangible concepts – is portrayed in the media.

**Inclusion** is the extent to which individuals experience a sense of belonging and participate actively in a society.

**Exclusion** is the extent to which individuals experience marginalisation and restriction of certain rights, resources and opportunities that are available to others.



# Who Gets to Tell Australian Stories? 2.0

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY AND UTS JUMBUNNA INSTITUTE FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, MEDIA DIVERSITY AUSTRALIA HAS RELEASED A 'REPORT CARD' ON INDIGENITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN TELEVISION NEWS, WITH INSIGHTS INTO WHAT HAS CHANGED, WHAT HAS STAYED THE SAME AND OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD THE CHARGE TOWARD GREATER CULTURAL DIVERSITY.

Who appears on our screens is more Anglo-Celtic, however there are pockets of progress



The Anglo-Celtic category remained vastly over-represented on TV, across all states and territories

There was a slight increase of Anglo-Celtic TV presenters from 2019 to 2022



Appearances by TV presenters of Indigenous background improved overall but was inconsistent across networks



## Activity 1 – Identifying stereotypes in the media

As we've discussed, a stereotype is an oversimplified idea about a person or group and a belief that all people in that group are the same.

- 1 Make a list of examples of stereotypes you see in your everyday life or the media. Divide them into categories: race, gender, wealth and any other types you have witnessed.
- 2 What assumptions might people make about the cartoon characters in the tip box below based on their appearance?
- 3 Do you fit into a stereotype? Is it hurtful for others to assume things about you without knowing you?
- 4 Do you believe stereotypes can be beneficial? Explain your thoughts.



## Tips for analysing media representations

Think about how the group being studied is represented. Is this presentation fair, respectful and accurate? If it is, what are the positive outcomes of this representation? If it isn't, what are the negative impacts and concerns that need to be addressed?

When analysing a representation, it is important to examine each part separately and then consider how it contributes to the overall perception of the group being represented.

Keep the following questions in mind as you begin your initial review of a media representation:



Credit: Franzi/Shutterstock

- 1 Who is being portrayed?
- 2 What visual and/or written features can be seen in the portrayal? Are there any elements that are distorted, missing or left out?
- 3 Is the portrayal accurate?
- 4 Are members of the relevant group likely to approve of the representation?
- 5 How might other people feel about the portrayal?
- 6 Is the portrayal positive, negative or a mix of both?
- 7 Are there multiple perspectives or opinions presented about this group/issue in the media, or is there only one?
- 8 Who discusses this group/issue in the media? Are they part of the group/issue or are they outsiders?
- 9 Are there any potential positive outcomes resulting from the portrayal of this group/issue in the media? Who benefits from these positive outcomes?
- 10 Are there any potential negative outcomes resulting from the portrayal of this group/issue in the media? Who is affected by these negative outcomes?

## Analysing media representations

When analysing media representations, it's important to consider both visuals and language.

### Visual analysis

When reflecting on the visual features of a representation, consider how lines, shapes, colours, and layout evoke emotions and convey meaning.



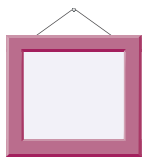
**Colour** can prompt different feelings or moods. Warm colours such as red, orange and yellow can make you feel excited, while cool colours such as blue and green can make you feel calm. Artists often use colour to communicate messages and convey emotions.



**Symbols** often have important cultural or historic significance that can assist us to understand the message being shared. By analysing the meaning of these symbols, much can be learnt about the values, beliefs and social norms of different social groups. For example, the Aboriginal flag symbolises the unity and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through its black, red and yellow colours: black represents the Aboriginal people; red represents the earth (ochre has ceremonial significance) and yellow, the sun. Thus, the flag conveys connection to Country. Designed by Harold Thomas in 1971, it has become a powerful symbol of First Nations identity and resistance to cultural suppression (Pascoe, 2018).



**Intertextuality** is the practice of linking visual or written representations to convey a message. Creators can use various techniques, such as referencing artworks, texts or popular culture. For example, in the song 'January 26' by A.B. Original, the group addresses the contentious history of Australia Day and draws on intertextual references to Australian First Nations cultures and history. The song also criticises the superficiality of reality TV shows such as *The Bachelor*, noting that our time would be better spent learning about the impact of colonisation on First Nations peoples.



**Framing** refers to how an image is arranged or composed. It involves observations about what is included or excluded. It can be used to direct the viewer's attention and convey a message or mood. For example, a photograph of a School Strikes 4 Climate protest may focus on the faces of the demonstrators, creating a sense of connection and importance of their message. Whereas a negative framing of the same protest rally might involve the use of misleading images to downplay the size or impact of the movement, or to portray protestors as irresponsible.



**Text** refers to how words or letters are incorporated within an image, such as titles, captions, or labels. These elements can provide additional information or context to help the viewer understand the image. For example, a political cartoon may use a speech bubble with a satirical remark to comment on a current issue or event. Using humour to convey a serious message is a common tactic employed in various forms of media.

### Language analysis

- **Word choice:** Creators of representations sometimes deliberately use vague or emotive words to try to influence us. For example, news headlines that use words such as 'shocking' or 'heroic' can shape our interpretation of the material being presented to us.
- **Leaving information out:** Identify information or perspectives deliberately excluded from written representations (for example, an online news story exploring the behaviour of youth gangs that does not present the views of young people).
- **Strategic placement:** Those who control the publication of written representations make decisions about which stories or topics are given the most attention. For example, stories that are placed at the top of an online news website are more likely to be seen than those 20 items in.

## Millennials, you can't 'unfollow' a pandemic

To the educated, COVID-19 is an unfathomable disaster. Spare a thought then for Millennials, who — through the blindness of parents and educators — have grown up without the need for detail, depth and analysis.

THE AUSTRALIAN 🇦🇺



### The FAPO method

A quick and easy way to reflect on the agenda behind particular representations is the **FAPO** strategy. This method involves considering the following factors:

- **Form** — What form does the representation take (e.g. film, book or advertisement)?
- **Attitudes** — What attitudes are present or being challenged in the representation?
- **Positioning** — How have the creators attempted to persuade or educate their audience?
- **Omission** — Are any views, opinions or facts missing from the representation?

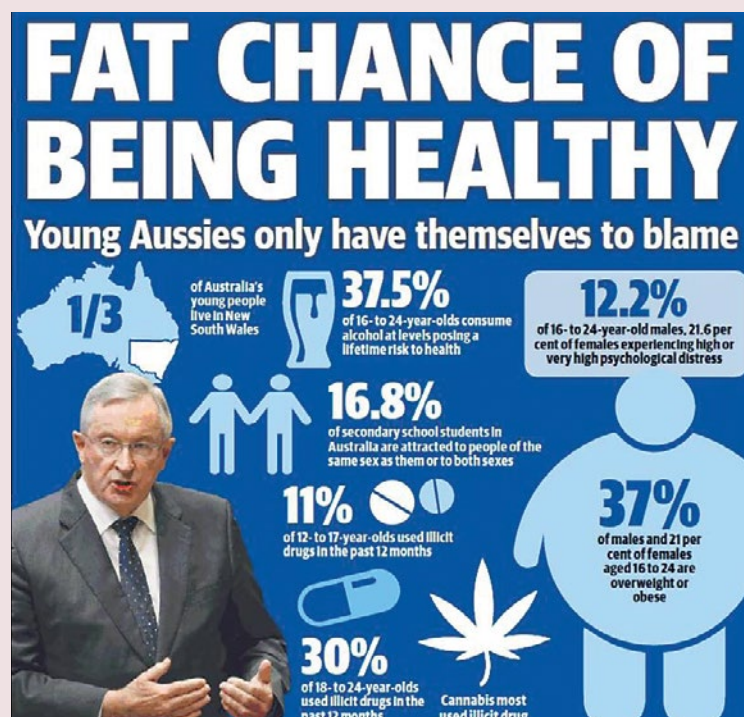


## Misleading claims

This graphic was published in 2017, alongside a news article in Sydney's Daily Telegraph. The paper was criticised for misrepresenting data about the health of LGBTIQ+ youth. The headline 'Fat Chance of Being Healthy' and sub headline 'Young Aussies have only themselves to blame' were accompanied by a statistic indicating that '16.8% of secondary school students are attracted to people of the same sex or to both sexes'. This representation was not accurate and the newspaper was formally accused of misleading its readership.

Compiled using information from:

- ✔ 'Outrage over Daily Telegraph's 'shameful' LGBTI health clanger'. QNews, 2017. [qnews.com.au/outrage-as-daily-telegraph-suggests-same-sex-attraction-is-a-health-problem](http://qnews.com.au/outrage-as-daily-telegraph-suggests-same-sex-attraction-is-a-health-problem)
- ✔ 'Press Council releases adjudication on misleading Daily Telegraph article'. Out in Perth, 2017. [outinperth.com/press-council-releases-adjudication-on-daily-telegraph-article](http://outinperth.com/press-council-releases-adjudication-on-daily-telegraph-article)



This infographic appeared in the 12 July 2017 edition of the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, which included same-sex attraction among secondary students amongst a list of 'health problems' affecting Australian teenagers.



## Activity J – Using the FAPO method

- 1 Read the case study 'Misleading claims' provided. Using the table headings sampled below, use the FAPO method to explain the Daily Telegraph's (mis)representation of same-sex-attracted people.

FAPO features	Evidence from the representation material	Explanation
Form(s)		
Attitudes		
Positioning		
Omission		

- 2 The FAPO (Form, Attitudes, Positioning, Omission) method can also be applied to positive representations of youth. Research stories about Young Australians of the Year or young professional athletes who have achieved great success and are positive role models for young people. Complete a FAPO table to document your findings.
- 3 Apply the FAPO method to one of the following sources:
  -  Dr Murooj Yousef, James Durl and Timo Dietrich, 2023. 'Everyone's NOT doing it: how schools, parents should talk about vaping'. The Conversation. [theconversation.com/everyones-not-doing-it-how-schools-parents-should-talk-about-vaping-196139](https://theconversation.com/everyones-not-doing-it-how-schools-parents-should-talk-about-vaping-196139)
  -  Tanya Notley and Michael Dezuanni, 2019. 'On an average day, only 1% of Australian news stories quoted a young person. No wonder so few trust the media'. The Conversation. [theconversation.com/on-an-average-day-only-1-of-australian-news-stories-quoted-a-young-person-no-wonder-so-few-trust-the-media-122464](https://theconversation.com/on-an-average-day-only-1-of-australian-news-stories-quoted-a-young-person-no-wonder-so-few-trust-the-media-122464)
  -  Foundation for Young Australians, 2020. 'Missing: Young people in Australian news media. Examining the representations of young people by Australian news media in the first six months of COVID-19'. [fya.org.au/resource/missing-young-people-in-australian-news-media-series](https://fya.org.au/resource/missing-young-people-in-australian-news-media-series)



## Activity K – Media file

The media plays a significant role in shaping society's perception of young people. In many ways it is the media that constructs our idea of what it means to be young, what youth do and how they should behave. We are constantly exposed to depictions of youth through television shows and films, while news media sources provide information about many issues that affect young people.

- 1 Over the next few weeks, compile an annotated media file of representations relating to youth. This may include examples from television shows, films, news sources, documentaries, podcasts, music, video recordings, books and magazines.
 

The purpose of this task is to make links between these mediums and how broader society views youth. Select one or two representations each week, and try to include a range of different types of representations.
- 2
  - a Describe each representation and then analyse it using the questions provided below as a guide. Keep a record of your observations in an electronic media file, using the table provided as a guide for how to organise your findings.
  - b Is the representation a positive or negative depiction of young people? Explain how, and in what way.
  - c It is a realistic and/or fair depiction of modern youth? Explain how, and in what way.
  - d Is it designed to educate the public about issues affecting the lives of young people? Explain how, and in what way.
  - e Is it designed to influence the public view of young people? Explain how, and in what way.

Title	Date and source	Brief description	Analysis
'The Swap: Bridging the cultural divide' Episode 1	February 2023 SBS documentary	This documentary is about . . .	This is a positive depiction of young people because . . . It is a realistic and fair depiction of modern youth because . . . The documentary is designed to educate the Australian public about . . . It is fair to say that people would view these young people as . . . It might challenge stereotypes in that . . .

## Cultural, social, economic and technological factors leading to differences in the experience of being young <sup>1.1.4</sup>

Not all young people have the same experiences, interests, characteristics or values. A variety of factors contribute to differences in the way youth experience the world. For example, politically, many young people are excluded from fully participating in our democracy due to their inability to vote. However, young people are still finding ways to engage in active citizenship. For example, at age 15 Swede Greta Thunberg became a leading voice for climate activism by using digital tools such as Twitter and Instagram to share her message. She has inspired hundreds of thousands of young people around the world to act on environmental issues that impact their future. Thunberg has successfully challenged the stereotype that the youth of today are lazy and disinterested in political action.

You can learn more about Greta Thunberg by reading the 2020 BBC article 'Two years of Greta: What impact has she had?' and the Context article 'Greta Thunberg's rise from teen activist to global climate leader'.

[bbc.co.uk/newsround/53816924](https://www.bbc.com/news/53816924)

[context.news/just-transition/greta-thunbergs-rise-from-teen-activist-to-global-climate-leader](https://context.news/just-transition/greta-thunbergs-rise-from-teen-activist-to-global-climate-leader)

Young people have diverse experiences and interpretations of what it means to be young, and many face inequitable journeys into adulthood. The **experience of youth** varies considerably.

**Experience of youth** refers to the range of factors affecting the way young people feel and experience life; this includes feelings of belonging, inclusion and exclusion.

### Cultural factors

**Cultural factors** encompass a diverse set of learnt values, beliefs, customs and practices of a particular group or society, which can significantly shape the experiences of young people from different ethnic backgrounds. These factors can have both positive and negative impacts on identity formation, socialisation and understanding of the world. For example, some cultures may prioritise family, education and social relationships while others may place more significance on community involvement or traditional career paths. These differences reflect the unique values and beliefs that are learnt and shared as you enter and experience your teenage years.

**Cultural factors** refer to a diverse set of learnt values, beliefs, customs and practices of a particular group or society.

## Ethnicity

**Ethnicity** is fundamental to the construction of identity. Ethnicity refers to a shared cultural heritage and way of life. Everybody can be considered to have an ethnic identity, but in different societies some ethnic groups experience prejudice and discrimination. This negative experience can influence how youth from these groups interpret and experience being young. Since the 1950s, Australia's population has been shaped by several waves of migration from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, with migrants playing a significant role in transforming Australia into a vibrant and successful **multicultural** nation. Despite facing economic challenges and prejudice, the children of migrants have successfully pursued educational and career aspirations.

**Ethnicity** refers to a shared cultural heritage and way of life.

**Multicultural** means several different cultures coexisting peacefully and equitably in a single country.

A report by the Grattan Institute in 2018, which analysed NAPLAN data, found that schools with more students from language backgrounds other than English achieved higher levels and made greater academic progress, especially in numeracy, compared to schools with fewer migrant-background students (Sonnemann, 2018). The report suggested that reasons for this could be that migrant students are motivated to succeed by their parents, and that learning another language may have cognitive benefits for students from non-English-language backgrounds.



A selection of Herald Sun headlines between 2016 and 2018, when African gang violence was a particularly popular focus of the newspaper's reporting. Credit: Sarah Muschamp.

“Young adults who arrived in Australia from Asia with their migrant parents in the past 10 years go to university at more than double the rate of their Australian-born peers.”

Julie Hare, 2022. 'Migrants attend uni at more than double the rate of locals'. Australian Financial Review. 2022. [afr.com/work-and-careers/education/asian-migrants-attend-uni-at-more-than-double-the-rate-of-australians-20220930-p5bmcy](https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/asian-migrants-attend-uni-at-more-than-double-the-rate-of-australians-20220930-p5bmcy)

Unfortunately, not all young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds successfully navigate economic disadvantage and social prejudice. For some it can be challenging to feel a sense of belonging to either their ancestral culture or the dominant Australian culture. At times conflict can occur between first- and second-generation migrant family members as young people more readily adopt the language and customs of the dominant culture.

“Being of Vietnamese background, I've noticed that adults, the older generation have kind of resigned to the fact that a lot of us second generation Vietnamese have just become too Australianised for them and it's kind of past a threshold of turning back. So the link and the cultural language has suddenly been irreversibly lost . . . I think there's a generation gap and a cultural gap between different generations. (Vietnamese young man).”

Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014. 'Migrant & Refugee Young People Negotiating Adolescence in Australia'. p. 8.

Young Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds face the risk of discrimination and disadvantage due to their ethnicity, language or religion. This can cause feelings of isolation and exclusion, affecting their mental health and educational opportunities. Some may react to this by rejecting parental authority and joining destructive or harmful peer groups, which can lead to negative behaviour. The media may also contribute to this by publishing inaccurate, racist stories about 'gang violence', stereotyping vulnerable young people who are seeking a sense of belonging.

Read more about racial stereotyping here:

- 🔗 [Police Accountability Project. 'Apex Gang and the racial perception of crime'.](https://policeaccountability.org.au/racial-profiling/apex-gang-and-coded-racism)
- 🔗 [Chris Vedelago and Royce Millar, 2021. 'One election later, the lessons from Melbourne's 'African gang' scare campaign'. The Age.](https://theage.com.au/national/victoria/one-election-later-the-lessons-from-melbourne-s-african-gang-panic-20211118-p59a4u.html)

“Q: How do you think racism has affected you or others around you?

- Feeling less than
- Feeling helpless and vulnerable
- Mental health well-being negatively affected
- Affected future career options
- A sense of fear, safety threatened
- Uncertainty about the future
- Self-hatred.”

Multicultural Youth and Advocacy Network, 2022. 'Multicultural Youth Perspectives on Racism and the Draft Anti-Racism Framework'. pp 8–9.





## Racism in Australia

Stephanie Dalzell, 2021. 'Most Australians believe there's a lot of racism these days, but experts say recognising discrimination is just the beginning'. ABC.

[abc.net.au/news/2021-05-31/australia-talks-racism-discrimination-society/100172652](http://abc.net.au/news/2021-05-31/australia-talks-racism-discrimination-society/100172652)

Mohammad Al-Khafaji came to Australia as a refugee when he was 13 after his family fled Iraq seeking political asylum.

He has spent the majority of his life in this country, so was left frustrated and outraged when a complete stranger followed him out of the terminal at Adelaide airport recently, and yelled: 'Go back to where you came from.'

'It made me feel incredibly angry and upset,' Mr Al-Khafaji said.

'For someone to tell me to go back to where I come from, it's very insulting but it also puts into question my existence in Australia – it might seem something very basic but it hits hard, it hits to your core.'

The Australia Talks National Survey 2021 found around three in four Australians with non-European ancestry say they have been discriminated against because of their ethnicity.

It has also revealed the majority of us – across all **demographics** and political persuasions – believe there is a lot of racism these days, with the only exception being One Nation voters.

For Mr Al-Khafaji, who is also the chief executive of the nation's peak multicultural body, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, the **statistics** are consistent with his experience.

'It doesn't surprise me, it's really important for us to talk about these issues and talk about what racism looks like, it doesn't have to be physical violence on the streets, it can be a throwaway comment,' he said.

Racism has also affected Sydney bakery owner Mohammad Makki.

When civil war erupted in Lebanon in the 1970s, his parents escaped to Sydney for a better life.

But being born in Australia has not been enough to shield him from the vilification that comes with being a Muslim man of Middle Eastern descent.

'We grew up in the St George area – if you spend a day in the Shire, people look at you a little different,' he said.

Mr Makki said that experience got worse after September 11.

'It's nearly 20 years ago, September 11 – Muslims all around the world got persecuted and picked on,' he said.

'We've all experienced racism, at the end of the day people stereotype, people judge people for what they look like.

'Any box of fruit can have one bad apple, doesn't mean the whole box is bad.'

The Australia Talks survey also found 64 per cent of us believe most Australians are prejudiced against Indigenous peoples, whether or not they realise it.

Munanjahli woman and University of Queensland academic Chelsea Watego said she was surprised to see recognition of racism is prevalent.

'We live in a society where for too long [we've insisted] that racism isn't real, so it is surprising to see increasingly Australians are recognising that it does exist,' she said.

But she said recognising racism was only the first move in the journey to equality.

'The next step is to work out what are we going to do about it, and unfortunately there's a resistance to tending to racism explicitly in this country still.'

A **demographic** is a particular sector of a society, for instance those grouped by age, gender, education level, economic status, ethnic background or and place of residence.

**Statistics** are numbers that summarise broad patterns in how society is structured.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already serious racism problem in Australia, according to former race discrimination commissioner and academic Tim Soutphommasane.

He said while members of Australia's Asian community bore the brunt of the vilification, other groups have also been targeted.

'We know there can be spill-over effects whenever racial hostility is directed at one particular group,' he said.

'When racism and xenophobia are unleashed they can be directed from one group to another very quickly and very easily, because once it's out there people feel they have the licence and permission to vent hostility and intolerance towards others.'

Professor Soutphommasane wants the federal government to do more to combat racism.

There has not been a national anti-racism strategy since 2015, and he said Australia was lagging behind other countries in adopting one.

The Human Rights Commission put forward a proposal for a new national anti-racism framework in March, which includes improving data collection on racism, and reviewing the country's laws to ensure they are properly protecting people.

In a statement, the Attorney-General's department said the government welcomed the proposal and was working closely with the race discrimination commissioner on developing a strategy.

'The government believes that Australia is the most successful multicultural nation on earth and believes people should be treated equally, regardless of their race or religion,' the statement said.

'As such, the government abhors racism and race-based discrimination, and believes in a prosperous, harmonious and inclusive society, in which there is absolutely no place for racism,' the statement said.

But Professor Soutphommasane said change needed to come from the top.

'If we had more diversity in our political leadership within Australian society, I suspect political leaders would be treating racism somewhat differently,' he said.

'Combatting prejudice requires leadership, so we need to have political and other leaders in our community sending a very strong message there is zero tolerance for any discrimination or prejudice or bigotry.'

'We've got to maintain our laws against racism and racial hatred, ensuring there is accountability when people do discriminate against others or incite hatred, and we've got to make sure we continue educating our society about the harms of racism and what racism can look like.'



## Activity L – The impact of racism on the experience of youth

Read the case study 'Racism in Australia' provided and answer the questions that follow.

- 1 Identify a quantitative piece of evidence that shows the level of discrimination based on ethnicity in Australia.
- 2 The article refers to the experience of xenophobia. Find a definition of this concept and link this to an example from the ABC news story.
- 3 In what ways do discriminatory experiences affect the sense of belonging for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds? Use evidence from the article and your own or other's experiences to support your answer.
- 4 Explain how articles such as this might impact on the experience of culturally and linguistically diverse young Australians.

## First Nations

First Nations Australia is comprised of many different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, each with their own language, beliefs and cultural practices. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived on this continent for tens of thousands of years – they are Australia’s first peoples.

Today there are more than 250 First Nations languages, including around 800 dialects spoken in Australia (AIATSIS, 2023). This reflects the significant diversity among First Nations cultures. It is critical to be aware of this when researching the experiences of First Nations youth. Often media representations and government agencies inaccurately represent First Nations people as one culture, which neglects the unique perspectives and characteristics of the different cultural groups.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in 2021 one-third (33.1 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were aged under 15 years compared with 17.9 per cent of non-Indigenous people in the same age group. This data reflects that our First Nations cultures have a significantly higher proportion of young people compared to other cultural categories. This illustrates the importance of listening to stories from First Nations youth that capture the distinctive challenges they face, and their hopes for the future.

Despite this diversity, there are important commonalities in the personal experiences of First Nations youth today. These include injustices associated with racism and legacies of violence and dispossession, poor access to health and education, and economic disadvantage. They are also bound by connection to culture and Country, thriving and engaging in schooling, and developing together in strength within their communities.



You can learn more about Australia’s first peoples and their languages at the AIATSIS website, and review ABS statistics about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- 🔗 [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies \(AIATSIS\), 2023. ‘Australia’s First Peoples’.](https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/australias-first-peoples) aiatsis.gov.au/explore/australias-first-peoples
- 🔗 [ABS, 2022. ‘Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians’.](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/latest-release) abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/latest-release



## Activity M – First Nations youth

- 1 Watch the video ‘Reclaiming our right to education’ (6 min), about the educational experiences of First Nations youth, prepared by the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC), and then answer the following questions.

🔗 [niyec.com/our-story](https://niyec.com/our-story)

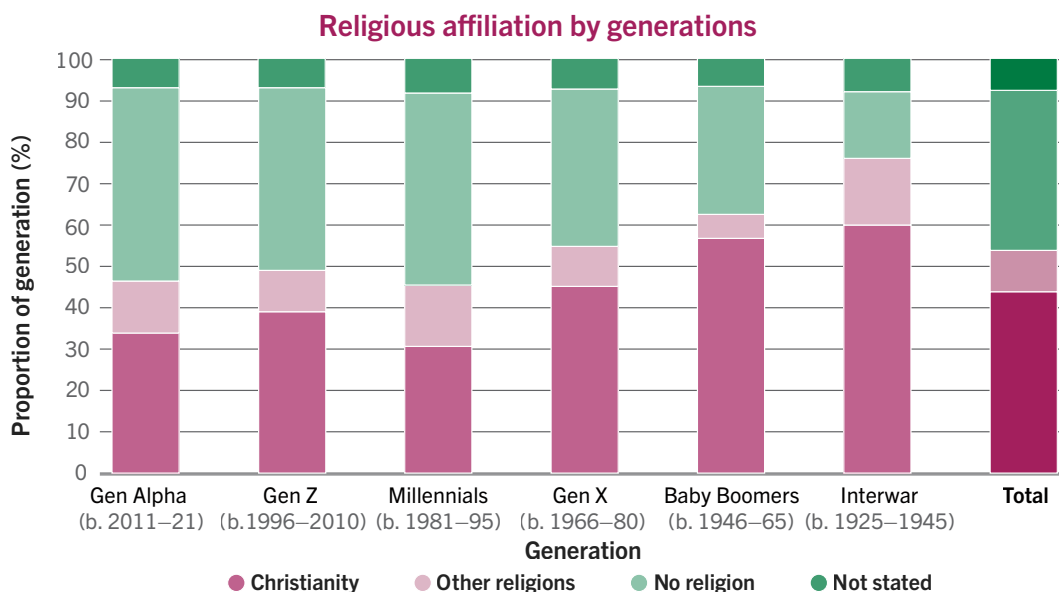
Remember to include quotes (and quotation marks) in your responses to show that you’ve collected supporting evidence.

- a What positive impacts of education for First Nations youth were discussed in the video?
  - b Explain what was meant by education previously representing ‘exclusion and oppression’ for First Nations peoples.
  - c Explain the significance of family as a guiding influence for the First Nations young people as articulated in the video.
  - d What current challenges to education were explored in the video?
  - e What hopes for the future were shared by the young people featured in the video?
- 2 Read the 2023 ABC article ‘Indigenous young people make possum skin cloak to help elders with safe passage to the Dreamtime’, about the connection to culture, and then answer the following questions.
- [abc.net.au/news/2023-06-21/indigenous-youth-make-possum-skin-cloak-elders-dreamtime/102501550](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-21/indigenous-youth-make-possum-skin-cloak-elders-dreamtime/102501550)
- a According to the article, what is the nature and purpose of possum skin cloaks?
  - b Who participated in the five-week program? Include a reference to culture, age and location in your answer.
  - c Describe two benefits of the program for the First Nations youth.
  - d In what way did the workshops assist with connection to culture?

## Religion

Religion can have a big impact on how young people see and experience the world around them. **Religion** refers to a set of beliefs and practices that involve the worship of a higher power or powers and often provide a moral code for believers to follow. According to the 2021 ABS Census, there has been a significant increase in religious diversity in Australia, with fewer people identifying as Christian and more people reporting ‘no religion’. Christianity remains the most common religion, with 43.9 per cent of the population identifying as Christian, but this has decreased from over 60 per cent in 2011. The proportion of people reporting ‘no religion’ has increased to almost 40 per cent, up from 22 per cent in 2011. Other religions, such as Hinduism and Islam, have also grown, but still make up a small proportion of the population.

**Religion** is a set of beliefs and practices that involve the worship of a higher power or powers and often provide a moral code for believers to follow.



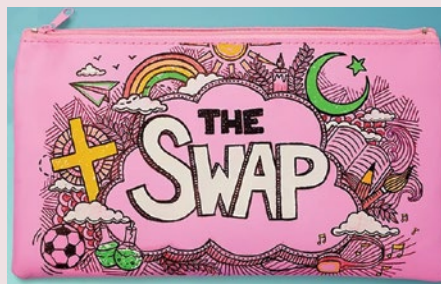
Adapted from table ‘Christian affiliation by generation, 2021’. ABS, 2022.  
[abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia](https://abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia)

For some young people, religion plays a crucial role in their identity formation, socialisation and sense of belonging. It can provide a sense of community and support, as well as a guide for moral and ethical decision-making. However, religion can also be a source of conflict and tension, particularly if young people from different religious backgrounds are unable to find shared interests or if they experience discrimination or prejudice because of their faith.



## The Swap: Bridging cultural divides

*The Swap* is a three-part documentary series centred around a social experiment involving 12 students and families from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, who swap schools and homes to break down social barriers and build greater acceptance and understanding between communities. The series explores the potential for the experiment to backfire as cultures collide, but also observes the positive impacts of the experience on the participants, and its potential to inform national curriculum and transform lives. The series was produced by Southern Pictures for SBS, and premiered in 2023, with each episode available to stream via SBS On Demand with subtitles in multiple languages.



Promotional image for *The Swap*.  
Credit: Southern Pictures/SBS, 2023.

Watch the series and learn more here:

- [sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-series/the-swap](https://sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-series/the-swap)
- [sbs.com.au/learn/resources/the-swap-bridging-cultures](https://sbs.com.au/learn/resources/the-swap-bridging-cultures)



## Activity N – Documentary analysis

Watch the three-part 2023 SBS documentary series *The Swap*, and then prepare a short report based on the following focus questions:

- 1 Write a short profile about one student from each of the three schools.
- 2 Describe the cultural diversity, activities and shared interests of the different school communities.
- 3 Outline two stereotypes that existed prior to the school swap. Describe how these views changed over time.
- 4 Explain how religion influenced the experience of the young people's lives.
- 5 Provide two examples that show the young people have common experiences.
- 6 What do you believe were the key learnings from this social experiment?

### Subcultures

**Subcultures** are groups of (young) people sharing common characteristics, interests, norms, values, ethnicity, social status or gender identity. These groups may involve face-to-face or online communities with shared ways of life, dress, interests or beliefs. Examples of subcultures include hip hop, goths, punks, hippies, surfers, gamers, cosplayers and eshays.

**Subcultures** are groups whose members share characteristics or interests, such as norms, values, ethnicity, social status or sexual and/or gender identity.

Sociologists believe that exploring subcultures is a way for young people to work on their identity and find belonging. This exploration can provide a positive sense of self-esteem and enjoyment for group members as they interact with others who share their interests and values. However, it has also been observed that certain youth subcultures – such as punk, goth and hip-hop – have been subject to stereotyping and commercialisation, resulting in a loss of their unique character and values.



Seapunk emerged as a subculture on Tumblr in the early 2010s, characterised by an interest in 3D art, allusions to 90s popular culture, aquatic-themed fashion and iconography – as pictured above. Credit: w.wiki/6uAr



## Activity 0 – Youth subculture representation

- 1 Create a magazine or video that represents a specific youth subculture of your choice. Ensure that your representation includes the following elements:
  - a at least two articles or video segments that discuss issues relevant to your subculture. For example, if your chosen subculture is the surfer subculture, your articles or segments might focus on issues such as plastics in the ocean or supporting surfers with disabilities.
  - b a self-help page or quiz that relates to your subculture. This could include advice on how to achieve a certain style or tips on how to improve skills associated with the subculture.
  - c at least four advertisements from corporations that would support your magazine or video. These should be relevant to your subculture and reflect the interests of your target audience.
  - d a pitch that justifies why your magazine or video is needed for young people interested in your chosen subculture. This pitch should outline the benefits of your magazine or video, including how it will provide valuable information and entertainment for your target audience.

### Social factors

**Social factors** can have a significant impact on the experiences of young people, affecting their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Living in areas without access to sufficient resources, for example, can hinder a young person's ability to thrive and meet their needs. Additionally, social factors such as gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation can intersect with societal expectations and norms, posing unique challenges for different groups of young people. It is important to understand how these social factors can impact the experiences of young people in order to empower them to pursue their dreams and goals, while also ensuring that they are protected and supported.

**Social factors** refer to a broad range of variables, including level of education, employment opportunities, physical and psychological health, geographic location, gender and age.

## Gender and sexual orientation

Australian youth are assigned gender roles beginning in childhood, which are reinforced in the family and the media. **Gender** influences their education and employment choices. According to the On Track 2022 report conducted by the Victorian Department of Education, males were more likely to commence an apprenticeship or traineeship, while females were more likely to pursue further education. This reflects a pattern of intergenerational social norms, but over time this pattern is changing.

**Gender** refers to an individual's internal sense of their identity, which may or may not align with the sex assigned to them at birth, with common examples being female, male or non-binary.

In response to persistent gender imbalance in the construction and manufacturing industries, a new program has been introduced in Ballarat to address the shortage of skilled workers and encourage young women to consider careers in trades such as carpentry, electrical work and plumbing. The 'Women in Trade' and 'Try a Trade Day' programs have already been run at four schools in the region. The programs start with a conversation about gender stereotypes, followed by safety briefings and hands-on activities. Several **organisations** participate, providing mentoring and career pathway options for girls. One early participant, Hannah Pearce, secured a full-time painting and decorating apprenticeship. The program empowers girls and promotes gender equality in traditionally male-dominated fields, aiming to enhance their youth experience (van Es, 2022).

An **organisation** is a group of individuals or entities that work together towards a common goal or objective.



In Australia today, young people have a deeper understanding of diversity in gender identity, **sexual identity** and sexual orientation. Young people may describe themselves as male, female, nonbinary, heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex,

**Sexual identity** refers to an individual's sexual orientation or preference for emotional and sexual relationships with people of a particular gender; it encompasses a range of identities, including heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual and asexual, among others.

queer, questioning or an array of other descriptors.

Although there is increasing social acceptance of non-cisgender, non-heterosexual identities, some LGBTIQ+ young people still face significant challenges.

In 2019, the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health, and Society at La Trobe University, with support from Rainbow Health Victoria and Rainbow Network, asked 6418 LGBTIQ+ people aged 14 to 21 about their experiences with education, homelessness, harassment, assault, mental health, community connections and more. Some of the key findings from the report (Hill et al., 2021), were:

- 60.2 per cent reported having felt unsafe or uncomfortable at secondary school in the previous year due to their sexuality or gender identity. This was also true for 33.8 per cent of those at TAFE and 29.2 per cent of those at university.
- in the previous year 40.8 per cent had experienced verbal harassment, 22.8 per cent sexual harassment or assault and 9.7 per cent physical harassment or assault

- 81 per cent reported high or very high levels of psychological distress
- 10.1 per cent had attempted suicide in the past year, and 25.6 per cent had attempted suicide at some point in their lives
- 23.6 per cent had experienced homelessness, and for 11.5 per cent it was in the past year. This was often directly related to family rejection.

Gender-diverse young people were found to have disproportionately poor health outcomes across most of the study's findings, highlighting the urgent need for better support and resources for LGBTIQA+ youth (Latrobe University, 2021).



## Activity P – The experiences of young transgender people

- Read the ABC article 'The long and storied history of transgender people in Australia and beyond' and review the material on teenagers at TransHub's website, before completing the questions that follow:
    - [abc.net.au/news/2023-03-03/the-long-history-of-transgender-people-in-australia-and-beyond/102037662](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-03/the-long-history-of-transgender-people-in-australia-and-beyond/102037662)
    - [transhub.org.au](https://transhub.org.au)
  - Describe some of the challenges faced by transgender young people when they come out to their families and communities.
  - Outline the current rules around accessing gender affirmation hormone treatment for people under 18 in Australia.
  - Discuss the role of the Family Court of Australia in the process of accessing gender affirmation hormone treatment for young people.
  - In what ways can society better support the wellbeing of young transgender people?
- Extend your learning by researching the legal and social rights of transgender individuals in Victoria. Use the following sites as a starting point:
    - [humanrights.vic.gov.au/hub/lgbtiq-rights/](https://humanrights.vic.gov.au/hub/lgbtiq-rights/)
    - [tgv.org.au](https://tgv.org.au)
  - Discuss in small groups how the legal and social rights of transgender youth relate to social factors such as gender, age, ethnicity and/or homelessness.
- Based on the research methods explored earlier in the chapter, develop a research plan to respectfully investigate the experiences of Australian transgender youth. Describe how and why at least two different methods will be used.
- Reflect on and brainstorm ideas for creating a more inclusive and equitable community for transgender youth.
  - Reflect on your own biases and beliefs about gender identity. Write a paragraph describing how your thinking has shifted since you have become a student of sociology. Try to reference the sociological imagination in your reflection.



Christine Jorgensen, pictured here with her partner Howard Knox in 1959, became famous around the world as an entertainer, author, activist and lecturer on the experience of being transgender.



## Economic factors

**Economic factors** can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of Australian youth. Families with irregular or insufficient incomes are more likely to experience poor health and educational outcomes, making it challenging for young people to attain a basic quality of life. Limited financial resources also create barriers for youth in accessing education and healthcare. This leads to further financial hardship, creating a cycle of disadvantage that can span many generations.

**Economic factors** relate to the impact social class and socioeconomic status have on people within society.

According to the 'Poverty in Australia 2023, report by UNSW Sydney and Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), people in households relying on Youth Allowance are in the deepest poverty, with incomes averaging \$390 per week below the poverty line. ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie has reported that many people relying on unemployment and parenting payments live in poverty, thus demonstrating that support for unemployed young people or single parents raising children is grossly inadequate. In the same report, Professor Carla Treloar from UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre noted that the depth of poverty experienced by young people on Youth Allowance is unacceptable, stating that young people starting their working lives are being left behind (UNSW, 2023). These observations by prominent academics reinforces the profound impact that access to financial resources has on the experience of youth.

“23% of all people experiencing homelessness were aged from 12 to 24 years.”

ABS, 2021. 'Estimating Homelessness: Census, 2021'.

A further economic factor that has influenced the lived experience of young people is that of evolution of the gig economy. The introduction of the gig economy has had a profound impact on employment practices and individuals' personal lives. The gig economy involves people using online platforms to access short-term work based on their ability to complete specific tasks or services. While this has helped some people to access flexible forms of work, it has also resulted in income instability and an erosion of workplace rights: for example, the provision of sick pay, superannuation payments and family leave.

Want to learn more about the 'gig economy'? Start here:

- 🔗 Listen to the (30 min) segment 'Students in poverty, unpacking climate policy and why young sports stars struggle' on Triple J's Hack program.  
[abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/hack/102077162](http://abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/hack/102077162)
- 🔗 Read the University of Melbourne's 2022 article 'New research reveals how gig economy platforms are transforming our cities'.  
[unimelb.edu.au/newsroom/news/2022/july/new-research-reveals-how-gig-economy-platforms-are-transforming-our-cities](http://unimelb.edu.au/newsroom/news/2022/july/new-research-reveals-how-gig-economy-platforms-are-transforming-our-cities)
- 🔗 Read The Conversation 2023 article 'Insomnia, headaches, and stomach pains: the hidden costs of gig workers' flexibility'.  
[theconversation.com/insomnia-headaches-and-stomach-pains-the-hidden-costs-of-gig-workers-flexibility-198027](http://theconversation.com/insomnia-headaches-and-stomach-pains-the-hidden-costs-of-gig-workers-flexibility-198027)



## 'I go for the food': What children and young people told us about why they steal from houses

Natalie Gately and Suzanne Rock, 2022. "I go for the food": What children and young people told us about why they steal from houses'. *The Conversation*.  
[theconversation.com/i-go-for-the-food-what-children-and-young-people-told-us-about-why-they-steal-from-houses-192857](https://theconversation.com/i-go-for-the-food-what-children-and-young-people-told-us-about-why-they-steal-from-houses-192857)

The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show theft and burglary are among the most common offences committed by young people.

We wanted to find out from children why they committed burglary, which can exact a huge financial and emotional toll on victims.

Our study, recently published in the journal *Youth Justice*, involved interviews with children presenting at the Perth Children's Court who reported they had burgled.

We interviewed 50 children between the ages of 11 and 17 years who told us why they stole, what they stole, and how they learnt how to burgle.

We found children rarely planned or 'staked' premises. They usually committed burglaries on the spur of the moment with friends, and generally to steal items they felt they needed – like food or drugs – out of boredom or while drunk or high.

Most young people chose a target that had 'signs' of being an empty home (such as no cars in the driveway). This was commonly tested by a young person knocking on a door.

Other ways homes were picked was when they saw items they wanted through windows or in gardens that were 'just sitting there' and, in their words, 'just there for us to take'.

The time spent selecting a target was minimal, with many tending to favour places that could obviously be accessed easily via, for example, an open window or door.

### More need than greed

Children's reasoning for why they burgled was more out of need than greed.

One child said they stole because they were 'poor' and 'had nothing'.

Eight of the 50 children we spoke to said they only stole food, often looking for fresh food from the fridge to eat in the moment, and frozen or tinned items to take home to family.

When asked why they stole, one child said: 'I had nothing to eat.' Another told us: 'I got stuff from the freezer. I go for the food, but I didn't take anything else.'

Commonly stolen items included money, drugs, jewellery, food and mobile phones. Most young people reported keeping the items or gifting them to friends or family.

Those items not kept were often sold to drug dealers, with one child telling us they stole 'just what was around: jewellery, money, anything really that we could sell to get drugs.'

### Drug use and burglary

Many children reported stealing to obtain drugs or money to buy drugs. One child targeted a certain place because 'I knew they had dope in there.' Another said they stole because 'I needed the fix.'

In one case, a child was 'employed' to steal from drug dealers' homes known to have large quantities of drugs and money.

Others reported only burgling because they were intoxicated. As one child put it: 'I was just drunk and being stupid.'



Some children burgled because they were looking for food. Credit: Shutterstock.

### Motivations for burglary

We sorted these young burglars into categories based on their motivation (using categories developed by previous criminology research).

The majority fell into the 'opportunistic' category. These were characterised by the opportunity posed to the child, such as an open window in an affluent area or valuables in view. As one child put it: 'It was just out of the blue.' Another told us: 'We just walked into a house.' Another said: 'I just saw toys and stole the toys. No, it wasn't planned – just walked past and that's it.'

Another category – 'searchers' – said that while they had intended to burgle, they had not picked a property and would instead roam the streets looking for a house. As one child put it: 'We don't plan it, we just knock on the people's door and if they aren't home we go in.'

Although intention to burgle was present for children in this group, the element of planning was minimal. There was overlap with 'opportunists', as they targeted premises based on the ease of entry without being caught.

The background lives of these children were often chaotic. Most were not attending school regularly, if at all. Most had learnt to burgle from family members. As one child put it: '[I've] been there and seen it; Dad used to take me along with him.'

Most committed their burglaries in groups with friends (78 per cent) or family members (10 per cent).

This snapshot of young burglars calls for a better understanding of the reasons for 'food-only' theft as a matter of urgency.

These findings could also be used to support measures such as Youth Drug Courts to address the underlying drug behaviours that contribute to criminal behaviours.

We need holistic interventions that address the economic and social disadvantages that drive children to burgle.



### Activity Q – The impact of poverty on young people

Read the article 'I go for the food' provided and then complete the following questions.

- 1 According to the article, what are three reasons for young people committing theft and burglary?
- 2 Explain how economic disadvantage contributes to the incidence of burglary among young people. Support your answer with quotes from the article.
- 3 Discuss how schools and community groups can better understand and address the underlying factors that lead to youth offending. Use evidence from the article to support your response.
- 4 Complete the following reflection exercise in groups, or as a journal entry.
  - a Imagine that your home has been burgled. Think about how you would feel if you returned home to find your favourite and valuable things gone.
  - b Next, put your empathy shoes on. Try to connect with the point of view of the youth offender. Imagine how they might feel if they had no food and were forced to steal to get by.
  - c Finally, pretend that the offender is part of your school community. What could you do to discreetly support this person? What do you think their practical needs might be?

## Technological factors

**Technological factors** encompass a wide range of advancements in tools, equipment and systems that impact various aspects of human life, such as communication, education, employment and socialisation. **Information and communications technology (ICT)** is a rapidly progressing form of technology that refers to the equipment and machinery used to store and distribute information, such as computers, mobile phones, the Internet and social media. While ICT has provided young people with new ways to connect and extend their friendships, it has also exposed them to unprecedented amounts of somewhat unmediated information, including adult material such as R-rated movies and games, gambling websites and pornography.

**Technological factors** are advancements in tools, equipment and systems that affect diverse facets of human life, such as communication, education, employment and socialisation.

**Information and communications technology (ICT)** is the equipment and machinery that is used to store and/or distribute information: for example, computers, mobile phones, Internet and social media.

One negative consequence of the increased use of ICT by young people is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined as the deliberate psychological, emotional and/or physical harassment that occurs through the use of technology; it can include exclusion from peer groups, intimidation, extortion, embarrassment, harassment and violence (or threats of violence). A quick chat with a friend or classmate will reveal that many young people have experienced cyberbullying.

Social media has become an essential part of all our lives today. Unfortunately, for young people the impact on their mental health can be harmful. In 2021 Associate Professor Alina Morawska from the University of Queensland reported that teenagers actively using social media have 'increased exposure to harm, social isolation, depression, anxiety and cyber-bullying'. It was noted that increased social media use can intensify symptoms of depression and anxiety, exacerbate existing low self-esteem, and make teens vulnerable to feeling bad about themselves. This is triggered by untrue or unrealistic messaging from celebrities and influencers. However, social media can also provide benefits, such as feeling part of a social group, communicating with others for emotional support, and finding entertainment, distraction and information about social justice issues (The University of Queensland, 2021 and Bahr 2023).

“Simon Copland recently completed a PhD at the Australian National University in the school of sociology, with a focus on men’s rights groups and far-right extremism on social media. ‘Social media provides a place for people to come together and meet people they might not normally encounter, so if you’re a disaffected young person . . . you can go online and find almost any community and any explanation for why you’re facing the struggles you might be facing,’ he said.”

Jessica Bahr, 2023. 'How young is 'too young' for children to be using social media?'. SBS News. [sbs.com.au/news/article/how-young-is-too-young-for-kids-to-be-using-social-media/xrxnzaobw](https://sbs.com.au/news/article/how-young-is-too-young-for-kids-to-be-using-social-media/xrxnzaobw)

“Six out of ten teens have been exposed to harmful content such as drug taking, suicide, self-harm and unhealthy eating, gory images and violent sexual material but only four out of 10 parents are aware ...

Encouragingly, children are more knowledgeable and empowered to utilise tools to block people, delete messages, change their privacy settings or report material to a website or social media platform. ”

Inman Grant, Australia's eSafety commissioner, quoted in AAP, 2022. 'Most Australian teens have viewed harmful content online but parents in the dark'. The Guardian.  
[theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/feb/08/most-australian-teens-have-viewed-harmful-content-online-but-parents-in-dark-safer-internet-day](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/feb/08/most-australian-teens-have-viewed-harmful-content-online-but-parents-in-dark-safer-internet-day)

Want to learn more about the impact of ICT on the lives of young people? Watch the (120 min), documentary *The Social Dilemma*, available on Netflix, and explore the associated website:

[thesocialdilemma.com](https://thesocialdilemma.com)



## Activity R – Investigating the impact of technology on young people

Undertake your own research into how technology affects the lives of young people in your school community. Focus on the following areas:

- 1 Social connections: Explore how technology, such as social media, shapes how young people connect with each other. Explore the positive effects, such as staying connected and being exposed to different points of view, as well as the challenges, such as cyberbullying, impacts on wellbeing, and addiction.
- 2 Education: Explore how technology is used at school to help improve learning. Consider asking your teachers for their points of view. Outline the benefits and potential challenges of technology such as access to devices and the Internet.

Design a research plan that includes surveys, interviews and data analysis. Make sure to consider ethical guidelines, such as obtaining consent and protecting participants' privacy.

# Cyberbullying

There are ways to protect yourself

It's important to keep in mind that dealing with any type of bullying is about finding a solution that works for you.

Here are some steps you can take:



Tell them it's not ok



Get help from the police if needed



Block and report the person



Report the post or image



Seek help from a trusted adult or Kids Helpline



Make a report to esafety if the post/image doesn't get removed



Keep evidence – take some screenshots



Switch off for a while – do something else you enjoy

Advice for young people encountering cyberbullying published by Kid's Helpline, 2023.  
 Credit: [kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/cyberbullying](https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/cyberbullying)

## Bringing it all together

As you can see, there are a range of factors that have the potential to affect the lives of young people. Sometimes these factors act in isolation but often they intersect. For example, social expectations and financial resources can impact on a young person's access to and engagement with new technologies.

Furthermore, it is not unusual for an issue that affects young people to be caused or shaped by all these factors. For instance, a young person who has just settled in Australia and who does not have English as a first language (cultural factor) may need support with their schooling. As part of providing support, they may use online tools (technology) that have been provided by a charity or government agency to assist them (economic factor). The language support can help to expand the young person's friendships and connections (social factors).



## Activity 5 – Cultural, social, economic and technological factors

During this unit you may need to write an extended answer that examines the various cultural, social, economic and technological factors that contribute to differences in the experience of being young. Use the table below as a guide to organise your own evidence and examples.

Factors	Definition	Evidence and explain
Cultural		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include date, source, and quotation marks.</li><li>• Explain how you can use this information.</li></ul>
Social		
Economic		
Technological		



## Experience(s) of youth in Claireborough

Located in the eastern region of Melbourne, the (fictional) suburb of Claireborough has a diverse population of young people. Local council reports suggest that around 60 per cent of families in Claireborough have teenagers who face challenges that can affect their experiences and opportunities in life.

Claireborough is a highly diverse suburb in terms of ethnicity and religion. According to the Victorian Department of Statistics, approximately 40 per cent of the residents were born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas. Young people such as Radha, whose family migrated from Fiji, can embrace their cultural heritage while navigating the social norms and customs of their new home. Radha says, 'I enjoy celebrating Diwali as part of my Hindu faith, as well as attending Christmas parties with my friends.'



Claireborough High School implemented an antibullying program to promote a positive school culture and combat negative social dynamics. The program was developed in response to an incident where a small number of teenagers bullied younger students for wearing 'babyish' shoes to school. The school principal informed the education department that the program had significantly improved the social relationships among students, resulting in an increase in respect and inclusivity.

Economic conditions, such as high inflation and cost-of-living pressures, have had a significant impact on the lives of young people in Claireborough. Financial inequality affects many families, making it difficult to access adequate, nutritious food. Emma, who comes from a low-income family, shared that 'sometimes I come to school really hungry, which makes it hard to concentrate. Especially after lunch.' In response to this, Claireborough High School implemented a discreet food hamper program to support struggling students and their families by providing nutritious meals.

Louis, a cyber-savvy teenager from Claireborough, made a positive impact on the local environment by using social media to encourage his peers to participate in a Clean Up Australia Day event. His posts and updates received positive feedback, with many expressing excitement about taking part in the community event. The group that gathered was able to clean up the local creek adjacent to their school and they felt they made a big difference. Thanks to Louis's efforts, several young people enjoyed the company of like-minded individuals while also having fun during the event.



## Activity T – Experience of youth categorising tasks

- 1 Brainstorm and create a list of ten or more examples of cultural, social, economic or technological factors that may impact the experience of being young. Try to go beyond the examples shared in class.
- 2 Decide whether the following are cultural, social, economic or technological factors influencing the experience of youth.
  - a The negative impact of social media addiction on the mental health and self-esteem of young people
  - b A young person experiencing pressure from their family to follow a career path that they dislike
  - c The #MeToo movement raising awareness about the occurrence and impact of sexual harassment and assault among young people
  - d The rise of automation and artificial intelligence reducing or changing the future of work for young people
  - e The inability to replace a VCE maths teacher in a rural school
  - f A young person and their family being homeless, leading to interrupted schooling
  - g Technology being used to reduce gaps in education and increase access to resources for young people after a flood or bushfire
  - h Young people being more politically engaged compared to their parents' generation
- 3 Identify the cultural, social, economic and technological factors at play in the 'Claireborough' scenario provided.



## Skill development: the KLC model

As discussed in the introduction to this textbook, the 'KLC model' is a tool that can help students analyse VCE Sociology assessment questions – by identifying and thinking about the following interrelated components.

### Key knowledge words

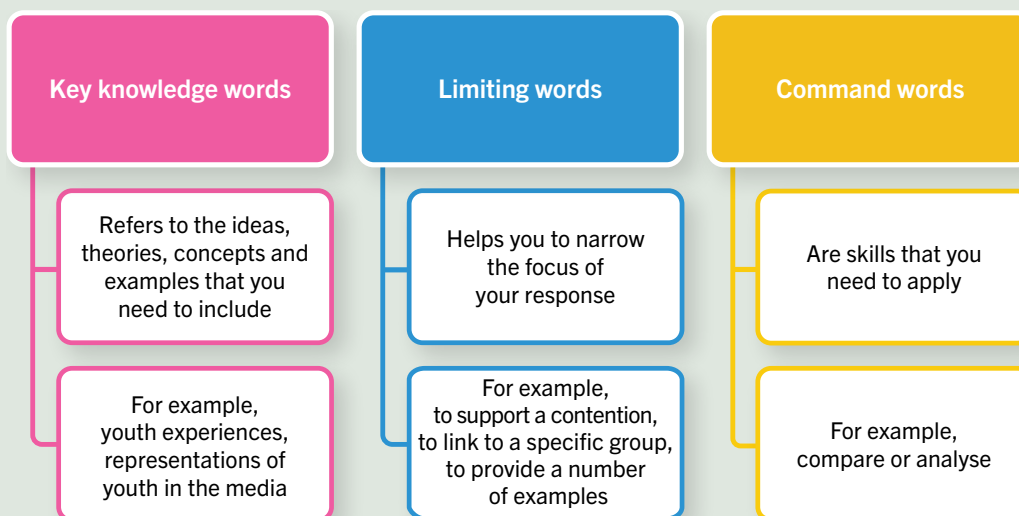
Each assessment question focuses on different parts of the course material (*Key knowledge*). For example, questions may relate to ethical methodology, or the concept of youth, or the media. When answering each question, your response needs to show that you understand the ideas, theories and concepts explored.

### Limiting words

Limiting words help you to narrow the focus of your response. They will often reference a specific sub-topic (e.g. *only the social factors leading to differences in the experience of being young*). They may also specify how many examples are required (e.g. *two or positive and/or negative examples*). Sometimes they might exclude examples: for instance, asking for the most important or recent example.

### Command (term) words

A good understanding of the VCAA command terms is important when planning a response. It will ensure that you answer the question accurately. For example, there is a significant difference between a question asking you to *describe* the experiences of two groups and one asking you to *compare* the experiences.



## Sample response using the KLC model

**Explain** how sociologists use **ethical methodology** to study human behaviour. Refer to **two** ethical guidelines in your response.

- The **key knowledge** required for this question relates to the nature of ethical methodology. This includes the different types of ethical guidelines (e.g. privacy and the confidentiality of data).
- This question **limits** the answer to two examples of ethical guidelines. Also, it is only focused on ethics, and not on analysis of data or the sociological imagination.
- The **command** term (word) is explained. For this question it means to explain 'how' ethical methodology guides human research.



Sociologists employ ethical methodology to study human behaviour, ensuring that their research adheres to ethical guidelines. This approach allows researchers to conduct their studies in an ethical and responsible manner, protecting the rights and wellbeing of the individuals involved. Two examples of ethical guidelines commonly followed by sociologists are privacy and the confidentiality of data.

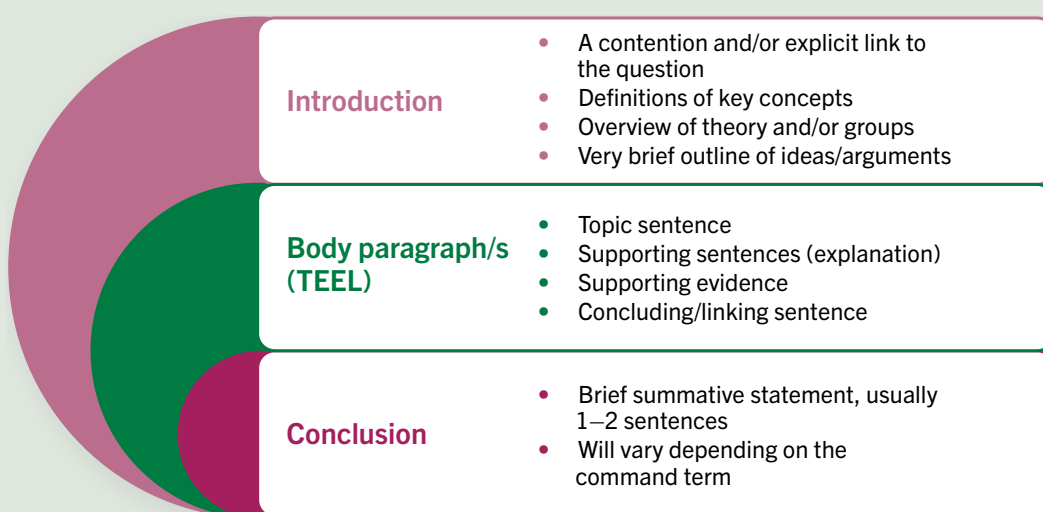
Privacy is a fundamental ethical principle in sociological research. It involves ensuring that the personal information of participants is not exposed or disclosed without their informed consent. Sociologists understand the importance of obtaining informed consent from participants before collecting data or conducting interviews. By doing so, they acknowledge the autonomy and rights of individuals to control their personal information and consent to participate in research.

Confidentiality of data is another crucial ethical guideline in sociological research. It involves safeguarding the privacy and identity of participants by ensuring that their personal information remains confidential and is not linked back to them directly. Sociologists take measures to protect the confidentiality of data by using coding systems or false names to anonymise participants' identities. This helps prevent any potential harm or negative consequences that could arise from the identification of individuals involved in the research.

Ethical guidelines such as privacy and the confidentiality of data are crucial in guiding sociologists' research practices. These guidelines not only uphold the ethical principles of respect for individuals and their rights but also help establish trust between researchers and participants. By adhering to these ethical principles, sociologists can ensure the integrity and reliability of their research findings while prioritising the wellbeing and dignity of those involved.

By adhering to guidelines such as privacy and the confidentiality of data, sociologists demonstrate a commitment to respecting individuals' autonomy, rights and privacy. By adhering to ethical principles, sociologists can conduct research that is both ethical and meaningful, contributing to our understanding of human behaviour while upholding the wellbeing and dignity of research participants.

### Extended response structure



# Revision questions

## Short-answer questions

- 1 Provide an overview of sociology as a field of study.
- 2 Provide an overview of the following theoretical perspectives: functionalism, Marxism and feminism.
- 3 Compare three different research methods that can be used in sociological investigations.
- 4 Explain the meaning of the sociological imagination with reference to the work of C. W. Mills and Evan Willis.
- 5 Explain the benefits and challenges of the use of social categories. Support your answer with examples.
- 6 Explain how the term 'youth' is a social category.
- 7 Define the concept of youth.
- 8 Describe two ethical considerations that sociologists need to consider when conducting research.
- 9 Explain how ethical considerations differ when working with vulnerable participants, such as children or people in a hospital setting.
- 10 Explain the relationship between the media and the concepts of stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.
- 11 Apply the FAPO method to one positive and one negative media representation of youth.
- 12 Explain what is meant by the experience of youth.

## Extended response questions

- 1 Explain some of the common experiences that young people share, regardless of their cultural or social background. Support your answer with examples from this area of study.
- 2 Analyse how social and economic factors have led to differing experiences of youth. Support your response with sourced evidence.
- 3 Analyse how cultural and technological factors have led to differing experiences of youth. Support your response with sourced evidence.

## Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: [sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12](http://sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12)

### Articles and reports

The Guardian, 2023. 'In Australia 1.2 million children and young people live in poverty: how can education make a difference?'  
[theguardian.com/the-smith-family-creating-better-futures/2023/jan/24/in-australia-12-million-children-and-young-people-live-in-poverty-how-can-education-make-a-difference](https://theguardian.com/the-smith-family-creating-better-futures/2023/jan/24/in-australia-12-million-children-and-young-people-live-in-poverty-how-can-education-make-a-difference)

Luca Walsh et al., 2022. '2022 Australian Youth Barometer: Understanding young people in Australia today'. Monash University Centre for Youth Policy and Education Practice.  
[monash.edu/education/cypep/research/the-2022-australian-youth-barometer-understanding-young-people-in-australia-today](https://monash.edu/education/cypep/research/the-2022-australian-youth-barometer-understanding-young-people-in-australia-today)

Mission Australia. Annual Youth Survey.  
[missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-impact-policy-advocacy/youth-survey](https://missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-impact-policy-advocacy/youth-survey)

### Books

Black Inc. *Growing Up* series: [blackincbooks.com.au/series/growing-series](https://blackincbooks.com.au/series/growing-series)

Giddens, A. and Sutton, P.W. 2021. *Essential Concepts in Sociology*. 3rd edn. Wiley.

Van Krieken et al. 2021. *Sociology*. 7th edn. Pearson.

### Podcasts

ABC. Fierce Girls. [abc.net.au/radio/programs/fierce-girls](https://abc.net.au/radio/programs/fierce-girls)

ABC Triple J. Hack. [abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack](https://abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack)

### TV programs

ABC. *BTN (Behind the News) High*. [abc.net.au/btn/high](https://abc.net.au/btn/high)

ABC. *Media Watch*. [abc.net.au/mediawatch](https://abc.net.au/mediawatch)

SBS. *The Swap*. [sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-series/the-swap](https://sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-series/the-swap)



## Videos/Films

*Crash Course Sociology*. [thecrashcourse.com/topic/sociology/](https://thecrashcourse.com/topic/sociology/)

*In My Blood It Runs*. 2019. (84 min). [inmyblooditruns.com/](https://inmyblooditruns.com/)

*The Oasis*. 2008. (88 min). [documentaryaustralia.com.au/news/the-oasis/](https://documentaryaustralia.com.au/news/the-oasis/)

*The Social Dilemma*. (120 min). [thesocialdilemma.com/](https://thesocialdilemma.com/)

University of Sydney. *Introduction to Sociology* playlist. YouTube.  
[youtube.com/@IntroductiontoSociologyChannel](https://youtube.com/@IntroductiontoSociologyChannel)

## Websites

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. [aihw.gov.au](https://aihw.gov.au)

Beyond Blue – Issues for Young People.  
[beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/young-people](https://beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/young-people)

Centre for Multicultural Youth. [cmy.net.au](https://cmy.net.au)

eSafety Commissioner – young people. [esafety.gov.au/young-people](https://esafety.gov.au/young-people)

Kids Helpline. [kidshelpline.com.au](https://kidshelpline.com.au)

Islamophobia Register Australia. [islamophobia.com.au](https://islamophobia.com.au)

The Australian Sociological Association. 2023. ‘Sociology’ and ‘Code of Ethics’  
[tasa.org.au/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=671860&module\\_id=357877](https://tasa.org.au/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=671860&module_id=357877)

Minus18: LGBTIQ+ support, education, and advocacy group. [minus18.org.au](https://minus18.org.au)

Thoughtco Sociology. [thoughtco.com/sociology-4133515](https://thoughtco.com/sociology-4133515)

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- Hall, G. S. 1904. *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. Appleton & Co.
- Hill, A. O., et al. 2021. 'Writing Themselves in 4: The Health and Wellbeing of LGBTQA+ Young People in Australia'. La Trobe University. [latrobe.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf](https://latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1198945/Writing-Themselves-In-4-National-report.pdf)
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- University of New South Wales. 2023. Poverty in Australia 2023: Who Is Affected. [povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/poverty-in-australia-2023-who-is-affected](https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/poverty-in-australia-2023-who-is-affected)
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**1.2**

**Unit 1,  
Area of study 2:**



**Family**

## “Unit 1, Area of Study 2: Family

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the institution of family and the developments influencing the experience of family.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

### Key knowledge

- 1 the sociological concept of an institution and the place and role of family as a social institution
- 2 the social construct of family, including how the concept has changed over time
- 3 contemporary family compositions
- 4 the use of sociological theories and perspectives to explain concepts and behaviours
- 5 functionalist and feminist views of family
- 6 comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology, including the experience of families in Australia compared with families in other societies
- 7 key developments influencing the experience of contemporary family life such as demographic shifts, as well as cultural, economic, technological and social developments
- 8 representations of family in the media
- 9 the influence of government policy and government assistance on the experience of family.

### Key skills

- i explain and apply sociological concepts
- ii explain the functionalist and feminist views of family
- iii explain comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology and apply it to the analysis of family
- iv analyse how key developments have influenced the experience of family life
- v identify and analyse representations of family in the media
- vi explain the influence of government policy and government assistance on the experience of family
- vii gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
- viii evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others' approaches to understanding the social world
- ix synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.



## Preface

In this area of study, students explore different definitions of the family and how families have changed over time. They consider the dynamic nature of the definition of family. In doing so, they explore various family forms as categorised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, including couples with dependents, couples only, one-parent families, sibling groups and multi-generational families. Students are introduced to comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology. They apply this methodology to the experience of family and consider a range of experiences of family life that can be found in different cultures and societies, as well as consider key influences on family life and family as a social institution. As students investigate issues relating to the changing nature of family, they may relate this to functionalist and feminist views of the family. In their exploration, they analyse media representations across print, digital and social media.

This exploration of the family may involve questions such as: What varieties of family forms are found in different cultural groups? Is there a single universal family type? What role does family play as a social institution in terms of influencing the values and behaviours of family members? Students explore issues around traditional and non-traditional forms of the family and gender roles within the family. In their exploration, they analyse media representations across print, digital and social media.

Students explore key developments influencing contemporary family life; for example, divorce rates, increasing size and ageing of the population, changes to traditional gender roles, and the growth in single-parent families and childless households. They explore the influence of government policy and assistance on the experience of family. ”

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). 2023.  
'VCE Sociology Study Design, 2024–2028'.  
[vcaa.vic.edu.au/documents/vce/sociology/2024SociologySD.docx](https://vcaa.vic.edu.au/documents/vce/sociology/2024SociologySD.docx)



# Family

## The sociological concept of an institution and the place and role of family as a social institution <sup>1.2.1</sup>

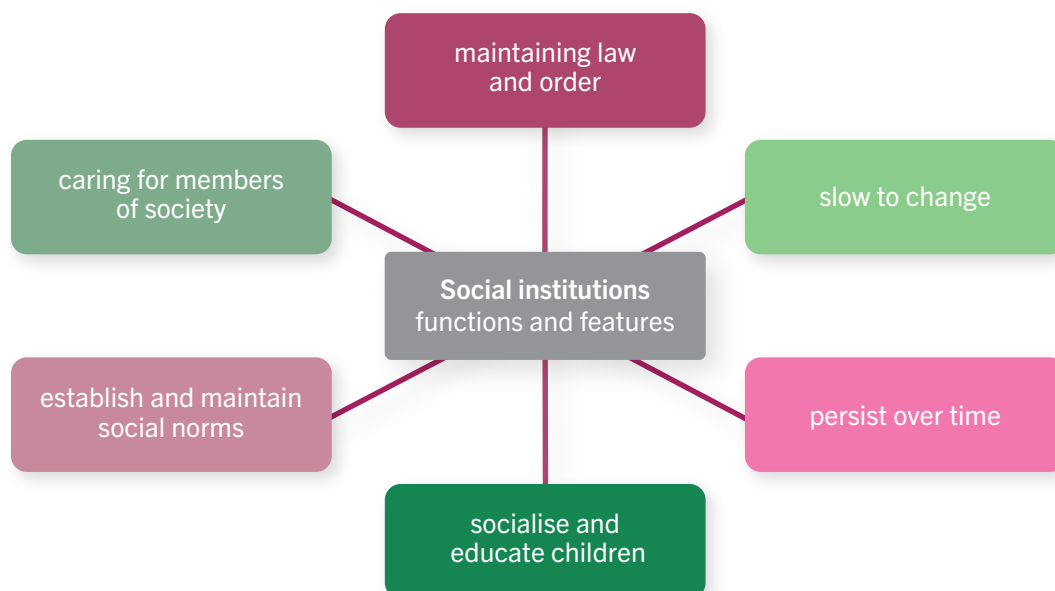
This chapter looks at the role of **family** as a social institution. The structure and purpose of 'the family' has been researched for decades. Sociologists have identified common features of the family that have existed across time and culture. But family structures have also altered over time due to a combination of social and economic factors. Before getting started with this area of study, ask an older family member or carer about what family life was like when they were young. What is similar to and different from your experience?

A **family** is a social unit consisting of people who are related to each other by blood, marriage, adoption or other forms of commitment.

### The sociological concept of an institution

Sociologists typically use the term **institution** to refer to complex social forms that reproduce themselves. These can include entities such as governments, the family, universities, hospitals, business corporations and legal systems. Their role is to meet the specific needs of members of a society: for example, providing education or care or administering taxation.

An **institution** is a complex social form that reproduces itself. Institutions include organisations and other entities that exist to meet specific needs for the members of the society.



### Key features of social institutions

Social institutions are formal groups that influence the structure and functioning of society. Some common features are outlined overleaf.

## Examples of social institutions



**The family:** Many sociologists consider the family to be a primary institution that directs all other institutions. They have observed that the family is responsible for teaching societal values to children, which helps to maintain a stable social structure.

**Education:** Education is viewed as a social institution because it provides formal learning to students of various ages. This learning reinforces a society's cultural values and social norms. It also teaches students the skills needed to contribute to the economy. A society's education systems are often interrelated with a nation's political and religious institutions.



**Religion:** The role of a religious institution is to provide a set of values and a system of social support. The level of influence a religious institution has and how engaged most people are with it varies between and within societies. Sometimes a society's political and educational institutions are based on dominant religious beliefs.

**The economy:** Economic institutions provide members of a society with a monetary base, as well as the means to produce, distribute and consume goods and services. The economy includes economic systems, markets, financial institutions and regulations. It also involves the ways that income is shared and distributed in a society.



**Politics:** Political institutions shape and guide a society's legal systems and formal decision-making processes. They attempt to mediate conflict between different interests in society (such as by providing avenues for these interests to justice), as well as facilitating the creation, application and enforcement of the laws that govern people's behaviour.



## The institution of marriage

The institution of marriage is important to consider, because it overlaps significantly with the focus of our study; marriage and marriage-like (de facto) relationships are often at the *core* of the family unit we are exploring in depth in this chapter.

Historically, marriages were legal and social arrangements often used to cement economic relationships between families (and political alliances among the aristocracy), to regulate sexual behaviour and to control the allocation of inheritance to 'legitimate' children.

In Western cultures, since the development of modern notions of romantic love in the 19th century, marriage has become more commonly viewed as a voluntary union based on love, companionship, mutual respect and shared goals. Marriage is a legally recognised institution in Australia, governed by the *Marriage Act 1961*, and was expanded to include non-heterosexual couples in 2017. The elimination of many barriers against divorce and women's financial independence, along with the



Prior to the 20th century, marriages were often arranged for reasons related to family business or financial imperatives, social class or caste, rather than romantic love, as depicted in this painting by Vassili Pukiryov, 1862 – 'The Unequal Marriage'.

gradual removal of formal differences in how married and de facto couple are treated under the law, have coincided with a gradual decline in the rates of formal, legal marriage. Some of those opting out of marriage cite concerns about the history of marriage as a means of restricting women's autonomy, as well as it having historically excluded same-sex couples. Nonetheless, marriage plays a central role in the social and cultural lives of many, providing a sense of stability and security and often serving as the foundation of family units.



## Activity A – The sociological concept of an institution

- 1 Copy and complete the following statements about the social rules relating to families. In your answers, try to be as representative of modern Australia as possible.
  - a All families are ...
  - b Fathers should ...
  - c Mothers should ...
  - d Children should ...
  - e Marriage is between ...
  - f The role of grandparents is to ...
  - g The role of the family is to ...
  - h The most important thing about family life is that it is ...
- 2 Watch the following (3 min) clip from Khan Academy, which discusses institutions:
 

[khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/society-and-culture/social-structures/v/institutions](https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/society-and-culture/social-structures/v/institutions)
- 3 Create a mind map based on your understanding of the concept of social institutions.
- 4 Working in pairs or independently, investigate the characteristics of a particular institution of your choice. You may wish to consider:
  - its name
  - its size (e.g. is it large or small?)
  - its makeup (e.g. is it abstract or physical?)
  - how long it has existed
  - its purpose (e.g. what does it do or achieve?)
  - how cultural or social norms have influenced its evolution.

You might like to present this using a mind map, or write notes or a paragraph about the characteristics of the particular institution.

### The place and role of family as a social institution

In this area of study, we will explore the family as the primary unit of **socialisation**. The family is a form of community and plays a crucial role in social functioning, as it is the first and most important social institution (or community) that individuals encounter. The family is also the place where the first emotional bonds are formed and the first experience of socialisation occurs.

It is where a child first learns social norms, values and beliefs. They learn social skills such as communication, cooperation and problem-solving to help form their social identities, and feel a sense of belonging and security that helps them to find their place as a member of the society.

**Socialisation** is the process by which individuals learn and internalise the norms, values, beliefs and behaviours of their culture or society.



Credit: Irandelson Salgueiro, 2020.  
instagram.com/tubarones

Families also provide individuals with emotional support and economic stability. It is where love and affection are ideally shared and financial needs are met. Ideally, families play an important role in the stable construction of a confident, well-rounded, successful individual who contributes positively to society.

The institution of the family is also vital in the reproduction of humankind, as it is through the family that new life is created, thus contributing to the next generation of humans who will continue to participate in and contribute to social life.

Historically, the family institution has performed several roles:

- reproduction
- food, housing and clothing
- financial stability
- economic stability
- social norms
- love and affection
- care for the elderly.



## The role of the family as a social institution

The role of the family as a social institution can be seen through the example of a 'traditional' Chinese family.

Traditional Chinese culture is underpinned by Confucian thought, in which the nuclear family is seen as a vital institution with well-defined gender roles. As Chinese culture is patriarchal, the Chinese family is a site where men learn to lead and provide for the household and women learn to obey and love. Through the family, individuals learn their role within the wider Chinese society.

Although these roles are not strictly adhered to today due to economic and social change and



A Chinese family residing in Honolulu, Hawaii, prior to American annexation, 1893. Hawaii State Archives. Source: w.wiki/6cFK

diversity in Chinese culture, children are still expected to abide by the Confucian tenet of 'filial piety' (respect for parents and ancestors) and a culture of reciprocity. This has resulted in the expansion of the nuclear family to include extended family members, as children are expected to financially support and care for their parents. In return, parents help bring up grandchildren while their child works, thus leading to multigenerational households, an increasingly popular living arrangement here in Australia as well as in China.

In addition, the Confucian idea of filial piety includes the male child being responsible for ensuring the family name and bloodline continues, alluding to the role family has in reproduction. This, compounded by China's one-child policy, has resulted in an imbalanced sex ratio in China, with 110 males born to every 100 females as of 2021.

Today, this traditional family structure is changing and adapting to ongoing cultural, political and social changes, and therefore not all families in China are traditional anymore: for instance, some are matriarchal, such as the Mosuo people of southwestern China.

*Compiled from the following sources:*

- 🔗 Chara Scroope and Nina Evason, 2017. 'Chinese culture: Family'. SBS Cultural Atlas. [culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/chinese-culture/chinese-culture-family](http://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/chinese-culture/chinese-culture-family)
- 🔗 C. Textor, 2022. 'Sex ratio in China in 2021, by age group'. Statista. [statista.com/statistics/282119/china-sex-ratio-by-age-group](https://www.statista.com/statistics/282119/china-sex-ratio-by-age-group)
- 🔗 Rhiannon Stevens, 2022. 'As rents and mortgage repayments rise, is multi-generational living the secret to thriving in tough economic times?'. ABC News. [abc.net.au/news/2022-08-06/surviving-cost-of-living-pressures-multi-generational-living/101233868](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-06/surviving-cost-of-living-pressures-multi-generational-living/101233868)



## Activity B – The place and role of family as a social institution

- 1 Working in pairs or independently, discuss the purpose of the family in Australia today.
- 2 With reference to the list of roles of the family institution provided, which do you think have changed most significantly in the past 20 years? You may consider answering the question with reference to families in Australia or elsewhere.
- 3 Working in pairs or independently, discuss the extent to which you think there is a 'typical' family in modern Australia. You may wish to refer to the information about family in SBS's Cultural Atlas for additional material:
  - 🔗 [culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/australian-culture/australian-culture-family](http://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/australian-culture/australian-culture-family)
- 4 Listen to ABC Conversations' 'The forgotten children of the empire' (2023) for a true story about children who grew up without a family.
  - 🔗 [abc.net.au/radio/programs/conversations/margaret-humphreys-child-migrants-trust/101974530](https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/conversations/margaret-humphreys-child-migrants-trust/101974530)

Working in pairs, independently or as a class, imagine a world where there are no families:

- a What would this world look like?
- b How would society function?
- c Where would children grow up?
- d With whom would children grow up?

## The social construct of family, including how the concept has changed over time <sup>1.2.2</sup>

Berger and Luckmann, in their 1967 book *The Social Construction of Reality*, discussed the idea that when individuals and social groups interact within society, concepts are agreed upon and formed over time. These social concepts are so embedded in society members' everyday lives that they become our reality and are accepted as cultural knowledge. They suggest that everything we know as

true in society is a result of social groups agreeing on its meaning. Sociologists call this a **social construct**. For example, your school is a school because we as a society have agreed that it is a school and not simply a building. Similarly, in recent times the pronouns they/ them have taken on a new meaning as a result of collective consensus on a new social convention.

The concept of the family is also a social construct, meaning that it is an idea created and defined by society. Shaped by social norms, beliefs and values, social constructs can vary across cultures and change over time. As such, the consensus on what is now considered a family has evolved from the quintessential father, mother and their biological children to encompass a broader range of family types, including same-sex parent families, single-parent families, blended families and families created through assisted reproductive technologies.

Depending on the context, the role of the family in different societies also varies. As discussed in the previous case study, underpinning a traditional Chinese family is the idea of ‘filial piety’ (duty to one’s parents and ancestors), whereas modern Australian families are generally formed based on ideologies of love. This influences how family structures differ in the two nations.

Consider the definition of family by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS):

“two or more people, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household.”

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021.  
[abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/glossary/f](https://abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/glossary/f)

This definition of a family *might* be considered relatively narrow, given its claim that at least one person in the family has to be 15 years or over, and that relations between members must be either genetic or parental in some sense. This contrasts with emerging ideas around the concept of **families of choice**, where groups of individuals who are not related biologically or in a parent–child relationship nonetheless form a unit with ‘family-like’ intimacies and commitments. These relationships can be romantic or platonic and are often based on shared values, interests and life experiences. The idea of a chosen family first developed in the gay rights movement but has grown in popularity among other communities.

While traditional definitions of a family are useful as a starting point to discuss the concept of family, it is important to note how this definition has expanded to reflect contemporary society. This will form a key theme within this area of study.



A **social construct** is a concept that is created and defined by society or a particular social group, rather than existing naturally; it is shaped by social norms, beliefs and values, and can vary across cultures and time.

**Families of choice** are close-knit relationships between individuals who are not biologically related but who have formed deep bonds through their mutual support, care and love.





## Changes to the concept of family in Australia over time

Prior to the emergence and eventual predominance of the nuclear family in the early 20th century, the extended family was the dominant family structure in Australia and other similar countries. This typically included multiple generations living together in one household or in close proximity, and often involved parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins sharing resources and responsibilities, including child-rearing and economic activities. Families were historically the main economic unit prior to and during the industrial revolution, especially in rural areas – children might be expected to work together on the family farm, learn the skills of their parents and carry on their work as they entered old age. Significant social changes in the 19th and 20th centuries, including increased access to education, agricultural productivity and the growth of towns and cities, meant opportunities for adult children (along with their partners and children) could be found outside the family home or township. Simultaneously, modern attitudes evolved, favouring individualism, independence and privacy; together, this led to the nuclear family gradually replacing the extended family as the dominant family structure in Australia and similar societies in the early 20th century.

Since the 1970s, however, the nuclear family has become significantly less dominant. An increase in divorce and remarriage has created households that incorporate step-parents, step-children and step-siblings. The number of unwed parents has also risen, with many more children being raised in single-parent households. And as stigma around same-sex relationships has diminished, it has become more common for same-sex couples to have children or for families to incorporate LGBTIQ+ relationships within their households. There is also further diversity as 49 per cent of Australians have at least one parent born overseas (2016 Census). These multicultural families may have cultural customs that are particular to their country of birth. For example, it is more common to find extended family members living with the nuclear family in migrant households.

While the traditional family structure is no longer a realistic social standard, the family remains fundamentally important to people throughout their life. Individualism is highly valued and Australians usually encourage their family members to follow their personal aspirations. Children are often taught to subconsciously think of themselves as ‘special’ or ‘unique’ as they grow up. The cultural idea pervades: you are what you make of yourself and who you choose to be. People are expected to be self-reliant, self-determining and responsible for their choices.

Research shows that the extended family still plays a large role in most Australians’ lives. They add to an individual’s support network, often providing financial support, housing or job opportunities. The general preference for most Australian families is to have a small family with one to three children. Parents often make strategic choices about their children’s education to secure a good economic future for them. Most Australian parents do not use corporal punishment but instead discipline their children by enforcing consequences for their actions – for example, withdrawing privileges for bad behaviour and rewarding good behaviour. Using violence towards one’s family members is widely considered unacceptable in Australia.

In Australia, gender does not necessarily dictate a person’s role or duty in the family. Broadly, and in a formal and legal sense, women are considered equal to men, and to some considerable extent can choose the nature of their contribution to the dynamics of a household. Nonetheless, a disproportionate amount of the unpaid labour associated with raising children and domestic labour falls on women, which is one of a number of factors contributing to many fewer women than men being engaged in full-time employment. Industries which tend to employ more women than men tend to pay less on average; women’s careers also tend to be more interrupted. Over the course of a lifetime, this reduces their relative earnings and real capacity for financial independence.

Australians are generally waiting until later in life to have a family and the average ages at which family life events occur (e.g. marriage, children, retirement) are rising. This reflects

the growing individualist orientation of both men and women – particularly in the middle class – to want to establish a career for themselves and travel before starting a family. Women tend to be much older when they have their first child than in previous generations. They typically do so between 25 and 34 years of age (the median age is 29). In vitro fertilisation (IVF) is becoming more common. People are also working for longer: it is now common for people aged over 65 to remain in the workforce.

Adapted from: 'Australia culture: Family'. SBS Cultural Atlas.  
[culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/australian-culture/australian-culture-family](http://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/australian-culture/australian-culture-family)



## Activity C – The social construct of family

- 1 List as many different types of families as you can. You don't need to know the precise terms (e.g. 'nuclear family' or 'blended family') – instead, describe who is *in* the family (e.g. 'two elderly brothers', 'a mum, dad and two kids').
- 2 Speak to someone in your family or someone from an older generation and ask them how they think the concept of the family has changed over time. Record your insights in note form and/or write a paragraph about what you have learnt.
- 3 Do you think the concept of the family has very specific roles (e.g. mum looks after the children, dad is the breadwinner, etc.) or are these roles more fluid? In your answer you may wish to draw on examples of how people's roles in the family have changed over time and/or in different societies.
- 4 Discuss why it is challenging to accurately define the concept of the family.
- 5 How are families portrayed in the media today? Think about what you have seen on television shows, and in newspaper articles and documentaries.

### How family has changed over time

Now that we've established the ways in which the institution of family is a social construct, we can look at how families have changed over time in Australia. In addition to the traditional nuclear family, various forms of families have emerged as a result of political, economic, technological and social changes.

For example, in Australia, the 2021 census reported a growing number of same-sex couples, a direct result of amendments made to the *Marriage Act* in 2017. Since the first half of the 20th century, patriarchal family structures with rigid gender roles have become less prevalent; in the wake of changes spurred by the feminist movement, the country now records its highest proportion of single-parent households ever.

In the past few decades, the family as an institution has evolved and diversified. Hence, it is important to explore the contemporary family compositions that have emerged.

“The 2021 Census counted more than 5.5 million (5 552 973) couple families, of which 53 per cent have children living with them (53 per cent) and 47 per cent do not have children living with them (47 per cent), according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today.

The proportion of couple families without children living with them has been growing steadily, with only 41 per cent of couple families not having children living with them in 1996 (40.8 per cent).

For the first time, the Census recorded more than a million one parent families (1 068 268), of which four out of every five of those parents were female. As a proportion of families this is increasing slowly, from under 15 per cent (14.5 per cent) in 1996 to nearly 16 per cent (15.9 per cent) in 2021.

In 2021, the Census counted over 2.5 million (2 550 284) families with children under the age of 15 years.

Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Statistician, said 'The 2021 Census data provides a fascinating glimpse into the structure and changing profile of Australian families.

'We think there may be some COVID-19 impacts on child care arrangements, with the Census seeing a reduction in people aged over 55 years looking after other people's children, for example their grandchildren.

'In 2016, the Census saw an increase of nearly 140 000 people (137 227) over 55 who look after other people's children to more than 825 000. However in 2021, we have seen that figure drop by 50 000 to under 775 000.'

The variety in make-up of Australian families is reflected in the richness of the 2021 Census data presented by the ABS today.

In the 2021 Census, 46.5 per cent of Australians over the age of 15 were in a registered marriage (9 665 708). Following the 2017 amendments to the *Marriage Act 1961*, which enabled marriage equality, nearly 25 000 same sex marriages (23 914) were counted in the 2021 Census.

More than 1.8 million people are divorced (1 831 952) and over 600 000 are separated (674 590). Over one million Australians are widowed (1 029 142) and, of these, eight out of ten are female.

The information collected by the Census is used to inform decisions about local services to support families in all walks of life, including local playgroups, health care, schools and transport. ”

ABS, 2022. '2021 Census shows changing face of Australia's 6 million families'. [abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/2021-census-shows-changing-face-australias-6-million-families](https://abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/2021-census-shows-changing-face-australias-6-million-families)



## Back in Time for Dinner

*Back in Time for Dinner* is a reality-style television series produced by the ABC that takes a contemporary family and transports them 'back in time', exploring how food, family life and the home have changed over the past six decades. Each week, the family experiences life as it was in a different decade, from the 1950s to the present day, learning about the cultural, social and political events that shaped Australia's food and culture, and the nation as a whole. They cook and eat meals from each era and participate in various activities that were typical of each decade. The program aims to show how food and family life have changed over the years and highlights the challenges faced by families during each decade.




Promotional image from  
*Back in Time for Dinner*, 2018. ABC.  
[iview.abc.net.au/show/back-in-time-for-dinner](http://iview.abc.net.au/show/back-in-time-for-dinner)



## Activity D – How the concept of family has changed over time

- 1 Read Brendan Churchill's 2018 article 'Mum, dad and two kids no longer the norm in the changing Australian family', published in The Conversation:

 [theconversation.com/mum-dad-and-two-kids-no-longer-the-norm-in-the-changing-australian-family-88014](https://theconversation.com/mum-dad-and-two-kids-no-longer-the-norm-in-the-changing-australian-family-88014)


- a Present statistics from the article in a table or graph that demonstrates how 'mum, dad and two kids are no longer the norm' in Australian society.
- b Discuss why 'mum, dad and two kids are no longer the norm' in Australian society.

- 2 Watch the ABC television show *Back in Time for Dinner*:

 [iview.abc.net.au/show/back-in-time-for-dinner](https://iview.abc.net.au/show/back-in-time-for-dinner)

- a As you watch, note down the specific roles of each character and how they change during each episode.
- b Discuss how the following factors affect the dynamics of family life:
  - i economic changes
  - ii socio-cultural changes
  - ii political changes.
- c Discuss the extent to which family life has changed over the course of the series.

- 3 Read Camilla Nelson's 2023 article 'Labor's proposed family law overhaul makes some important changes, but omits others' from The Conversation:

 [theconversation.com/labors-proposed-family-law-overhaul-makes-some-important-changes-but-omits-others-198773](https://theconversation.com/labors-proposed-family-law-overhaul-makes-some-important-changes-but-omits-others-198773)

- a Discuss the positives and negatives of the proposed changes to family law.
- b Discuss how the rights of the child changes the nature of the family.

- 4 Speak to someone from an older generation (preferably someone older than your parents) and ask them:

- a how they think the concept of the family has changed over time
- b what the main challenges were in raising a family at the time when they would have been doing so.

You may wish to ask them whether social factors, expectations, gender roles, financial independence, having a career or other factors influenced how their role in the family has changed.

Record your insights in note form and/or write a paragraph about what you have learnt.

- 5 Are there any other social factors you think might have changed the concept of the family? Identify these and explain how each factor has led to the change of the concept of the family.

### Contemporary family compositions <sup>1.2.3</sup>

As discussed, the composition of the family tends to reflect social attitudes and expectations. While on the one hand, 'family' is in many ways a dynamic and 'fluid' term, on the other we can identify and define useful categories for the different types of family prevalent within society. Of course, families can take on different forms and combinations than the compositions outlined here – there is no one 'right' way for a family to be structured – but the following forms are recognisable in modern Australian society.

- **Nuclear family:** the most traditional family composition, consisting of a married or de facto couple and their biological or adopted children; also known as a conjugal family
- **Extended family:** includes relatives beyond the nuclear family, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins
- **One-parent family:** a composition in which one parent raises children without the presence of a spouse or partner; this can be due to divorce or separation, the death of a partner or the decision to raise children as a single parent
- **Blended family:** a composition that results from the merging of two or more previously existing families, often through marriage or re-marriage; often includes step-parents and step-siblings
- **Same-sex parent family:** a composition in which children are raised by two parents of the same gender; the children become a part of the family through adoption, surrogacy or other forms of assisted reproduction
- **Grandparent-headed family:** a composition in which the grandparents (or grandparent) are the primary caretakers for their grandchildren; may occur due to the death of parents, incarceration, or substance abuse
- **Couples with dependents:** couples who have adult children or other dependants who rely on them for financial support and care; dependents may include children, elderly parents or family members with disabilities who require ongoing assistance
- **Couple-only family:** a couple with no dependents
- **Sibling groups:** a family unit in which siblings live together under the care of one or both parents or, in some cases, other family members or caregivers; can arise from various circumstances including adoption, foster care or a family in which the parents have had multiple children
- **Multigenerational families:** a family structure that includes at least three generations living together or very near one another

**Nuclear families** are the most traditional family composition, consisting of a married or de facto couple and their biological or adopted children; also known as a conjugal family.

**Extended families** include relatives beyond the nuclear family, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

**One-parent families** comprise one parent raising children without the presence of a spouse or partner.


**Blended families** comprise the merging of two or more previously existing families, often through marriage or re-marriage.

**Same-sex parent families** comprise two parents of the same gender raising a child.

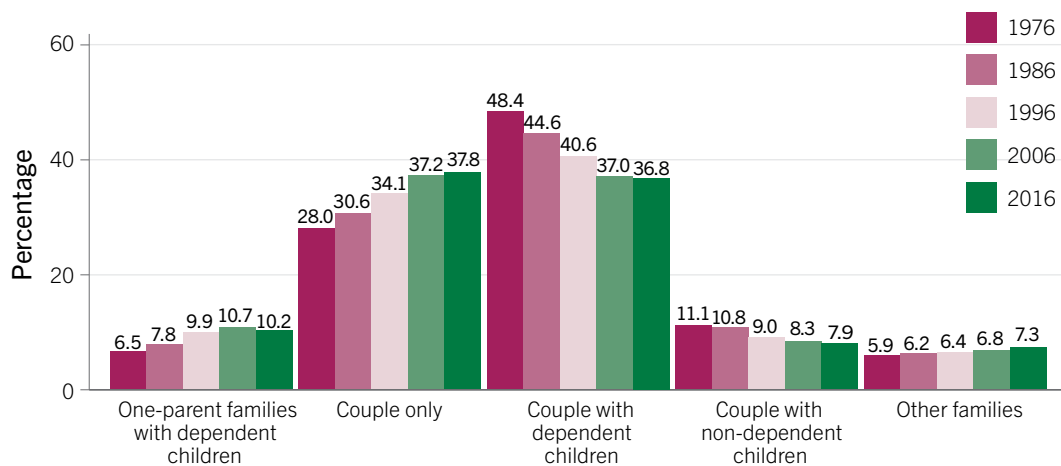
**Multigenerational families** are families with at least three generations living together.

According to the 2021 Australian Census data, the most common type of family composition in Australia is a couple with children, making up 43.7 per cent of all families. This is followed by couples without children (38.8 per cent) and single-parent families (15.9 per cent). The number of single-parent families has increased over the past two decades, with most of these families being headed by a female (85 per cent).

To learn more about family composition and the prevalence of different types of families in Australia, visit:

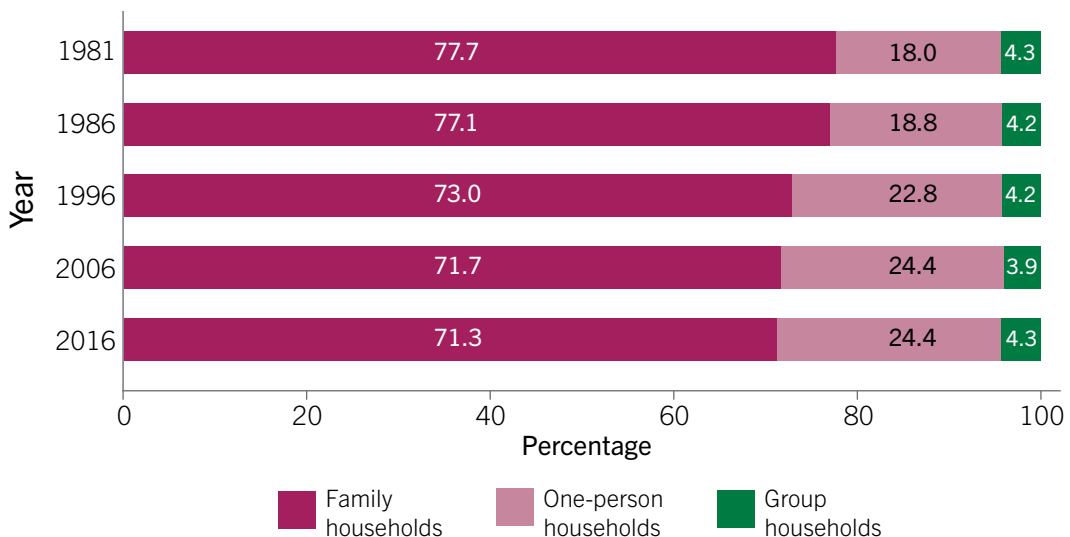
 ABS, 2021. 'Household and families: Census'. [abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-and-families-census/latest-release](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-and-families-census/latest-release)

### Family types, 1976–2016



Adapted from Lixia Qu, 2020. 'Household and families'. Australian Institute of Family Studies. [aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/2007\\_aftn\\_households\\_and\\_families\\_0.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/2007_aftn_households_and_families_0.pdf)

### Household types, 1981–2016



From L. Qu, 2020. 'Australian families then and now: Households and families'. Australian Institute of Family Studies, pp. 3 and 9. [aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/families-then-now-households-and-families](https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/families-then-now-households-and-families)



## Activity E – Contemporary family compositions

- 1 The ABS definition of family is relatively rigid. Given the concept of 'families of choice', consider whether you think the following are examples of families:
  - a Two young people who have lost their 'traditional' families due to death, and who now reside together as best friends
  - b A group of men who say they would 'do anything for one another' and who do not have traditional families
  - c A couple who are still officially married but have been separated for six months
- 2 Are there other sorts of groupings you would consider to be 'family'? You could consider discussing these with a classmate – do you agree or disagree, and why?
- 3 Read the 'Modern Australian Family' research snapshot from 2016 by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and answer the questions that follow:

[aifs.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/modern-australian-family](https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/modern-australian-family)

- a Identify the different phases of family life.
  - b Outline how different ‘stressors’ identified in the article affect some Australian families.
- 4 Use the AIFS ‘Households and families’ research report from 2020 to complete the following tasks:
-  [aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/families-then-now-households-and-families](https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/families-then-now-households-and-families)
- a In a table or graph, present statistics that demonstrate key trends that have occurred in family life in Australia from 1981 to 2016.
  - b Discuss how family has changed in Australia between 1981 to 2016.

## The use of sociological theories and/or perspectives to explain concepts and behaviours 1.2.4

In general, sociological theories attempt to explain concepts (ideas, theories, notions) and behaviours (typically human behaviours) by analysing the social structures, institutions and **cultural norms** that shape individuals and society. For example, functionalism argues that society exists as a system of interrelated parts that work together to maintain stability and order.

**Cultural norms** refer to customs and values of a society that provide general guidelines to navigate everyday life and a common purpose.

Conflict theory, which will be explored in more detail in Unit 2, views society as comprised of competing groups with conflicting interests and argues that power and resources are unevenly distributed. These and other sociological theories provide frameworks for understanding the ways in which social forces and relationships shape our concepts, beliefs and behaviours.



### Recap of key sociological ideas

**Theories** are explanations or models that describe or predict the way the world works based on evidence and logical reasoning. The role of sociological theories is to explain social behaviour in the real world. They provide a framework for understanding and making predictions and are often used as a basis for further research and exploration.

**Concepts** are abstract ideas or general notions that represent something in the world. They are mental constructs that help us organise and categorise information and understand the relationship between different phenomena.

**Perspectives** are collections of theories that provide researchers with models to analyse and interpret the world around us. They are shaped by our experiences, beliefs, values and social and cultural contexts, and can influence the way we understand and interact with the world. In academic and scholarly fields, perspectives often refer to specific theoretical frameworks or approaches used to study a particular phenomenon.

In Sociology, theories can help to explain the concept of the family by examining the ways in which families are shaped by social, cultural and historic forces. For example:

- functionalist perspectives see the family as serving important functions for both individuals and society as a whole
- conflict theories view the family as being a site of struggle and tension, with power and resources being distributed unequally among its members

- feminist perspectives critique traditional views of the family as patriarchal and oppressive towards women and highlight the role of gender in shaping family dynamics and power relations.

As outlined throughout this chapter, we need to be aware of how a range of forces – including cultural, historical, social, economic and political forces – shape how we define and think of concepts such as the family that we may take for granted. Doing so helps us gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of this seemingly simple concept. More generally, as part of your studies in Sociology, you can apply a range of sociological theories to help you better understand the world, with each having their limitations and strengths.



## Activity F – Theories, concepts, perspectives

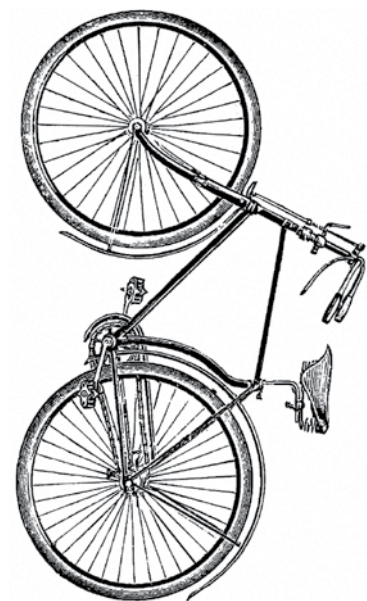
- 1 Identify whether the following statements refer to a theory, concept or perspective.
  - a I am used to make predictions, generate hypotheses and test scientific data.
  - b I can be used to study particular phenomena.
  - c I am used to organise and categorise information.
  - d I am used to understand the relationship between different phenomena.
  - e I refer to a specific theoretical framework.
- 2 Identify three key theories you have heard of: for example, ‘the theory of evolution’.

## Functionalist and feminist views of the family <sup>1.2.5</sup>

In Chapter 1 we learnt about perspectives, including **functionalism** and feminism, and applied them to youth. They can also be applied to the family – which is what we will look at now.

### Functionalist views of the family

Before we apply the term functionalism to the family, it is important to recap what functionalism is. Functionalism is a sociological perspective that views society as a system of interconnected parts that work together to achieve social equilibrium. French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1895) envisioned social institutions as smaller parts that contribute to the smooth and successful functioning of society. This means that social structures such as family, government, economy, media, education and religion all play their individual, specialised roles to ensure social order, stability and productivity. For example, schools educate children so they can enter the job market and support the economy, while the economy is responsible for the production and distribution of goods for the survival of families. Institutions are mutually dependent, like the organs of a body, each performing their specific function, and this helps maintain social stability.



Watch this brief (5 min) presentation from Sydney Brown on functionalism to learn more:

[youtu.be/5jOZqVnQmdY](https://youtu.be/5jOZqVnQmdY)



As an extension of how functionalists view society, functionalists see the family as a necessary institution that benefits society, arguing that a strong family structure is essential for maintaining social order. Functionalists believe the family unit serves several important social functions such as reproduction, socialising children and providing emotional and economic support for its members. Similarly, they suggest that problems in society such as crime and delinquency can be linked to the breakdown of the traditional family structure.

Hence, functionalists favour the traditional family structure of a nuclear family, composed of a married couple and their children; it is seen as the most efficient and effective unit for performing these functions. They perceive the family as a stable and cohesive unit with traditional gender roles, and with responsibilities attributed to each member. For example, within a nuclear family, the norm is for boys to take on an 'instrumental role' that prepares them to be 'breadwinners' and for girls to adopt an 'expressive role', learning to be nurturing 'homemakers'. These prescribed roles allow for a harmonious distribution of responsibilities and ensure children grow up having both their financial and emotional needs fulfilled, further contributing to a stable, 'well-oiled' society.

However, there are criticisms of the functionalist perspective. For instance, functionalism tends to overlook the power dynamics within families and the ways in which families can be sites of oppression, particularly for women and children. It views the family as a harmonious and cohesive unit, neglecting the reality of conflicts and inequalities within family relationships.

The functionalist perspective may also ignore the diversity of family forms and the ways in which families are shaped by cultural, historical and economic factors by presenting a narrow and idealised view of the family that does not reflect the complexity and variability of true family relationships. It may also fail to consider the changing nature of family and its functions over time. The family has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, with changes in gender roles, declining marriage rates and the rise of alternative family forms; functionalism fails to acknowledge these developments.



### Caricature of a traditional family

Once upon a time, there was a family named the Johnsons. They lived in a small suburban neighbourhood and were considered the epitome of a traditional family. The father, Jack, worked as a manager at a large corporation and was the primary breadwinner, while the mother, Sarah, stayed at home to take care of their two children, a son and a daughter.

The Johnsons valued hard work, discipline and a strong commitment to their family. Jack and Sarah both believed in traditional gender roles, with Jack serving as the authority figure and Sarah nurturing and supporting the family. They placed a strong emphasis on education and expected their children to do well in school and follow the rules.

Every day, Sarah woke up early to make breakfast for her family and send her children off to school. After they left, she would spend her day cleaning the house, doing laundry and making dinner for when her family returned. Jack, on the other hand, would leave for work early in the morning and work long hours to provide for his family.



'The Johnsons'. 1955.  
Credit: Seattle Municipal  
Archives Digital Collections.  
[w.wiki/6c46](https://www.wiki/6c46)

On weekends, the Johnsons would spend time together as a family, either going on outings or simply relaxing at home. They also valued their community and were active in local events, volunteering at their children's school and participating in neighbourhood activities.

As their children grew up, Jack and Sarah instilled in them the values and beliefs that were important to them. They encouraged their children to work hard, respect authority and embrace traditional gender roles.

Years passed, and the Johnsons' children grew up and started families of their own. Although they faced new challenges and changes in the world, they carried with them the strong sense of family, commitment and values that they learnt from their parents.

While the story of the Johnsons is a caricature or stereotype of the traditional family, there are certain elements that we do see in a lot of families. This is what makes the functionalist view of the family both appealing and open to criticism. On the one hand, the story of the Johnsons reflects heteronormative and Anglo-Saxon values, but on the other hand there are common features of this family in modern Australian society. Every family is unique and may have different values, beliefs and ways of functioning. Additionally, the traditional family structure has become more diverse and dynamic in recent decades, with more families embracing alternative family structures and gender roles.



## Activity G – Functionalist perspectives on the family

- 1 Write down the key functions of each of the members in your family. Compare your results with a classmate's.
- 2 Discuss the extent to which you think a person's role within a family is 'fixed'. In your answer, provide examples from any primary research, including your own family, and/or secondary research including families in Australia and overseas.
- 3 Draw a table or mind map that outlines the strengths and criticisms of the functionalist view of the family. Based on your research, including your readings in this chapter, evaluate the following statements.
  - a The functionalist view of the family may not be perfect, but it is important that we promote traditional views of the family to help promote a stable society.
  - b The functionalist view of the family is no longer relevant.

## Feminist views of the family

“The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed slavery of the wife.”  
Friedrich Engels, 1884. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Penguin Classics.

As noted in the previous chapter, the **feminist perspective** is a collection of theories that has evolved over time. Feminism can also be understood as a political and social movement that advocates for the rights, equality and liberation of women. It is an awareness that women's situations and experiences in society are different to those of men due to social structures in which men hold more power and privilege than women.

As explored in the previous chapter, we can consider feminism through its four 'waves', each with its own time period and focus:

- the **first wave** (1848–1920), which focused on women's suffrage or right to vote
- the **second wave** (1963–1980s) focused on equality and discrimination, and the institutions that oppressed women, such as the family



Eight years after the first 'National Women's Day' was held in New York in 1909 (to commemorate the garment worker's strike of the previous year), tens of thousands of women marched for political and economic rights as part of International Women's Day in St Petersburg (then Petrograd), Russia, in 1917. These protests culminated in the overthrow of the Tsarist regime and marked the beginnings of the Russian Revolution.

- the **third wave** (1991–2010) continued to work on equality but focused more on diversity and the intersectionality of race and gender
- the #MeToo movement ignited the **fourth wave** (2012–), in which women fought against sexual harassment and violence with the help of social media.

Feminism can be thought of as an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of beliefs, theories and practices that share a common goal: to promote the liberation of women, and equality with respect to the political, economic, personal, and social rights for women in society. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment, as well as working to end discrimination against women in the public sphere and in their personal lives.

Feminist researchers have observed that gender inequality starts and is perpetuated in families through the socialisation of children into gender roles. Others have noted that women tend to carry an unequal burden in completing household work and caring for children and extended family.

One of the key distinctions between functionalist and feminist views of the family is that functionalism focuses on how parts of society work in unison (and how they may have been *traditionally* established), whereas feminists tend to pay closer attention to criticisms of established modes of thinking, and in the way the burdens associated with different functions within the institution might be unequally distributed. In respect to these questions, feminists ask why things are the way they are and how they might be done differently.

Feminist theory critiques the traditional view of the family and its prescribed gender roles as a significant factor of female oppression. It contends that the nuclear family is where a child first learns how to take on these unequal roles. Thus, feminist scholars challenge the functionalist view of an ideal family, citing gender discrimination as a recurring theme.

## Perspectives within feminism

While perspectives *within* feminism are not considered key knowledge in this area of study, they may be useful as contextual knowledge. Like any significant social movement, feminism is not uniform – different strands of feminist thought (including but not limited to the three outlined below) each tend to emphasise different sources and aspects of women’s experiences of oppression, as well as offering different strategies for overcoming it.

**Liberal** perspectives within feminism seek to promote gender equality predominantly via legal and political reform, individual liberty, equal rights, and equal opportunities for all people regardless of gender. Liberal feminists tend to promote equality within romantic partnerships, and identify the traditional gender roles assigned to men and women within the family as a significant barrier to gender equality. This strand of feminism focuses on accommodations that can work within modern capitalism, such as paid parental leave, flexible work arrangements, access to childcare, and promoting policies that protect women’s bodily autonomy and reproductive choices.

**Radical** perspectives within feminism tend to locate the root cause of women’s oppression broadly in many mutually reinforcing patriarchal (male-empowering) structures in society. In the context of the family, radical feminists identify the

conventional nuclear family as a key site in this dynamic, which sees women compelled to perform roles that leave them subordinate to men, primarily caring for others, and lacking autonomy. Many radical feminists call for the creation of new, non-patriarchal forms of social organisation that prioritise women’s liberation.

**Socialist** (and/or Marxist) perspectives within feminism consider patriarchy, domesticity and capitalism as intertwined, and tend to identify women’s oppression as being rooted in the economic and political systems dominated by private owners, who manipulate them in a way that maximises their profit. The family is seen as an institution that serves the interests of the broader system by facilitating reproduction and maintaining a reserve army of labour. In this view, women are primarily tasked with unpaid domestic labour and child-rearing, which in turn allows men to be more productive in the workplace, with the resulting benefits mainly flowing to economic elites.



A woman performing domestic labour.  
Credit: Chalk drawing by August Allebé, 1907.



## Support for family violence

We're about to dive into some heavy topics, some of which students may find challenging regardless of their personal experiences.

Remember – 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) is a 24-hour national sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for anyone who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Individuals can also access local support services and search the internet using a free app (called 'Daisy') that protects user privacy.

*Further resources:*

- 🔗 [1800respect.org.au/daisy](https://1800respect.org.au/daisy)
- 🔗 [1800respect.org.au/#chat](https://1800respect.org.au/#chat)
- 🔗 [vic.gov.au/family-violence-statewide-support-services](https://vic.gov.au/family-violence-statewide-support-services)



## Who is perpetrating domestic, sexual and family violence?

Michael Flood et al., 2023. 'Who is perpetrating domestic, sexual and family violence?'. The Conversation. [theconversation.com/who-is-perpetrating-domestic-sexual-and-family-violence-192606](https://theconversation.com/who-is-perpetrating-domestic-sexual-and-family-violence-192606)

Some 1.6 million women (17 per cent) and 548 000 men (6.1 per cent) in Australia aged 15 or older have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or previous cohabiting partner. This means significant proportions of the population in Australia have perpetrated domestic or sexual violence.

There are no national Australian data on people's perpetration of domestic or sexual violence. While we have good data on violence victimisation, we know far less about violence perpetration.

The State of Knowledge Report on Violence Perpetration reviews the current data and research on who perpetrates domestic, family, and sexual violence, how, and why, in order to enhance national efforts to end this violence. Here's what it found.

### Data from victims and police

One of the consistent findings from victimisation data, legal system data, and survey self-reports is that most violence is perpetrated by men.

### Better decisions start with better information

Among all people in Australia who have suffered violence, nearly all have experienced violence from a male perpetrator (95 per cent of male victims and 94 per cent of female victims). Around one-quarter of all victims have experienced violence from a female perpetrator (28 per cent of male victims and 24 per cent of female victims).

The vast majority of perpetrators of homicide in Australia – 87 per cent – are male. Three-quarters (75 per cent) of all victims of domestic violence reported the perpetrator as male and 25 per cent reported the perpetrator as female. Among all victims of sexual violence aged 15 or older, six times as many people reported violence by a male perpetrator as by a female perpetrator.

As most victims do not formally report to authorities, police and legal data are limited sources of information on perpetration. Police data tend to capture only the most severe cases, legal definitions vary across Australia, and existing data are shaped by the over-policing of First Nations and ethnic minority communities.

### Self-report data

Another stream of data comes from surveys in which people report on their own use of violent behaviours. A key issue here is that most self-reported data on domestic violence

relies only on asking individuals if they or their partners have ever committed any violent acts from a specified list (slapping, kicking, punching, and so on).

Popular measures such as the Conflict Tactics Scale do not also ask about severity, frequency, impact (injury or fear), intent, whether the acts were in self-defence, or their history and context. They omit sexual violence, stalking, other violent acts, and violence after separation.

Much self-reported data on domestic violence do not measure the pattern of power and control exerted by an individual over their intimate partner or former partner, although many researchers and advocates see this as defining domestic violence.

Studies of domestic violence that use the Conflict Tactics Scales or other similar, acts-based measures tend to find males and females perpetrate aggression against intimate partners at similar rates, or in some instances that women report higher rates of perpetration than men.

Such studies also often find substantial proportions of people have used at least one type of aggression or abuse against a partner. For example, in a US study among university students, 18 per cent of men and 34 per cent of women reported perpetrating physical aggression towards their partners and 98 per cent of both men and women reported perpetrating psychological aggression.

Apparent findings that men and women are using domestic violence at similar rates must be interpreted with caution, for four reasons. First, most studies are just 'counting the blows', measuring any use of a set list of violent acts. They may lead to false positives or over-reporting, including of harmless and innocuous behaviours. Second, there is evidence men are less likely than women to report their own use of violence. Third, women's violence is more often in self-defence than men's. And fourth, even where overall rates of the use of various violent acts are similar among males and females, males' use of violence typically is more frequent, severe, fear-inducing, injurious, and harmful than females' use of violence.

Gender contrasts in rates of perpetration are far stronger for sexual violence. Boys and young men have significantly higher rates of sexual violence perpetration than girls and young women, as documented in reviews of studies among teenagers and young people.

Significant numbers of males have perpetrated sexual violence. For example, close to one-third (29 per cent) of men at universities in the USA and Canada reported having perpetrated sexual violence. In a multi-country self-report study in the Asia-Pacific, proportions of men reporting they had perpetrated some form of rape against a woman or girl ranged from 10 per cent to 62 per cent.

### **Perpetrators in society**

People's use of violence often starts young. Substantial proportions of adolescents perpetrate dating violence against their intimate partners and ex-partners. US studies find the average age of first perpetration of sexual violence by males is 16.

Few perpetrators are held to account for their crimes. The vast majority of perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence do not ever come to the attention of police or legal systems.


Perpetration is driven by risk factors at the individual, relationship, and community levels. Prevention efforts must address childhood exposure to domestic and family violence, violent and sexist norms, peers' condoning of violence, community disadvantage, and other factors.

We need to know far more about perpetrators and perpetration. We need national data on the extent and character of people's use of domestic and sexual violence. We need well-designed methods that capture the character, breadth, severity, impact, and contexts of violence perpetration. We need research on female and LGBT perpetrators and on diverse forms of violence. We need to know more about the risk and protective factors that either feed into perpetration or protect against it.

Without this information we do not know where best to target interventions against perpetration effectively, when to intervene early, and whether Australia's efforts to reduce the use of violence are making progress.



## Activity H – Feminist view of the family

- 1 Visit the following web page.
  -  Victorian Government, 2022. 'What is family violence?'. [vic.gov.au/what-family-violence](http://vic.gov.au/what-family-violence)

Note down the family violence statistics. Do you see any link between rates of family violence and the structure of the family? Or does it seem more likely that the frequency of family violence is unrelated to the structure and composition of families?
- 2 Construct a family tree outlining your extended family and list the roles assigned to each family member (e.g. husband, wife, homemaker, breadwinner). Analyse the tree to discover any recurring and/or reinforced stereotypical gender-based roles.
- 3 Consider the ways that families are portrayed on television – for example, in programs such as *Modern Family*, *The Family Law*, *The Heights*, *This Is Us*, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, *The Simpsons* etc. Choose a television show or other form of media and discuss how the family is portrayed in it. To what extent does this portrayal of the family reinforce and/or challenge traditional gender roles?
- 4 Refer back to the web page from Question 1 – particularly the excerpt that says:
 

'The causes of family violence are complex. There is no doubt that violence against women and children is deeply rooted in power imbalances between men and women. These imbalances are reinforced by gender norms and stereotypes, and attitudes and cultures that excuse violence and inequality.'

With this quote in mind, to what extent might the functionalist view of the family perpetuate family violence?
- 5 Explain how the family perpetuates or challenges stereotypical gender-based social norms (try to limit your response to 300–400 words). Refer to the extended response 'KLC framework' and planning resources provided in the previous chapter.

## Comparative perspectives as a methodology in sociology, including the experience of families in Australia compared with families in other countries 1.2.6

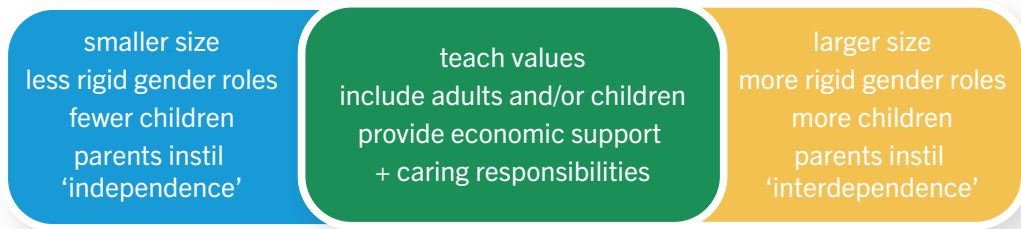
In Sociology, **comparative methodology** is an approach to studying **social phenomena** that involves comparing different cases or social contexts. In simple terms, to compare two or more things refers to identifying similarities and differences between those things. Sociologists often use this methodology to compare two countries or culture. This is useful when trying to discover unique features and patterns of a particular system or culture by identifying features missing in others. In this area of study, the comparative perspective is used to analyse the experience of families in Australia in comparison to other societies such as India and Japan. This method allows sociologists to observe distinctive characteristics of each system, culture and family experience.

**Comparative methodology** is a form of research that explores the similarities and/or differences between social phenomena across social groups or societies.

**Social phenomena** are observable and measurable patterns of behaviour, attitudes and interactions that occur within a society or social group; these patterns can be influenced by various factors, such as cultural norms, social institutions, economic systems and political structures.

Australian families tend towards...

Indian families tend towards



Both

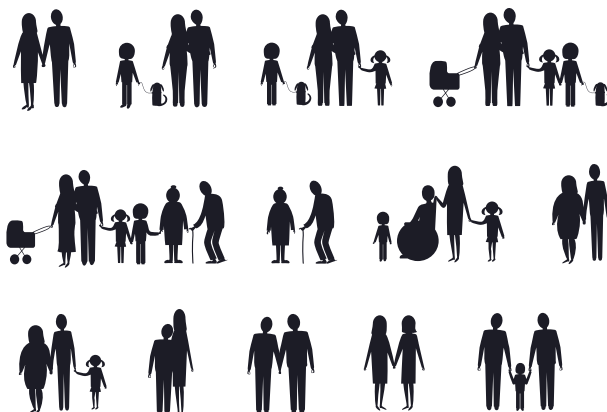
## The experience of families in Australia compared with other societies

We have already established that there is value in categorising family structures but that doing so can tend towards generalisations that are limiting in that they do not adequately describe the complete range of family types, dynamics and experiences that exist within a society. In general, the following comparison of three different family structures based on the dominant family types helps give us an overview of the kinds of social forces shaping societies and how families reflect the societies they inhabit.

For example, we have established from the ABS data that the nuclear family is the most common family structure in Australia. This consists of a married or de facto couple and their dependent children. The family may also include grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins, but the core unit is the parents and their children. In this family structure, the parents are responsible for the upbringing and care of their children, and they typically live in a separate household from other family members.

In India, the extended family is a traditional family structure that still exists in many parts of the country. This family structure consists of multiple generations of a family living together in a single household. The extended family can include grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and sometimes even distant relatives. In this family structure, all family members contribute to the running of the household and share responsibilities, including childcare and financial support.

In Japan, the 'stem' family is a traditional family structure that has been in decline in recent years. This family structure consists of a single male heir who inherits the family name, property and business, and is responsible for caring for his parents in their old age. In this family structure, the male heir and his wife are expected to have children to continue the family line, and the extended family members may live nearby or visit often, but the core unit is the stem family. However, due to changes in Japanese society, such as a declining birth rate and a growing emphasis on individualism, the stem family structure is becoming less common.



These generalisations give us some insight into the family structure and society that we are studying, but they also reveal some of the limitations.

In this regard, this reiterates the tension between the functionalist and feminist views of the family. Further exploring family types through detailed case studies can also help give us greater detail, insight and both breadth and depth of knowledge when studying the family.



### Generalised comparison of family types and dynamics in different nations

	Australia	India	Japan
Common family type	Nuclear family	Extended family	Stem family
Core unit of family	Parents and children	Multiple generations	Grandparent, parents and children
Responsibility for raising children	Parents	Parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents	Wife
Responsibility for running household	Parents	Parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents	Husband works, wife looks after household

Compiled using information from SBS Cultural Atlas. [culturalatlas.sbs.com.au](http://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au)



## Families in Malaysia

As a multi-ethnic society, Malaysia is a melting pot of cultures coexisting harmoniously. These include Malays, Chinese, Indians and various Indigenous groups. While most families share similarities – such as a preference for extended families due to widespread collectivist (group-prioritising) culture – the family makeup is both diverse and complex due to economic, political, cultural and social factors.

### Malaysian Muslim families

Although the Malaysian Federation is a secular state, Islam is the national religion. An Islamic legal system – the Sharia courts – sits alongside the civil courts. Sharia laws, governing the ‘Muslim way of life’, have jurisdiction over every Muslim in Malaysia and thus influence the structure of Malay families. Under the constitution it is illegal for Malays to convert from Islam to another religion. Which means all Malays in Malaysia must be Muslims and are thus bound by the Sharia.

One way in which the Sharia laws influence the structure of families is in the legalisation of polygamy. According to Sharia law a Muslim man can marry up to four wives if he is financially able to support multiple families and the first wife is ill or cannot produce children. This indicates a patriarchal family system in which men are the sole provider and women take on the traditional roles of homemaking and childbearing. In addition, the financial condition has meant that historically only wealthier men could afford to sustain



Credit: Nashrin Alhady/ABC RN. [instagram.com/artsy.ashin](https://www.instagram.com/artsy.ashin)  
[abc.net.au/news/2020-02-15/polygamous-marriage-debate-malaysia-shifting-cultures/11814258](http://abc.net.au/news/2020-02-15/polygamous-marriage-debate-malaysia-shifting-cultures/11814258)

multiple wives, which in turn has meant that polygamy was much more common among elites and the aristocracy.

However, in recent times the desire for love and intimacy – compounded by a sexually conservative society where marriage is seen as the only permissible means of accessing sexual intimacy – has seen legal polygamy as a legitimate alternative to extramarital affairs. Such families exist in various structures, some where men equally divide their time between wives, who live in different houses, while others blur the lines and share responsibilities of housekeeping and child-rearing among sister-wives.

In reality, though, most Muslim marriages in Malaysia are monogamous; only 3 to 5 per cent are polygamous. This suggests that legal legitimacy doesn't necessarily translate into social acceptance. Nevertheless, there were still about 8808 polygamy applications approved in Malaysia between 2010 and 2016, which does not include undeclared polygynous marriages (about 1617 marriages since 2019) done abroad, which is seeing a gradual incline. In addition, despite 70 per cent of Malaysian Muslim women believing polygamy is a right for men, only 32 per cent say they would allow their husbands to take another wife.

As such, while polygamy is a unique characteristic of some Malay Muslim families, it is not representative of *most* Muslim families in Malaysia; monogamous families with a nuclear family structure are still the most common. Nonetheless, nuclear families in Malaysia are distinct in that parents tend to prefer more than three children, compared to neighbouring countries such as Singapore, India and Australia, where the average preference is much closer to two.



A Chinese-Malaysian extended family poses for a photo in 2009.  
With thanks to Wei Yenn Ung.

### Chinese-Malaysian families

Descendants of Southern Chinese immigrants, Chinese-Malaysian families on the other hand are influenced by a hybrid of Confucian thought from China and the Malaysian way of life. As for traditional Chinese families (discussed in an earlier case study), the rules of filial piety apply, which explains the prominence of extended families. However, Chinese-Malaysians were not bound by the one-child policy like Chinese families living in China had been between 1979 and 2015. From the 1950s to the 1980s, it was common to see Chinese-Malaysian families with anywhere between five and ten

children. Due to economic challenges affecting households as well as changing social norms, the average number of children per family has decreased significantly among this group in particular, with the fertility rate (the average number of births per woman in a given population) declining among Chinese-Malaysians from 1.5 to 0.8 between 2010 and 2021.

The rules of patriarchy apply, but the more urbanised the family is, the less this is the case – due to the increasing cost of living and the need for dual-income households. In childcare duties to a maid (*bibik*), who in most households is considered part of the family. Having a *bibik* is not exclusive to Chinese-Malaysian families, however: it occurs in wealthy households of all ethnic backgrounds.

### Indian-Malaysian families

Like Chinese-Malaysians, Indian-Malaysian families ascribe to mainly traditional South Indian cultural norms while also being influenced by political, economic and technological factors unique to Malaysia. So, while Indian-Malaysian families still see

the family as the most important institution – usually more important than the self – wealth and religion can affect family structures and traditions. Due to the emphasis on marriage being between two families rather than two individuals, and the subsequent responsibilities, strong ties and expected loyalty members have with their extended family, arranged marriages are still considered acceptable among Indian families. It is also not uncommon to see close relationships between in-laws and multigenerational households. However, arranged marriage is increasingly being challenged by the younger generation, who are influenced by more Westernised ideologies of love and marriage.

### Mixed marriages

Unsurprisingly in a multicultural society where various ethnic groups live together harmoniously, cross-cultural marriages are common. This has led to new sub-ethnic groups in Malaysia which are products of such unions. One such group are 'Chindians': people of Chinese and Indian descent, who are increasingly regarded as an ethnic group in their own right. Born as a result of 'love marriages', many Chindian unions in Malaysia faced rejection back in the '50s and '60s not only due to aversion to mixing from both cultures but also because they represented significant acts of resistance against the arranged marriages typically and traditionally favoured by Indian families. Nonetheless, today Chindians are increasingly common and well accepted in Malaysian society. In such families, there is an interplay of two cultures that influences everyday life, from the food they eat to the traditions they practice; for example, Chindian families may celebrate Chinese New Year and Deepavali and/or Christmas at the same time.



Image courtesy of Anidha Nathan, via 'Chindian Diaries'. *Peril Magazine*, 2015. [peril.com.au/topics/aadc/chindian-diaries](http://peril.com.au/topics/aadc/chindian-diaries)

As we've seen, this diversity in culture within Malaysia has led to a wide variety of family structures and contributed to a myriad of different kinds of family experiences. Some of these are similar to Australian experiences while others differ.

By employing a comparative perspective of identifying similarities and differences between Malaysian families and Australian families, it both broadens our understanding of the family and challenges traditional conceptualisations of the family.

*Compiled using information from:*

- 📖 AIFS, 2023. 'Marriages in Australia'. [aifs.gov.au/research/facts-and-figures/marriages-australia-2023](http://aifs.gov.au/research/facts-and-figures/marriages-australia-2023)
- 📖 Nina Evason, 2016. 'Malaysian culture'. SBS Cultural Atlas. [culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/malaysian-culture](http://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/malaysian-culture)
- 📖 Joseph M. Fernando, 2006. 'The position of Islam in the constitution of Malaysia'. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2.
- 📖 Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). 2022. 'Vital statistics, Malaysia, 2022'. [dosm.gov.my/portal-main/release-content/vital-statistics-malaysia-2022](http://dosm.gov.my/portal-main/release-content/vital-statistics-malaysia-2022)
- 📖 Malay Mail, 2023. 'Selangor records 1,617 polygamous marriages without permission since 2019'. [malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/03/07/selangor-records-1617-polygamous-marriages-without-permission-since-2019/58450](http://malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/03/07/selangor-records-1617-polygamous-marriages-without-permission-since-2019/58450)
- 📖 Nurul Huda Mohd Razif, 2020. 'Polygamy in a time of pandemic: Hard times ahead.' Canopy Forum. [canopyforum.org/2020/06/30/polygamy-in-a-time-of-pandemic-hard-times-ahead/](http://canopyforum.org/2020/06/30/polygamy-in-a-time-of-pandemic-hard-times-ahead/)
- 📖 Victoria Soh, 2020. 'A tale of two systems: Sharia and civil law in Malaysia'. [durhamasianlawjournal.com/post/a-tale-of-two-systems-sharia-and-civil-law-in-malaysia](http://durhamasianlawjournal.com/post/a-tale-of-two-systems-sharia-and-civil-law-in-malaysia)



## Activity I – Comparing Australian families to families in other societies

- 1 As we seek to compare different social phenomena, we often rely on averages and generalisations – but it’s important to keep in mind that *within* groups there is also an enormous amount of difference.

Take the list below, which reflects the ‘average’ Australian household in 2023. Make your way down the list and mark ‘true’ or ‘false’ depending on how many of these attributes apply to you and/or your family. You could also use this for any other families that you know.

You speak only English at home.	T	F
You were born in Australia.	T	F
Your parents were born in Australia.	T	F
You’re religious.	T	F
Your family has English ancestry.	T	F
Your parents are in a registered marriage.	T	F
Your parents live together and have two children.	T	F
Your home is a free-standing, three-bedroom house.	T	F
Your parents own your home, with a mortgage.	T	F
You have two cars.	T	F

- a Select a country other than Australia (you may wish to refer to the case study on families in Malaysia provided). Conduct your own research about what the average family in this country might look like.
- b What similarities and differences with the average Australian family can you identify?
- 2 To reduce the country’s high birth rate and slow the population growth rate, the Chinese government introduced a one-child policy in the late 1970s. In 2015, China amended the policy, allowing couples to have two children if one of the parents was an only child.
- 3 Analyse the effect of the one-child policy on the Chinese family. You may conduct your own research and use the following resources.

CNN, 2023. ‘China’s population is shrinking. The impact will be felt around the world’. [edition.cnn.com/2023/01/18/china/china-population-drop-explainer-intl-hnk/index.html](https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/18/china/china-population-drop-explainer-intl-hnk/index.html)

ABC News, 2023. ‘China’s shrinking population brings challenges’. [abc.net.au/news/2023-01-19/china-shrinking-population-elderly-military-one-child-/101870790](https://abc.net.au/news/2023-01-19/china-shrinking-population-elderly-military-one-child-/101870790)

The Conversation, 2016. ‘China’s marriage rate is plummeting – and it’s because of gender inequality’. [theconversation.com/chinas-marriage-rate-is-plummeting-and-its-because-of-gender-inequality-66027](https://theconversation.com/chinas-marriage-rate-is-plummeting-and-its-because-of-gender-inequality-66027)

When analysing the effect of the one-child policy on the Chinese family you may wish to consider changes to:

- the size of the family
- the composition of the family
- filial piety and care responsibility for elders
- gender dynamics, including the role of men and women within the family.

## Developments influencing the experience of contemporary family life such as demographic shifts, as well as cultural, economic, technological and social developments <sup>1.2.7</sup>

“Until recent times, you know, human beings usually had a permanent community of relatives. They had dozens of homes to go to. So when a married couple had a fight, one or the other could go to a house three doors down and stay with a close relative until he was feeling tender again. Or, if a kid was so fed up with his parents that he couldn't stand it, he could march over his uncle's for a while. And this is no longer possible. Each family is locked into its little box. The neighbors aren't relatives. There aren't other houses where people can go and be cared for.”

Kurt Vonnegut (American writer and humourist), 1988. From William Allen. 'Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut'. University Press of Mississippi.

As we've discussed, the family is a central social group within our society: for some people (and some of the time) family life is enriching, positive and supportive, while in other instances experiences with family are challenging, undermining or even harmful. While researching the **experience of family**, it's important to remember that everyone's experience of family is deeply personal and varies widely.

**Experience of family** refers to what it is like to be a part of, and the level of connection with, a family unit.

In Australia, family life has been affected most noticeably by these trends:

- increased divorce rates
- declining marriage rates
- increased female labour market participation
- increased cohabitation rates
- declining family size
- more egalitarian values around sharing parenting and household responsibilities
- cost of living pressures
- the need to care for elderly parents amid an ageing population.

Marriage used to be a central structure of Australian families, but today, fewer people are marrying. This does not mean, however, that the number of romantic partnerships is declining. In fact, cohabitation rates are rising, and it is now the norm for couples to live together. Some couples may go on to marry after a period of cohabitation; however, for others, the rules and norms of religious institutions hold less significance than they might have done for their parents or grandparents. Previous generations faced significant social sanctions if they lived with a partner before marriage; this has since become the norm.

The divorce rate went up rapidly when 'no fault' divorce laws were passed in 1975 but it has now stabilised. More recently we have seen a decline in fertility rates and people are postponing having children. While the change has not been as significant as the move towards cohabitation before (or instead of) marriage, it is now much more common for people to have children before getting married. These sorts of changes are influenced by changing social attitudes, individual values and the feminist movement that liberated women from the limits of marriage and motherhood.

## Demographic shifts influencing the experience of family

**Demographic shifts** are changes in a population over time. Common examples include size, structure, fertility rate and age range. According to the ABS, there have been significant changes in Australia in recent years, with the population becoming more diverse and multicultural. The 2021 Census revealed that 48.2 per cent of the population had a parent born overseas and 27.6 per cent were born overseas. This compares to 15.3 per cent of the population having a parent born overseas and 24.1 per cent of the population being born overseas in 1981. This increase in diversity has had a significant impact on family life, with families from different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds bringing new traditions, practices and challenges to the family unit.

**Demographic shifts** are changes in the size, structure and distribution of population over time.

The proportion of couple families without children living with them has been growing steadily. The 2021 Census noted that 47 per cent of couples do not have children living with them compared to 40.8 per cent in 1996.

In addition, the changing nature of work and employment patterns have also had a significant impact on family life. According to the ABS, over the past decade there has been a steady increase in the number of families in which both parents are employed. In 2022, 71 per cent of couple families with children had both parents employed, compared to 54 per cent in 1991. This increase in dual-income families has led to new challenges, including balancing work and family commitments, and finding time for quality family time and relationships.

In addition, below are some key developments within Australia that have had a significant impact on the family.

- **Changing family structures:** There has been a significant change in family structures in Australia, with a decline in the traditional nuclear family and an increase in blended, one-parent, same-sex and de facto families. According to the ABS, in 2021, 43.7 per cent of families had children, 15.9 per cent were one-parent families and 38.8 per cent were couples with no children.
- **Increased female participation in the workforce:** Women's participation in the workforce has increased significantly over the past few decades, leading to changes in gender roles and family dynamics. According to the ABS, in 1950 women accounted for 25 per cent of the workforce and in 2020 they accounted for 47.4 per cent of all employed persons in Australia. This has led to an increase in dual-income families, with both parents working to support the family financially.
- **Ageing population:** Australia's population is ageing, with an increasing number of older adults in the population. This has significant implications for families, as they are often responsible for providing care and support for their ageing parents. According to the ABS, in 2020, 16.0 per cent of the population was aged 65 years and over, and this is projected to increase to 23.9 per cent by 2058.
- **Economic inequality:** Economic inequality has increased in Australia, with significant implications for families. According to the ABS, in 2019–20, the top 20 per cent of households held 63.2 per cent of the total household wealth, while the bottom 20 per cent held just 0.4 per cent. This has led to increased financial stress and hardship for many families, particularly those in low-income households.

- **Changing attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation:** Attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation have changed significantly in Australia. According to the ABS, in 2020, 76.5 per cent of couples who lived together were married, while 23.5 per cent were in a de facto relationship. This shift has significant implications for families, as it can impact the legal rights and obligations of partners and their children.

As noted, demographic shifts in Australia have brought about significant changes to the experience of family life, with families becoming more diverse and fluid in their structure, roles and relationships. To learn more, see:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021. 'Census of Population and Housing: Family Characteristics, Australia'. [abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-and-families-census/latest-release](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-and-families-census/latest-release)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), April 2023. 'Labour Force, Australia'. [abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2022. 'Population Projections, Australia, 2017 (base) to 2066'. [abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/finance/household-income-and-wealth-australia/latest-release](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/finance/household-income-and-wealth-australia/latest-release)

## Cultural, economic, technological and social developments influencing the experience of family

In recent decades, Australia has undergone significant cultural, economic, technological and social changes and these have affected the family, as well as individuals.



### Cultural developments

**Cultural development** refers to the process of creating, protecting and transmitting the beliefs, values, norms, customs, traditions and practices of a society, which

are passed down over time. Cultural developments are driven by various factors such as technological advances, migration, globalisation and social movements.

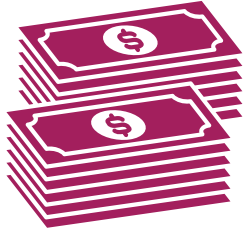
**Cultural development** is the process of creating, protecting and transmitting the beliefs, values, norms, customs, traditions and practices of a society, which are passed down over time.

Australia is a culturally diverse country that has undergone significant changes in the past decades, affecting family dynamics and structure. Australia's increased cultural diversity due to waves of immigration and globalisation has also led to the celebration and recognition of various cultural traditions. This diversity is linked to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census figure that showed that almost half of all Australians (48.2 per cent) have a parent born overseas. This diversity means that many families practise a range of different traditions, languages and customs. For many families, these practices result in positive experiences where personal connections are strengthened through the speaking of specific language(s) and/or engagement with meaningful cultural and/or faith-based traditions.

Sometimes people who are members of multiple cultural groups form what is known as 'ethnic hybridity'. Hybridity occurs when two or more cultural groups are blended to form a new cultural group. For example, a person who identifies as an Australian-Seychellois may have the following hybrid features: speaking English and French; eating a range of different foods, including mild curries, as well as Australian desserts; practising Catholicism or being an atheist (non-religious). When people have choice about their hybrid features this can be a positive and empowering experience. However, when family members feel pressured to adhere to specific cultural features tensions can arise: for example, concerns about the loss of language, erosion of important traditions and the weakening of intergenerational connections.

For more on the influence of cultural developments on the experience of family, read:

📖 Lauren Ironmonger, 2023. 'We didn't see couples like us growing up': Interracial dating in Australia'. Sydney Morning Herald. [smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/his-extended-family-don-t-know-about-me-interracial-dating-in-australia-20230124-p5cf0y.html](https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/his-extended-family-don-t-know-about-me-interracial-dating-in-australia-20230124-p5cf0y.html)



### Economic developments

**Economic developments** are the processes of improving people's access to financial resources, which is influenced by a variety of factors such as individual and collective contributions, charitable

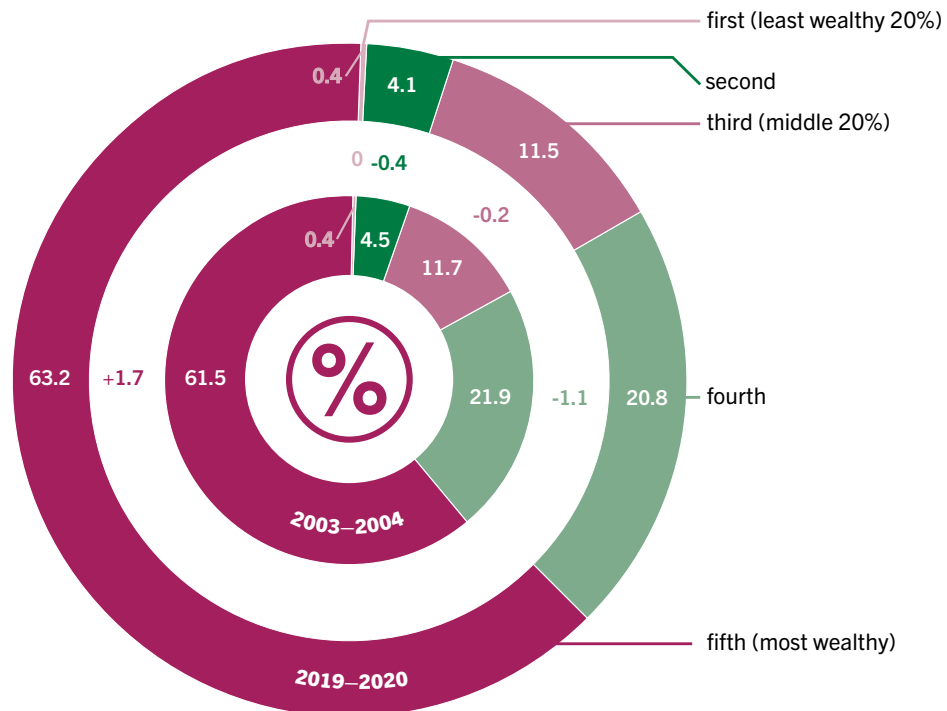
donations, government funding, and the economic conditions of society. It involves creating conditions that promote economic growth, such as increasing productivity, creating employment opportunities, attracting investment and improving infrastructure.

**Economic development** refers to the process of improving people's access to financial resources; it is influenced by a variety of factors such as individual and collective contributions, charitable donations, government funding, and the economic conditions of a society.

Economic developments have had a significant impact on families in Australia. The shift from traditional industries to a more service-oriented economy has resulted in changing employment patterns, with more people working in part-time, casual or contract jobs.

### Changes in distribution of net household wealth per quintile in Australia, 2003–04 to 2019–20

This chart divides the population into five groups ('quintiles') of equal size according to their household wealth. It shows what proportion of total household wealth in Australia was held by each group in 2003–04 (the inner 'donut') and 2019–20 (outer donut).





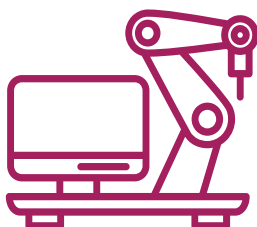
Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022. 'Australian National Accounts: Distribution of Household Income, Consumption and Wealth, 2003–04 to 2021–22'. [abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-national-accounts-distribution-household-income-consumption-and-wealth/2021-22-financial-year](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-national-accounts-distribution-household-income-consumption-and-wealth/2021-22-financial-year)



This can impact family income, job security and work–life balance. Additionally, the rising cost of living in Australia, particularly in cities, can make it difficult for families to make ends meet. This has contributed to a rise in multigenerational households, from 275 000 in 2016 to 335 000 in 2021 (ABS, 2021). This structure has evolved as a way to reduce the financial strain on families. A benefit of this type of household is the development of stronger connections across the generations, thus enhancing the experience of family.

Further reading about the influence of economic developments on the experiences of family:

-  Rhiannon Stevens, 2022. 'As rents and mortgage repayments rise, is multi-generational living the secret to thriving in tough economic times?' ABC. [abc.net.au/news/2022-08-06/surviving-cost-of-living-pressures-multi-generational-living/101233868](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-06/surviving-cost-of-living-pressures-multi-generational-living/101233868)
-  Shiloh Payne, 2023. 'Australians are struggling with increasing cost-of-living pressures. Here's how inflation is driving up the prices of common goods'. ABC. [abc.net.au/news/2023-01-27/consumer-price-index-categories/101863456](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-01-27/consumer-price-index-categories/101863456)



### Technological developments

**Technological developments** are the process of creating, improving and implementing tools, machines and systems that increase human productivity and efficiency through the application

of scientific knowledge and engineering skills. These developments can include the invention and improvement of tools, equipment and systems that make tasks easier, faster and more efficient. Some examples of technological developments include the invention of the Internet, smartphones, artificial intelligence and renewable energy sources.

Digital technology, including smartphones, social media and video conferencing, has revolutionised the way families communicate, making it easier for them to stay connected and share information even when they are physically distant. In the education sector, technology has transformed the way students learn, with online learning becoming more prevalent. Additionally, technology has disrupted traditional employment patterns, with some jobs being replaced by automation, and the gig economy becoming more prevalent.

**Technological developments** are advancements in technology that have improved and transformed various aspects of human life.



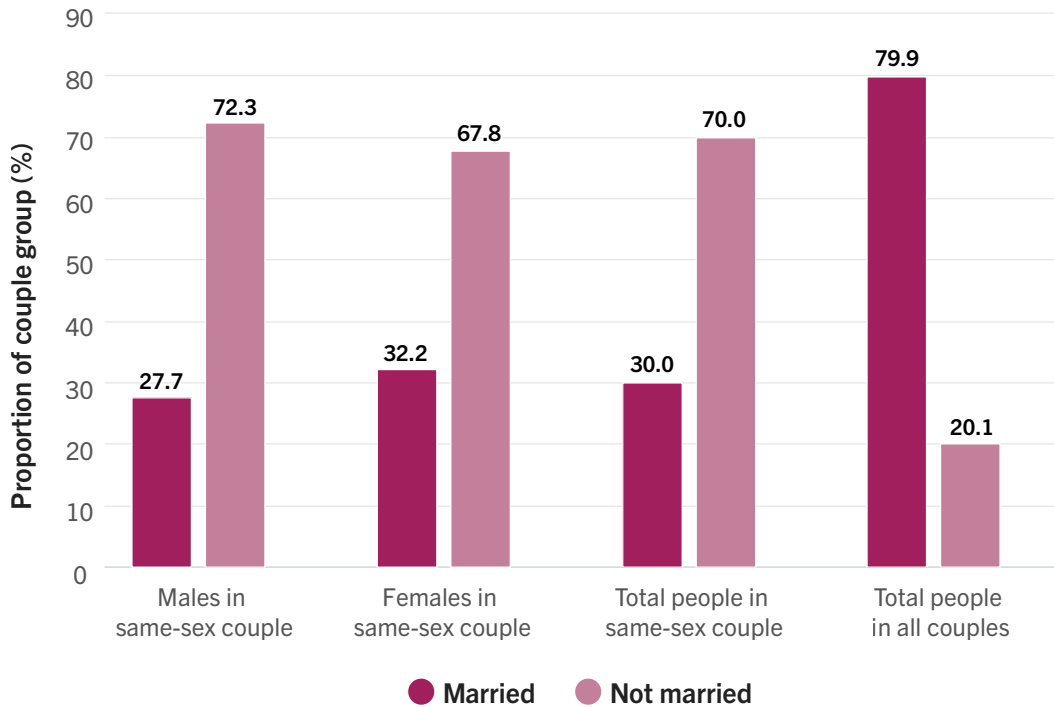
### Social developments

**Social developments** are changes within society that influence the behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of individuals and groups. This can include changes in culture, social norms, values, social trends and interpersonal dynamics.

Social developments in Australia have significantly impacted the experience of family. One major development is the growing acceptance of diverse family structures, including same-sex couples, blended families and lone-parent households. This change reflects a more inclusive and accepting society that values diverse family forms. When Australians voted 'Yes' to amend the *Marriage Act*, it revealed an increasing acceptance of same-sex relationships and changed the landscape of families in Australia, and resulted in 30 per cent of same-sex couples being married in 2021 (ABS, 2021).

**Social developments** are changes and progressions that occur within a society's social structure and norms over time.

### Marriage status of Australian couples (same-sex and general), 2021



ABS, 2022. 'Same-sex couples living together in Australia'.  
[abs.gov.au/articles/same-sex-couples-living-together-australia](https://abs.gov.au/articles/same-sex-couples-living-together-australia)

Additionally, the role of women in society has changed, with more women entering the workforce. This has challenged traditional gender roles and led to a shift in family dynamics. For some, these changes bring opportunity. For example, people may choose not to have a family, others may decide to participate in a non-traditional family role, and others in couple relationships may negotiate the various roles that need to be fulfilled in a modern family. Changing social attitudes about gender are reflected in the 2021 ABS Census data, which revealed that more than two-thirds of couples with children had both parents employed and 61 per cent of single mothers employed, which suggests an increasing need for childcare services. This is a critical factor for governments to accommodate in order to support parents and the experience of family.

Typically, there are *many* factors that influence experiences of family. For example, during the periods of lockdown in Victoria in 2020–21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many families were impacted by loss of employment, which changed the social dynamics within the household (e.g. gender roles and expectations around running the household). At the same time, children accessed remote learning from home (unthought-of one decade ago), spent more time with their families and may have had a more active role in the running of the household. This experience, exacerbated by economic, social and technological developments, prompted many families to re-evaluate the dynamics of their own family life.

Read more about the influence of social developments on the experience of family here:

📖 Megan Carroll et al., 2020. 'The good, the bad and the lonely: how coronavirus changed Australian family life'. *The Conversation*. [theconversation.com/the-good-the-bad-and-the-lonely-how-coronavirus-changed-australian-family-life-151688](https://theconversation.com/the-good-the-bad-and-the-lonely-how-coronavirus-changed-australian-family-life-151688)



## Activity J – Influences on the experience of family life

- 1 Copy and complete the table by identifying key developments in the given categories that have influenced the experience of family life. Use the further reading material provided above. Two examples have been provided to help get you started.

Demographic shifts	Cultural developments	Economic developments	Technological developments	Social developments
In 2021, 27.6 per cent of the population were born overseas as opposed to 26.3 per cent in 2016.	In 1950, women accounted for 25 per cent of the workforce and in 2020 they accounted for 47.4 per cent of all employed persons in Australia.			

- 2 Use the extended response writing guide provided in the previous chapter to plan and answer the following question.

*Analyse how two developments have influenced the experience of family. Support your response with evidence from your summary table.*

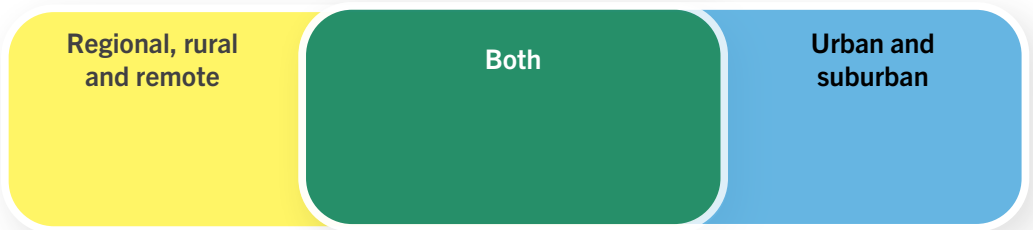
- 3 Read the 2020 article from The Conversation, ‘Yes, more and more young adults are living with their parents – but is that necessarily bad?’:

[theconversation.com/yes-more-and-more-young-adults-are-living-with-their-parents-but-is-that-necessarily-bad-146979](https://theconversation.com/yes-more-and-more-young-adults-are-living-with-their-parents-but-is-that-necessarily-bad-146979)

- Based on the article, identify why it is ‘not unusual’ for children to live at home as adults in the United States.
  - How has the rise of adults living with parents changed the nature of the family dynamic? You may wish to consider:
    - social developments
    - economic developments
    - technological developments.
  - How does this article relate to the experience of family life?
- 4 Read the 2011 report on ‘Families in regional, rural and remote Australia’ from the Australian Institute of Family Studies:

[aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/families-regional-rural-and-remote-australia](https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/families-regional-rural-and-remote-australia)

Based on the information in the report, compare family experiences in regional, rural and urban Australia. You may wish to draw a Venn diagram such as the one below to help you complete this activity.



- 5 Read the 2020 article by Patrick Parkinson, 'The erosion of marriage: Family and faith in a multicultural society' from ABC Religion:

[abc.net.au/religion/patrick-parkinson-erosion-of-family/12691648](http://abc.net.au/religion/patrick-parkinson-erosion-of-family/12691648)

- What type of development does this article relate to? How do you know?
- Write a dot-point summary which includes five quotes that could support an extended response question about the experience of family.
- Write an extended response question based on the ideas in the article and the chapter material explored so far. Ask a friend to check the question and write a plan together.

## Representations of family in the media <sup>1.2.8</sup>

The family, which is a key social institution, reflects the attitudes, expectations and cultural, social, economic and political context of its time. As you may expect, representations of the family in the media also reflect these factors. Media representations refer to the various ways in which people and events are depicted in media such as television, film, advertising, news and social media.

The reality of families' lives is often partially or completely reflected accurately in the media. Media representations can also have significant implications for how families are perceived and treated in society (as you'll see demonstrated in our *Modern Family* and *Gayby Baby* case studies provided).

Historically, media representations of families have tended to reflect patriarchal and **heteronormative** values, with the nuclear family consisting of a married heterosexual couple and their children as the dominant ideal. This ideal was particularly prevalent in the post-World War II era, when the nuclear family was seen as a cornerstone of Australian society.

**Heteronormativity** is the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and is the only natural or acceptable form of sexual orientation

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the ideal of the nuclear family began to be challenged by new cultural movements, such as feminism and the sexual revolution, which sought to expand the definition of what constituted a family. This led to a diversification of family representations in the media, with single-parent households, blended families, same-sex couples and chosen families all becoming more visible in popular culture.

Despite these changes, however, media representations of families have continued to be shaped by dominant cultural values, including the idealisation of motherhood, the importance of traditional gender roles, and the emphasis on the importance of biological kinship. This can lead to the marginalisation of families that do not fit these norms, as well as reinforcing stereotypes and limiting the potential for more diverse representations.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of more inclusive and diverse representations of families in the media, as well as greater attention to the impact that media representations can have on social attitudes and behaviours. This has led to a growing number of portrayals of families that challenge traditional gender and sexual norms, and that highlight the diversity of family forms and experiences. For example, the Australian TV series *The Letdown* (2017–2019) portrays the challenges of modern motherhood in Australia. It explores the lives of a diverse group of mothers, including a single mother and a lesbian couple, as they navigate the ups and downs of parenting. The popular children’s animated series *Bluey* features a modern Australian family and their everyday experiences. The show depicts the family’s dynamic, including that both parents work and are highly involved in the raising of their children.



Title card from Australian animated series *Bluey* (2018–)

However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that media representations of families are truly inclusive and reflective of the wide range of family structures and dynamics that exist in society. When representations reflect the authentic experiences of family life this can lead to feelings of belonging and affirmation; however, when they are inaccurate or rely on stereotypes, this can, in turn, generate feelings of alienation.



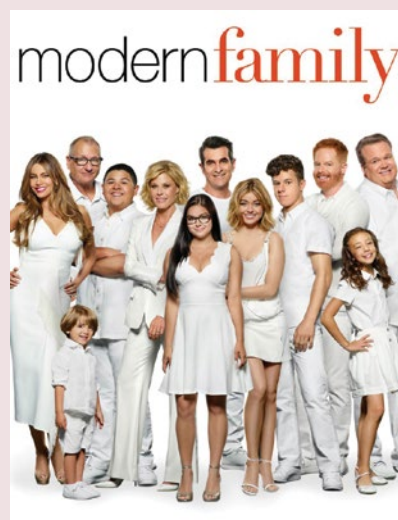
### Modern Family

The television show *Modern Family* premiered in 2009 and ran for 11 seasons until 2020. The show featured an ensemble cast of characters who were all members of an extended family, including a traditional nuclear family, albeit with a significant age gap between the couple (Jay and Gloria, a married couple with a young son); a same-sex couple with an adopted daughter (Mitchell and Cameron); and a blended family (combining Jay’s adult children Claire and Mitchell, who each have their own families, with the entire group).

The show was widely praised for its diverse representation of family structures and its portrayal of LGBTIQ+ characters. Mitchell and Cameron were seen as ground-breaking characters for their somewhat realistic and nuanced portrayal of a same-sex couple raising a child. The show also tackled a range of issues relevant to modern families, including parenting, marriage and intergenerational conflicts.

However, the show was also criticised for perpetuating some stereotypes and reinforcing traditional gender roles, particularly in its portrayal of the nuclear family. For example, Gloria, the mother in the traditional nuclear family, was often portrayed as overly emotional and irrational, while her husband, Jay, was seen as the more rational and level-headed parent. This reinforced traditional gender norms that position men as logical and rational and women as emotional and irrational. Mitchell and Cameron were also, at times, criticised for reinforcing gay stereotypes.

Overall, *Modern Family* represents an important case study in the representation of families in the media, highlighting both the progress that has been made in terms of diversity and inclusion and the ongoing challenges and limitations of media representations of families.



Promotional image for *Modern Family*'s 10th season



## Gayby Baby

The 2015 documentary *Gayby Baby* provides a glimpse into the lives of children being raised by same-sex parents in Australia, and how they navigate their everyday lives. The film features four families and shows how their non-traditional family structure has shaped their experiences. One of the families featured in the film is a same-sex male couple raising two children. The children discuss their experiences of being teased by their peers for having two dads and share their concerns about being different. Another family is a lesbian couple who have used a sperm donor to conceive their child. They discuss the challenges they faced in accessing fertility services due to their sexual orientation.

The film highlights the challenges faced by same-sex families, including discrimination and a lack of legal recognition. It also explores the positive aspects of having same-sex parents, including the close bond between children and their parents, the acceptance of diverse family structures, and the benefits of growing up in a non-traditional family.

The film promotes the acceptance of diverse family structures and challenges traditional notions of family. It shows that love and family can exist in many forms, and that what really matters is the love and support that children receive from their caregivers. The film has had a significant impact in promoting awareness and acceptance of same-sex families in Australia and has contributed to the ongoing development of the family structure in this country.



Promotional poster for *Gayby Baby*, 2015. [w.wiki/6iCh](http://w.wiki/6iCh)



## FAPO

LDB

The 'FAPO' strategy for examining the agenda of representations covered in the previous chapter can also be used when interpreting representations of family:

- **Form** – consider the form of representation you are reviewing, such as a film, book, or advertisement.
- **Attitudes** – identify the attitudes that are present or being challenged in the representation.
- **Positioning** – consider how the creators are attempting to persuade or educate their audience.
- **Omission** – observe whether there are any views, opinions or facts that are missing from the representation.



## Activity K – Representation of family in the media

- 1 Using the FAPO method, reflect on one or both of the media representations provided (*Modern Family* and/or *Gayby Baby*):
  - What **f**orm is used?
  - What **a**ttitudes are presented, or challenged?
  - How is the audience **p**ositioned (are they be educated or persuaded)?
  - What information or views have been **o**mitted?

- 2 Based on your media analysis in the previous question, discuss the extent to which the portrayal of the families and individuals in these case studies are representative of modern families/individuals.
- 3 Identify and analyse a modern family that is portrayed in the media of your own choosing.
- 4 Explain how representations of the family in the media shape our understanding of what a 'normal' family looks like, and how this might affect individuals and families in real life. Draw on at least one example in your answer.
- 5 Explain how media representations of family structures have changed over time. What do these changes reveal about shifts in societal norms and values?
- 6 Explain how media representations of the family reflect or shape the diversity of family structures that exist in society. How might this impact individuals from non-traditional families?
- 7 Explain how media portrayals of parenthood and the roles of mothers and fathers differ. What messages do these portrayals send about gender roles and expectations?

## The influence of government policy and government assistance on the experience of family <sup>1.2.9</sup>

**Government policies** and **government assistance** influence the lives of citizens and by extension the experience of family. Such experience may include the challenges, opportunities and realities that families face in their daily lives. This experience will be influenced by various social, economic, cultural and political factors that impact families' wellbeing and development, such as income inequality; access to healthcare, education and social services; family dynamics and cultural values.

Government policy can have both positive and negative effects on experiences of family. Historically, governments have used policies to provide incentives or disincentives to individuals in order to shape behaviour. They have also developed policies to shape the types of families it wants within society.

On the flip side, governments have also attempted to assist families. In recent years Australian government policies and assistance programs have played a significant role in shaping the experience of family. These policies and programs have been designed to support families in various ways, such as providing financial assistance to care for infants, improving access to healthcare, childcare and education, and promoting work–life balance.

One of the key ways in which the Australian government supports families is through financial assistance programs. For example, the Family Tax Benefit provides financial assistance to families with dependent children, while the Child Care Subsidy helps families with the cost of childcare. These programs help families to meet the cost of living and provide children with access to essential services such as education and healthcare.

The Australian government has also implemented policies to promote work–life balance for families. The Parental Leave Pay program provides eligible working parents with financial support during the first 20 weeks after the birth or adoption of a child. The government has also introduced the right to request flexible working arrangements, which allows parents to work flexible hours to better balance the demands of work and family life.

**Government policy** are the principles and objectives of a government and the actions it takes to address various issues affecting its citizens and the nation as a whole.

**Government assistance** is support and aid provided by a government to individuals, families or businesses facing financial difficulties or other challenges.

In addition to these financial assistance programs and policies, the Australian Government has also implemented policies to improve access to healthcare and education for families. The Medicare Benefits Schedule provides access to a range of medical services for families, while the *Education and Care Services National Law Act* regulates and sets standards for the provision of education and care services for children.

You can learn more about the federal Department of Social Services, as well as the Victorian Government’s Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, by following these links:

 [dss.gov.au/families-and-children](https://dss.gov.au/families-and-children)

 [services.dffh.vic.gov.au/families-and-children](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/families-and-children)




### **‘The nuclear family was a mistake’**

In a 2020 article for The Atlantic, American political and cultural commentator David Brooks argued that ‘the family structure we’ve held up as the cultural ideal for the past half century has been a catastrophe for many’. He claimed that the nuclear family was a product of a unique historical model – the post-World War II era that saw a rise in suburbanisation with families moving to the suburbs and relying on a single breadwinner to support the family – which gave rise to the nuclear family becoming the dominant family structure in American society.

The nuclear family, he argues, lacks the support and social connections that extended families and communities can provide. Conversely, the nuclear family is too insular, which can lead to a sense of isolation and loneliness for its members. Moreover, as society changes and demands on families evolve, the nuclear family model becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. For example, the need for two incomes means that parents have less time to devote to their children, and the ageing of the population means that there are fewer grandparents available to help with child-rearing.

Brooks proposes a ‘family agnostic’ approach, building on communities that can provide support for families regardless of the structure. He argues that policy changes, such as paid parental leave, universal education from pre-kinder and greater support for caregiving, are necessary to reflect the lives of modern families. In addition, we should look to other societies to better understand models for parents and appropriate support.

Further resources:

 David Brooks, 2020. ‘The nuclear family was a mistake’. The Atlantic.  
[theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/03/the-nuclear-family-was-a-mistake/605536](https://theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/03/the-nuclear-family-was-a-mistake/605536)



### **Further resources**

Don’t forget to check the online resource library – [sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12](https://sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12). This includes updated links to resources referenced in the textbook.






## Activity L – Effects of government policy on the experience of family


- 1 Select one government policy and discuss how it has impacted the structure and function of the family unit. In planning your answer, you may want to consider changes to individuals' roles, including their capacity to work, being the 'breadwinner' and so on.
- 2 Review the article (and/or summary provided) referenced in the above case study – 'The nuclear family was a mistake'.
  - a Outline Brooks' argument that the nuclear family is an 'accident of history'.
  - b Identify the key tenets of Brooks' argument that the 'nuclear family was a mistake'.
  - c Outline Brooks' proposal(s) to help make the family unit function better.
  - d Evaluate whether the 'nuclear family life' was a mistake, as claimed by Brooks.
  - e Analyse the extent to which Brooks' argument undermines the case for the functionalist perspective on the family.


- 3 Read Ben Butler's 2022 article, 'More affordable childcare would boost women's retirement savings, report says', from The Guardian:


 [theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/mar/21/more-affordable-childcare-would-boost-womens-retirement-savings-report-says](https://theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/mar/21/more-affordable-childcare-would-boost-womens-retirement-savings-report-says)

Explain how family policies such as parental leave and childcare subsidies affect gender roles and equality within households.

- 4 In your opinion, what is the role of government (or what should it be) in shaping family life? Discuss this with a classmate. Make note of the similarities and differences in each of your perspectives.
- 5 For a more in-depth activity, read the linked articles and use what you've learnt to analyse how government policies such as parental leave and childcare subsidies affect gender roles and equality within the household.

 Kate Jenkins, 2021. 'The gendered costs of childcare: A feminist analysis of the effects of Australia's early childhood education and care system on women's inequality in the workforce and beyond'. University of Melbourne (for the Future of Work Lab – Women at Work series). [unimelb.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/4117192/Kate-J\\_FoWL-Report.pdf](https://unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/4117192/Kate-J_FoWL-Report.pdf)

 Regan M. Johnston et al., 2020. 'Evidence of Exacerbated Gender Inequality in Child Care Obligations in Canada and Australia during the COVID-19 Pandemic'. *Politics and Gender*. [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7853744](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7853744)

 Aleisha Orr, 2023. 'Childcare will be cheaper in Australia from July. Could it ever be free?', SBS News. [sbs.com.au/news/article/childcare-will-be-cheaper-from-july-in-australia-could-it-ever-be-free/4plyazbez](https://sbs.com.au/news/article/childcare-will-be-cheaper-from-july-in-australia-could-it-ever-be-free/4plyazbez)

# Revision questions

## Short-answer questions

- 1 Explain how the family is a social institution.
- 2 Outline three different contemporary family compositions.
- 3 Explain the feminist view of the family.
- 4 Explain how the family has changed over time in Australia. Refer to demographic data in your response.
- 5 Explain and apply the feminist or functionalist theory to an example of a family represented in the media.
- 6 Explain how a government policy or government assistance is designed to enhance the experience of family.

## Analysis activity

- 1 Review the question and the suggested response plan provided. Then, read the sample response, and assess the response against the plan.

*Explain the functionalist view of the family.*

### Response plan:

- *define family*
- *explain what functionalism is*
- *show how the functionalist view explains the purpose of family*

### Sample response:

*A family is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as 'two or more persons, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who are usually resident in the same household'.*

*Functionalists argue that the family serves several important social functions such as reproducing the next generation, socialising children, and providing emotional and economic support for its members. They argue that the traditional nuclear family is the most efficient and effective unit for performing these functions, which in turn leads to a strong and stable society.*

- 2 Rewrite this response to ensure it more accurately addresses the requirements outlined in the plan provided.

## Extended response questions

- 1 Use comparative methodology to explain the differences between the experience of families in Australia and families in another nation. In your answer, refer to one Australian and one non-Australian family you have studied this year.
- 2 Explain how the construct of family has changed over time. Support your response with examples of past and present compositions of families.
- 3 Explain how Australian government policy and/or assistance has affected the experience of the family. In your answer, refer to at least one example or materials you have studied this year.
- 4 Read the question and partial sample response provided below. Using the partial introduction and first body paragraph as a starting point, complete the introduction, and write a second paragraph and a conclusion to round out the response.

### Question:

*Analyse how one technological development and one cultural development have impacted the experience of Australian family life. In your answer, refer to material that you have studied this year.*

### Partial sample response:

*One technological development that has impacted the experience of contemporary Australian family life is the increased prevalence of smartphones and social media. One cultural development that has impacted the experience of Australian family life is increased cultural diversity. Family refers to (...). Technological developments refer to (...). Cultural developments refer to (...). Experience of family refers to (...).*

*The prevalence of smartphones and social media has transformed the way families communicate in positive and negative ways. The Digital 2021 Australia report by We Are Social and Hootsuite revealed that 88 per cent of the Australian population uses the Internet, with 79 per cent accessing it via mobile devices. This widespread connectivity enables family members to stay in touch regardless of physical distance. The report also highlighted that Australians spend an average of 5 hours and 13 minutes per day using the Internet. Excessive screen time has led to decreased face-to-face interactions and decreased quality family time. The rise of streaming services and online entertainment options has also altered family dynamics, with individuals often retreating to their personal devices for entertainment rather than engaging in shared activities. The increased use of smartphones and social media has paradoxically led to increased breadth of connection among families across generations but also decreased depth of connection among family members in terms of intimacy.*

## Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: [sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12](http://sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12)

### Books

Diamond, J., 2012. *The World Until Yesterday: What can we learn from traditional societies?* Viking.

### Podcasts

'Managing the cost of childcare'. Life Matters. ABC RN, 2023. [abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/managing-the-cost-of-childcare/102626666](http://abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/managing-the-cost-of-childcare/102626666)

'Talkback: chosen families'. Life Matters. ABC RN, 2023. [abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/talkback-chosen-families/102538550](http://abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/talkback-chosen-families/102538550)

### Videos

'Female uni students asked about their role in society (1961) Retrofocus'. ABC News, 2021 (4 min). [youtu.be/m7GGKkVCFxY](https://youtu.be/m7GGKkVCFxY)

'Should husbands help with the weekend housework? (1961) Retrofocus'. ABC News, 2018 (4 min). [youtu.be/ZhfnLoEOTyk](https://youtu.be/ZhfnLoEOTyk)

Theories About Family & Marriage: Crash Course Sociology #37. CrashCourse, 2017 (11 min). [youtu.be/yaeiCEro0iU](https://youtu.be/yaeiCEro0iU)

'Polygamy in modern Muslim Malaysia'. DW Stories, 2021 (13 min). [fb.watch/m0sK6tiwMr](https://fb.watch/m0sK6tiwMr)

'How modern families increase social inequality'. The Economist, 2019 (18 min). [youtu.be/hSmAYUnZyxE](https://youtu.be/hSmAYUnZyxE)

'The Marriage Dilemma in China'. CTGN, 2018 (29 min). [youtu.be/KWJ3gm3tiDA](https://youtu.be/KWJ3gm3tiDA)

'You can't ask that: Domestic and family violence survivors answer 'Why didn't you just leave?', ABC TV, 2019 (3 min). [youtu.be/gmDXwF\\_fjOY](https://youtu.be/gmDXwF_fjOY)

*The Letdown*, 2017–19. ABC TV. [iview.abc.net.au/show/letdown](http://iview.abc.net.au/show/letdown)

### Websites

'Census 2021 – Australia as 100 people'. ABC News, 2022. [abc.net.au/news/2022-06-29/census-australia-as-100-people/101181614](http://abc.net.au/news/2022-06-29/census-australia-as-100-people/101181614)

Families Australia. [familiesaustralia.org.au](http://familiesaustralia.org.au)

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[abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2103.01981](https://abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2103.01981)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). '2021 Census of Population and Housing: Family Characteristics, Australia'. [abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-and-families-census/latest-release](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-and-families-census/latest-release)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). 2022a. 'How Australians use their time'. [abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/how-australians-use-their-time/latest-release](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/how-australians-use-their-time/latest-release)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2022b. 'Labour force status of families'. [abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-status-families/latest-release](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-status-families/latest-release)
- Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Penguin.
- Durkheim, É. 1895. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press.



# 2.1

## Unit 2, Area of study 1:



# Deviance

## “Unit 2, Area of Study 1: Deviance

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse a range of sociological theories explaining deviant behaviour and the impact of moral panic on those considered deviant.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

### Key knowledge

- 1 the sociological concept of deviance:
  - 1.1 the relationship between deviance and social norms
  - 1.2 deviance as a relative concept
- 2 Emile Durkheim’s functionalist theory of deviance and its four roles of deviance:
  - 2.1 affirmation of society’s cultural norms and values
  - 2.2 clarification of a society’s moral boundaries
  - 2.3 the unification of others in society
  - 2.4 promoting social change
- 3 Travis Hirschi’s social control theory of deviance and the relationship between weak bonds and deviance:
  - 3.1 attachment
  - 3.2 commitment
  - 3.3 involvement
  - 3.4 belief in social values
- 4 Howard S. Becker’s labelling theory of deviance:
  - 4.1 the process of labelling
  - 4.2 responses to labelling
- 5 the nature of positive deviance: altruism, charisma, innovation, supraconformity and innate characteristics
- 6 Stanley Cohen’s theory of moral panics:
  - 6.1 the creation of folk devils
  - 6.2 the role of the media in assisting in the creation of moral panics
- 7 the impact of moral panic on individuals and groups considered to be deviant.

### Key skills

- i explain and apply sociological concepts
- ii explain how deviance is a relative concept
- iii explain and apply the functionalist, social control and labelling theories of deviance
- iv outline examples of positive deviance



- v analyse the impact of moral panic on individuals and groups considered to be deviant
- vi gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis
- vii evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others' approaches to understanding the social world
- viii synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

## Preface

In this area of study, students focus on the concept of deviance, including how what is considered deviant may differ according to age and social status and across time and space. They learn about the meaning of deviance, how sociologists explain deviant behaviour and the impact of moral panic on those considered deviant.

Students explore three perspectives that sociologists have established to explain deviance: Emile Durkheim's functionalist theory, Travis Hirschi's elaboration of social control theory and Howard S. Becker's labelling theory. Students also identify examples of positive deviance.

Students develop an understanding of Stanley Cohen's theory of moral panic, where a condition, episode, person or group emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests. According to Cohen, there are five sequential stages of a moral panic, with the mass media being a key agent in the exaggeration and distortion of messages. Commonly, moral panics relate to the behaviours of young people and sometimes these can be associated with behaviour or activities identified as deviant. ”

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2023.  
'VCE Sociology Study Design, 2024–2028'.  
[vcaa.vic.edu.au/documents/vce/sociology/2024sociologysd.pdf](https://vcaa.vic.edu.au/documents/vce/sociology/2024sociologysd.pdf)



# Deviance

“The focus of deviance studies tends to be on the margins between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours; to examine the boundaries between right and wrong, between the acceptable and the unacceptable, and between insiders and outsiders.”

Glenn W. Muschert, 2012. *Deviance and Crime*. Facts on File.

**Deviance** includes actions that challenge existing social norms. These types of behaviours have existed for centuries. When people engage in deviant activities they are often subjected to social stigma and judgement because they are challenging the views of the many, and often those in power.

**Deviance** refers to actions considered to be outside a society's understood and accepted standards of behaviour, or, more formally, the violation of social norms.

Sociologists have noted that deviance can be beneficial for society by clarifying expected social rules and values. For example, people who engage in physical violence towards others are viewed as deviant in modern Australian society. Our societal value is that violence is not acceptable. This belief is reinforced by formal punishments and social judgements.

Deviance (and deviants) can also benefit society by encouraging and 'testing' social changes before they can become accepted by the mainstream. The actions of the Australian suffragettes, First Nations civil rights activists and the marriage equality movement in Australia are examples of groups who, despite significant opposition and adversity, were able to challenge existing social rules to benefit groups who were experiencing injustice.

The sociology of deviance seeks to examine the social forces that contribute to deviance in society. It also aims to understand and explain the process of deviance. In this chapter you will explore the questions that sociologists ask. These include:

- what is deviance?
- what are deviant behaviours?
- who sets social norms and rules?
- how are social norms and rules constructed?
- why are some people motivated to engage or not engage in deviant behaviour?
- why and how do sections of society react to deviant behaviour, people and groups?



## Activity A – Deviance

Write a dot-point summary responding to the following questions. When you've finished, share your answers with a friend, or with the class as a whole. Take note of the similarities and difference in each of your responses.

- 1 What is deviance? How do you know when something is deviant?
- 2 What are some social norms (rules) enforced in society?
- 3 Can something be illegal but not deviant? Provide an example.
- 4 Can something be deviant yet not illegal? Provide an example.

## The sociological concept of deviance 2.1.1

Deviance can also be understood as describing those who do not conform to a society's standards and as a result are looked upon unfavourably or with suspicion. In this case, they are **non-conformists**. Over time many individuals and/or groups have chosen not to conform to societal expectations: for example, the various waves of feminists who were studied earlier in this text.

**Non-conformists** are people who do not comply with the general norms set out by society.

More recently, the climate activism of Greta Thunberg reflects actions of a person who has dissented from established social norms. Thunberg is an environmental activist who inspired the youth led 'School Strike for Climate' social movement in 2018, at 15 years of age. She is a non-conformist in that her actions placed protest ahead of schooling. In addition, she was blunt rather than diplomatic in her use of language about her criticism of political leaders, organisations and governments for their lack of action. Thunberg continues to agitate for social change today.

Want to learn more? Look here:

- 🔗 'Greta Thunberg Facts'. National Geographic. [natgeokids.com/uk/kids-club/cool-kids/general-kids-club/greta-thunberg-facts](https://natgeokids.com/uk/kids-club/cool-kids/general-kids-club/greta-thunberg-facts)
- 🔗 Sonia Elks, 2019. 'Timeline: Greta Thunberg's rise from lone protester to Nobel Favorite'. Reuters. [reuters.com/article/us-sweden-nobel-thunberg-timeline-idUSKBN1WI1RT](https://reuters.com/article/us-sweden-nobel-thunberg-timeline-idUSKBN1WI1RT)

In everyday language and discussion, deviance is generally thought about, described and positioned as being negative and bad. However, it is not always necessarily this way; it can be positive and constructive.

Before we delve deeper into this area of study, keep in mind that sociologists are interested in deviance in a 'neutral' way. What this means is that sociologists do not make normative ('is this good or bad?') judgements about deviant behaviour; rather, they try to observe, investigate and understand the dynamics involved when a societal norm has been violated. Our focus is not only the behaviour but also the *response* to the behaviour.



People, groups and behaviours that don't conform to social norms are often understood as being 'deviant'.

## The relationship between deviance and social norms 2.1.1.1

Deviance and social norms are interrelated. Social norms lay out the expectations for our daily lives. They inform us of how we are expected to behave in different situations, places and contexts. Social norms are underpinned and informed by **core values**.

When social norms are broken, society reacts by imposing **sanctions**. A sanction is society's reaction to deviant

**Core values** are the common ideas and beliefs held by a group that underpin what is important, and how people in general behave; these can include equality, freedom of speech and family, and may vary across context, time and space.

behaviours and can be positive or negative. Positive reactions reward behaviours that adhere to social norms, while negative reactions aim to discourage behaviours by punishing them. This process is referred to as **social control**, which is society's way of ensuring conformity by employing methods that focus on regulating or changing behaviour.

It is important to note that not all deviant behaviour is necessarily wrong, immoral, criminal or harmful. Deviance at its core refers to any behaviour that deviates or strays from a society's established norms. This means that deviant behaviour can range from harmless acts and behaviours to more harmful actions, and these are all defined by social norms.

Small infractions might include talking with your mouth full, opening a birthday gift and not thanking the person who gave it to you, not giving up your seat on public transport to an elderly person or pregnant woman, or jaywalking. Theft and murder are more serious infractions. You can see here that as they escalate in seriousness and harm caused, the punishment applied in each case increases. Your parent might just glare at you if you talk with your mouth full, but a murderer faces life imprisonment.

These examples exclude other forms of deviance such as how one may dress, act or speak. For example, there are accepted way to dress for particular contexts: school, work, a wedding, a funeral or a nightclub.

Expected social norms of how to dress also apply to one's age, gender and profession. This then extends to how people are expected to behave in particular/specific contexts: for example, young couples who show affection in public are seen as cute, in love and romantic. However, if an elderly couple engages in the same behaviour, it is often seen as being inappropriate.

Let's think about our everyday life – from the moment we wake until bedtime, our day requires us to negotiate our way through different situations and contexts.

In the morning in our homes, we negotiate space and time: for example, who uses the bathroom first and how long can it be used for?

Whether we drive to work or take public transport, there are several informal and formal rules that we are expected to abide by. When we arrive at our place of work or study, we are bound by particular expectations: from the way we dress and how we address those around us to what is expected of us in the way we work.

Then there is the broader context of our lives: from supermarkets and shopping centres, restaurants and cafes, to other people's homes, gyms, sports clubs and so on.

We are made aware of what behaviour is expected of us through many different means: informal expectations, signs, cursory glances, social contracts and agreements. Social norms are everywhere and are upheld or made clear to us by others.

In many ways social norms – informal and formal – help us live together. They manage small groups such as families, friends and community groups all the way to big groups, such as nations.

**Sanctions** are a society's reaction to deviant behaviours, which can be either positive or negative; positive reactions reward behaviours that adhere to social norms, while negative reactions aim to discourage behaviours through punishment.

**Social control** refers to the process of enforcing conformity and minimising deviance by using authority to enforce norms.



### Local or community social norms

Many public places such as parks and beaches feature signs requiring that dogs be kept on a leash and that owners collect and dispose of any dog waste.



### State or regional social norms

When travelling on public transport in Victoria, a valid ticket is required, and respectful behaviour is expected – for instance, it’s assumed you’ll relinquish your seat to someone who has limited mobility.



### National or international social norms

Acts of transgression can include committing acts seen to endanger national security: for example, Wikileaks’ distribution of classified government intelligence to various media outlets.

These signs outline the behaviours expected while walking a dog or at a train station. Not conforming to these can lead to a caution and/or some sort of penalty.



### Etiquette as a social norm

In every society there are social norms that outline the ways we are expected to behave in social and professional situations. We all generally understand what is polite and impolite behaviour. This is referred to as social etiquette. For example, we generally know to:

- say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’
- not talk with a mouth full of food
- not push, or push in front of, others waiting in a queue
- not use slang or swear in professional emails
- use greetings when answering the phone, meeting someone, entering a room, or arriving at a social function.

## Please treat our team with respect.

Our team is here to help make your shopping experience a pleasant one.

We will not tolerate any verbal abuse and aggressive or violent behaviour towards our team or other shoppers.

If you have a complaint, we are here to help. Call 1300 767 969 or visit [woolworths.com.au](http://woolworths.com.au)



During and after the COVID-19 pandemic in particular, there has been much concern about lack of politeness and increased rudeness in our interactions at work and in public. As a result, many organisations have run awareness campaigns to remind people of the behaviours that are expected in the hospitality, retail and health sectors.

You can learn more about the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA) campaign against verbal abuse of staff working in the retail and fast-food sectors from the SDA website.

[national.sda.com.au/win-for-woolworths-members-sda-welcomes-new-signs-calling-for-respect-from-customers](http://national.sda.com.au/win-for-woolworths-members-sda-welcomes-new-signs-calling-for-respect-from-customers)



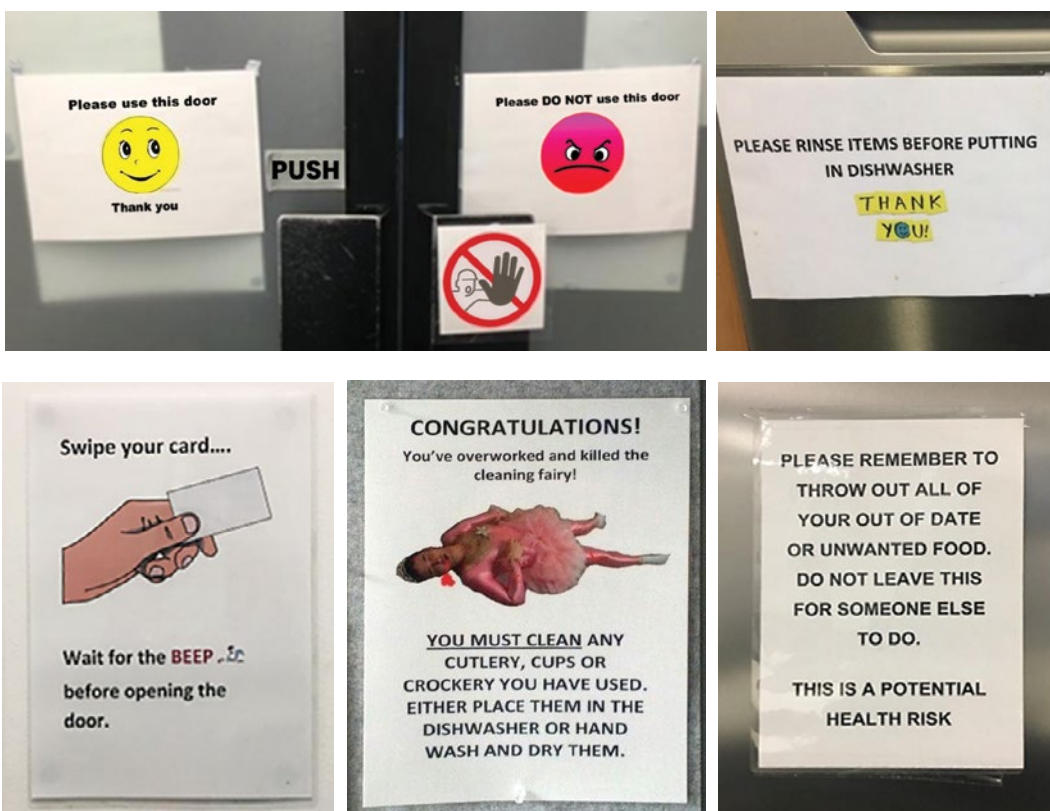
## Activity B – Rudeness and social etiquette

- 1 Read this article about rudeness at work and then, in small groups, discuss the following questions.
  - 📖 Trevor Folk, 2016. 'Why rudeness at work is contagious and difficult to stop'. AEON. [aeon.co/ideas/why-rudeness-at-work-is-contagious-and-difficult-to-stop](http://aeon.co/ideas/why-rudeness-at-work-is-contagious-and-difficult-to-stop)
  - a Which acts are considered to be rude in the workplace?
  - b What are the links between rudeness, deviancy and social norms?
  - c What are the consequences of rudeness on individuals, a workplace and broader society?
  - d What other examples of rudeness have you observed at school, at home or in your community?
  - e What might the lack of politeness and the supposed increase in rude behaviour suggest about changes in social norms and values?



## Activity C – Deviance and social norms

- 1 These five photos were taken in a workplace (before COVID-19). Review the photos and answer the questions that follow.
  - a Identify the behaviour that each sign is prohibiting.
  - b Identify the social norm that each sign is enforcing.
  - c List the possible reasons for the prohibited behaviour and the value it is upholding.
  - d What kind of a workplace would this be? What would it feel like to work there?
  - e What kind of a person would be seen to be deviant?



## Deviance as a relative concept <sup>2.1.1.2</sup>

To sociologists, the concept of deviance is relative, meaning that it varies according to time, space, age, social status and social group.

### Religious and scientific views of deviance

Before the 1950s, deviance was framed within religious beliefs and the notions of good and evil (bad). For example, in countries where Christian values are held, notions of right and wrong are informed by the Ten Commandments set out in the Bible.



#### The Ten Commandments

##### You shall ...

- 1 have no other gods
- 2 make or worship no idols
- 3 not take my name in vain
- 4 keep the Sabbath day holy
- 5 honour your parents
- 6 not murder
- 7 not commit adultery
- 8 not steal
- 9 not lie or deceive
- 10 not covet

Since the 1950s, understandings of deviance have moved to more science-based theories, based on biological and psychological theories. While religion and science may differ in focus, what they have in common is that they consider deviant behaviour to be a 'fault' in the individual who is often seen as being 'abnormal'. This abnormality is viewed as being caused by defects in either their biological or psychological make-up.

Sociologists, however, see deviance very differently. Their focus is on the social context in which deviance occurs – as well as on how society's norms are accepted or rejected by its members.

Social factors are important factors to consider when attempting to explain why a person might engage in deviant acts. Examples of social factors that make people more likely to engage in deviant behaviours include:

- **inequality**, such as having limited access to educational and healthcare resources
- **socioeconomic status**, such as experiencing exclusion based on social class or economic barriers
- **biases** and **prejudices** in various legal institutions: for example, structural racism
- **stereotyping** and **social factors** that lead people to feel that they should be deviant and/or are deviant.

### Deviance varies across time and space

Deviance is not a stagnant concept; it is fluid. Much like society itself, it is always changing and constantly being redefined, as our values and social norms are negotiated and renegotiated.

Interestingly, it is not possible to isolate certain behaviours that are universally viewed as deviant by all societies. Deviance is relative (it varies) according to **time** and **space**.

#### Victoria police accused of racial profiling, as data shows minority groups more likely to receive Covid fines

African, Middle Eastern and First Nations people up to four times more likely to be fined for Covid-19 breaches

The Guardian



**Difference based on time** relates to *when* deviance occurred. Sociologists have noted that what may have been viewed as deviant in the past often changes over time. For example, witchcraft was historically considered deviant but this is no longer the case in Australian society. Similarly, what is deviant now may not be in the future. And in some cases, what is deviant now may not have been deviant 100 years ago.

A powerful example of the relative nature of deviance is the age of marriage. In 1942, the Tasmanian parliament passed a law to raise the minimum age of marriage from 12 to 16 for women and 14 to 18 for men. Twelve and fourteen years of age to marry may have been acceptable in the 1940s, but this would now be seen as deviant. The age of marriage across Australia is now 18 years.

Another example is the current debate about raising the age of criminal responsibility. Currently in Victoria the age of criminal responsibility is 12 and the plan is to raise it to 14 within four years. Thus, a young person who could be a criminal now may not be in the future.

Want to learn more about this debate? Start here:

- 📄 Sumeyya Illanby and Annika Smethurst, 2023. 'Victoria to raise age of criminal responsibility to 12'. *The Age*. [theage.com.au/politics/victoria/victoria-to-raise-age-of-criminal-responsibility-to-12-20230424-p5d2vw.html](https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/victoria-to-raise-age-of-criminal-responsibility-to-12-20230424-p5d2vw.html)
- 📄 Legal Aid Victoria, 2019. 'Am I old enough? Common legal issues for young people'. [legalaid.vic.gov.au/am-i-old-enough-common-legal-issues-young-people](https://legalaid.vic.gov.au/am-i-old-enough-common-legal-issues-young-people)

**Difference based on space** refers to the *place* that deviance occurred. This means that what is considered deviant in one context, society or culture may not be so in another. For example, consider adults drinking alcohol. A person at home alone who drinks three or more glasses of wine may be seen as having a 'drinking problem'. Whereas a person who drinks the same amount at a party may be seen as enjoying a night out with friends.

As you read earlier, social norms can be influenced by religion, and they can also be influenced by culture. We refer to these as cultural norms and they are specific to place. Cultural norms refer to customs and values of a society that provide general guidelines to navigate everyday life and a common purpose. Using alcohol again as an example, a person who consumes alcohol breaching their orthodox or devout faith would be viewed as having engaged in deviant behaviour.

## Eating animals

In India, Hinduism is practised by approximately 80 per cent of the population. According to the Hindu belief system, cows hold a sacred status. As such, they are not consumed and are allowed to wander freely in the streets. Any mistreatment of cattle is seen as deviant and, in many cases, criminal – cultural and religious norms are visibly intertwined. This differs to Australia, where, broadly speaking, the influence of religious beliefs on which animals are considered suitable for consumption or slaughter is relatively weak. While attitudes in Australia against eating certain animals, such as cats and dogs, seem to have some basis in early Christian thought, modern sentiments generally invoke the pseudo-social status of cats and dogs as pets for why eating one might feel 'wrong'. Conversely, the slaughter of other animals in particular settings

### Cow slaughter to be punishable by life sentence in Gujarat

Government of Indian state to introduce a bill bolstering existing laws against butchering the revered animals

The Guardian

(such as on a residential street of a city or large town) would be considered quite shocking and aberrant in Australia; it's generally expected that livestock are killed in a slaughterhouse or on a farm or in another rural setting. In India, however, even among a population that is largely vegetarian, it's not unusual to encounter people slaughtering chickens for cooking at home or in public view.

As we know, eating habits are strongly influenced by cultural values, which vary widely between and within different countries. Each culture has developed different ways of choosing, preparing and eating food. For example, in Japan and China it is customary to use chopsticks as your main utensil, while in many parts of the Arab world it is far more commonplace to eat a meal with your hands or to use small pieces of bread to 'scoop up' food. In Australia, however, the dominant custom is to eat using knives, forks and spoons. Not conforming to these customs would be viewed as deviant.


Actions and behaviours around the dinner table also vary across cultures. Burping at the dinner table after a meal or making slurping noises while eating would be seen as rude in many homes around Australia and would probably illicit a reaction, possibly even a reprimand. However, in Japan slurping is generally taken to mean you are enjoying your meal, while in China burping is thought to show that you've enjoyed your meal and signals appreciation. This example shows that the same action is perceived differently across cultures.



## Activity D – Space, food and social norms


Let's explore the relationship between food, eating and social norms a little further.

**1** Read the following article and then discuss the questions that follow with a classmate.

 USAID, 2023. 'Responding to social norms that Influence food choices'.  
[advancingnutrition.org/what-we-do/activities/responding-social-norms-influence-food-choices](https://advancingnutrition.org/what-we-do/activities/responding-social-norms-influence-food-choices)

- a** How can food choices be influenced by social norms and cultural values?
- b** Identify and discuss other examples or situations where social norms and location influence what and how we eat (for example, on a 'first date').

**2** Read the following article.

 '7 interesting eating habits from different cultures'. Kuali, 2023.  
[kuali.com/kitchen-inspirations/7-interesting-eating-habits-from-different-cultures](https://kuali.com/kitchen-inspirations/7-interesting-eating-habits-from-different-cultures)

Use what you've learnt from the article as the basis for creating a multimedia presentation. Your presentation could include text, images, audio, video and/or animations. In your presentation, make sure you feature the following:

- a** Select and briefly describe two countries or cultural regions.
- b** Outline some of the social norms relating to food for each nation.
- c** Provide tips of do's and don'ts (it might be helpful to imagine your audience is actually about to travel to both countries).
- d** Describe the consequences of breaking the social norms you've outlined in each culture.

### Other examples of the relative nature of deviance

There are many other examples of the relative nature of deviance. Below, let's explore two of them: illicit and alternative drug use, and social status.

## Illicit and alternative drug use

Over the years there has been a consistent push for the legalisation of certain drugs for medicinal use. The campaign for marijuana to be legalised for medicinal use (medicinal cannabis as well as CBD oil) was met with much resistance due to marijuana's status as a 'deviant' drug (in contrast to, say, alcohol or prescription medications). While as of 2023 the recreational use of marijuana remains illegal in Victoria, it is now permitted for medicinal purposes, under heavy regulation by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). The TGA is an organisation that ensures that medicines made available to the public are safe to use. Doctors may legally prescribe medicinal cannabis for patients for whom they deem it is clinically appropriate – often to assist with pain management.

In 2023, Australia became the first country in the world to legalise the use of psychedelic medicines such as MDMA and psilocybin for mental health treatment in certain circumstances. Psychiatrists are now able to prescribe these drugs for specific cases of certain mental illnesses that have proven resistant to other treatment methods. As with medicinal marijuana, this process and the circumstances in which use is permitted are overseen by the TGA.

These developments are interesting to us because they reflect some of the ways in which views of illicit and alternative drug use have changed over time. In the past, these drugs were strongly associated with deviance and, to some extent, criminality. Many hours of police and court time have been spent fighting the 'war on drugs'. Today, views about the benefits of *some* drugs have shifted, in light of their potential as medicine. So if a person consumes these drugs as prescribed by a health professional (rather than via a drug dealer), they are less likely to feel like and be viewed as deviant, even if the substance itself is the same. This can be further complicated when travelling with these substances overseas, as some other countries are much less tolerant of their presence *regardless* of whether they've been prescribed by a doctor in Australia.

You can read the following articles to learn more:


- 📖 Kate O'Halloran, 2023. '100,000 Australians were prescribed medicinal cannabis for chronic pain in 2022. Is it effective, and when is it legal to take?' ABC News. [abc.net.au/news/2023-06-18/medicinal-cannabis-lauren-jackson-chronic-pain-evidence-legal/102463560](https://abc.net.au/news/2023-06-18/medicinal-cannabis-lauren-jackson-chronic-pain-evidence-legal/102463560)
- 📖 Donna Lu, 2023. 'Australian psychiatrists can now prescribe MDMA and psilocybin: who can access them and how do they work?'. The Guardian. [theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jul/01/australian-psychiatrists-can-now-prescribe-mdma-and-psilocybin-who-can-access-them-and-how-do-they-work](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jul/01/australian-psychiatrists-can-now-prescribe-mdma-and-psilocybin-who-can-access-them-and-how-do-they-work)

## Social status

Another example of the relative nature of deviance can be seen in social status – that is, a person's standing or importance in a society or group. A person's social status can influence

and be influenced by how they behave, how much they earn, their profession or level of education, how they speak and/or who their family or friends might be. In other words, a person's social status often comes intertwined with a set of assumptions or expectations. For instance, we might expect that those from a higher socioeconomic background would not use slang or swear words in everyday conversation, and correspondingly that those from lower socioeconomic status would speak more casually. We expect those in positions with more 'authority'

**Actor Vince Colosimo faces court over \$65,000 in unpaid fines** 

Hunter Biden agrees to plead guilty in tax case and avoid prosecution on gun charge 

attached to them – such as, lawyers, actors, sportspeople or politicians – to model a higher standard of behaviour than the average person. This, in turn, can mean that when someone in one of these groups is seen to break a social norm, they might be held to account at a higher standard, or conversely that they are given greater leeway due to their position. ‘Cancel culture’, where someone is shunned, ostracised or boycotted for doing or saying something deemed unacceptable, is another more recent development in how many people understand this dynamic.



## Activity E – Observing deviance

- 1 Think about the ways that behaviour is viewed as deviant in some contexts and not in others. Create a table in your notes based on the one below. Use the sample as a guide.

Deviant act	Location	Social norm being breached	Reaction/potential sanctions	How is this form of deviance relative?
Cyber bullying of a young person	Australian-based social media app	Racism and sexism are not consistent with Australian values.	Anger from peers resulting in social exclusion Formal punishment from school and family	Time: laws have been slow to catch up with this form of harassment. These laws are fairly recent. Space: not all nations have cyberbullying laws.

- 2 How do sociologists define deviance?
- 3 Provide an example of a deviant behaviour. Explain why it is viewed as deviant.
- 4 Provide an example of a behaviour that may viewed as deviant in one setting but not in another. Explain why.
- 5 Provide an example of a behaviour that may viewed as deviant in one culture, but not in another. Explain why.



## How do you spot a witch?

This is an excerpt from Melissa Chim, 2021. ‘How do you spot a witch? This notorious 15th-century book gave instructions and helped execute thousands of women’. *The Conversation*. [theconversation.com/how-do-you-spot-a-witch-this-notorious-15th-century-book-gave-instructions-and-helped-execute-thousands-of-women-168569](https://theconversation.com/how-do-you-spot-a-witch-this-notorious-15th-century-book-gave-instructions-and-helped-execute-thousands-of-women-168569)

Books have always had the power to cast a spell over their readers – figuratively.

But one book that was quite popular from the 15th to 17th centuries, and infamously so, is literally about spells: what witches do, how to identify them, how to get them to confess, and how to bring them to swift punishment.

As fear of witches reached a fever pitch in Europe, witch hunters turned to the ‘Malleus Maleficarum’, or ‘Hammer of Witches’, for guidance. The book’s instructions helped convict some of the tens of thousands of people – almost all women – who were executed during the period. Its bloody legacy stretched to North America, with 25 supposed ‘witches’ killed in Salem, Massachusetts, in the late 1600s.

### Witches 101

The ‘Malleus’ was written circa 1486 by two Dominican friars, Johann Sprenger and Heinrich Kraemer, who present their guide in three parts.

The first argues that witches do in fact exist, sorcery is heresy, and not fearing witches’ power is itself an act of heresy. Part Two goes into graphic detail about witches’ sexual deviancy, with one chapter devoted to ‘the Way whereby Witches copulate with those Devils known as Incubi.’ An incubus was a male demon believed to have sex with sleeping women.

It also describes witches' ability to turn their victims into animals, and their violence against children. The third and final part gives guidelines on how to interrogate a witch, including through torture; get her to confess; and ultimately sentence her.

Twenty-eight editions of the 'Malleus' were published between 1486 and 1600, making it the definitive guide on witchcraft and demonology for many years – and helping the prosecution of witches take off.

### Targeting women

The authors of the text reluctantly admit that men can be agents of the devil, but argue that women are weak and inherently more sinful, making them his perfect targets.

Accusations were often rooted in the belief that women, especially those who did not submit to ideals about obedient Christian wives and mothers, were prone to be in league with the devil.

The authors detail 'four horrible crimes' which devils commit against infants, both in the mother's womb and afterwards.' They even accuse witches of eating newborns and are especially suspicious of midwives.

Women on the fringes of society, such as healers in Europe or the slave Tituba in Salem, were convenient scapegoats for society's ills.

### Hand-held history

One striking aspect is its size. The 'Malleus' is just under 8 inches long, with 190 pages – this book was meant to travel with its reader and be stored in a coat or bag.

Our copy is from 1492, and it was published by the famous bookbinder Peter Drach from Speyer, Germany. This makes it a rare example of 'incunabula', as scholars call European books published before about 1501 – the earliest period of printing.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this 'Malleus', in addition to the text itself, is a bookplate pasted on its back cover. This bookplate states: 'It was the handbook of the Witchcraft Persecution of the 15th and 16th centuries. This copy possesses much the same interest as would a headman's ax of that date in as much as it has probably been the direct cause of the death of many persons accused of sorcery.'

It's unclear who attached this statement, but its sentiment rings very true: The 'Malleus' represents the power of ideas – for good or ill.

#### *Further reading:*

Ruth Mace, 2018. 'Why are women accused of witchcraft? Study in rural China gives clue.' *The Conversation*. [theconversation.com/why-are-women-accused-of-witchcraft-study-in-rural-china-gives-clue-89730](https://theconversation.com/why-are-women-accused-of-witchcraft-study-in-rural-china-gives-clue-89730)



## Activity F – Deviance and witchcraft

Read the case study about witchcraft provided and then answer the questions below.

- 1 What is the 'Malleus Maleficarum'?
- 2 What is this book a guide to/for?
- 3 When was it used?
- 4 'The 'Malleus' represents the power of ideas – for good or ill.' Analyse how ideas about people and behaviours shape our ideas about what is deviant. Support your extended response with evidence from this text and other material that you have studied this year.

Tip: Use the KLC extended response writing resource from chapter 1 to help guide your response.

## Émile Durkheim's functionalist theory of deviance 2.1.2

Functionalism has its origins in the works of Émile Durkheim. As explored earlier in this text, the sociological perspective of functionalism views society as a *system*; that is, as a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole. This idea lends itself to the 'organic' analogy, which sees all the parts of society functioning together as a whole, as with the organs within our body.

Durkheim asserted that deviance is a normal and necessary part of any society because it contributes to the social order. He identified four specific functions that deviance fulfills within a social group:

- affirmation of society's cultural norms and values
- clarification of society's moral boundaries
- the unification of others in society
- promoting social change.

### Affirmation of society's cultural norms and values 2.1.2.1

Functionalist theory asserts that one of the purposes of deviance is to **affirm** (in other words, verify and strengthen) **society's cultural norms and values**. In this view, people's reaction to social behaviours reinforces what actions are acceptable or unacceptable. This can be understood as developing and maintaining shared standards of 'right and wrong'.

**Affirmation of society's cultural norms and values** refers to the reinforcement of behaviour that is acceptable or unacceptable; deviant behaviour is used to confirm and clarify social norms.

Consider the following examples.

This deviant behaviour ...	... leads to this response ...	... which reinforces this norm or value:
a child throwing a toy at a sibling	the child is put in a 'time out'	don't throw toys, be kind to your siblings, don't do things that might hurt others
a student doesn't wear the school uniform	getting a detention	follow the rules set by the school (regardless of whether you agree with them)
standing still on the right-hand side of an escalator	being asked (perhaps pointedly) to move to the left	notice how people around you are moving, don't impede the flow of people in a hurry
driving while drunk	serving time in prison	don't drink drive, don't engage in behaviour that risks seriously injuring yourself and other people

### Clarification of a society's moral boundaries 2.1.2.2

An extension of deviance's first function is that it **clarifies society's moral boundaries**. This component of the theory observes that deviance helps people to understand the *limits* of socially acceptable behaviour. The way people identify and respond to social behaviour helps to define the boundary between conformity and deviance, with consequences intended to deter the latter.

**Clarification of society's moral boundaries** refers to the limits and consequences used to indicate what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour; these define the boundary between conformity and deviance.


Prosecuting the owners of inhumane puppy farms, recent laws to ban Nazi symbols in Victoria, and school sanctions related to the use of unacknowledged AI content in formal assessments are just a few examples that illustrate this process.

The process of boundary clarification is outlined in the table below.

This behaviour ...	... might be acceptable when ...	... but crosses moral boundaries when ...	... which leads to the following consequences:
dog breeding	performed in a clean and safe environment in line with RSPCA principles	puppies are over-bred or physical harm or neglect is caused to the animals	community outrage; law enforcement agencies penalise breeders
displaying Nazi symbols	presented in an educative or historical context, or in the case of the swastika in line with its earlier use as a Hindu religious symbol	used in pretty much any other context: it is considered unacceptable, hurtful, offensive and racist	legal repercussions or the creation of new laws to ensure there are such repercussion; judgement via the media likely to prompt community disgust, as well as support for those being vilified
using artificial intelligence tools at school	used to help students develop their own knowledge and writing skills; guided by a teacher and acknowledged in their work	not acknowledging the use of AI tools, which is generally viewed as highly dishonest (these boundaries are still developing in response to recent advances)	likely academic penalties, judgement and distrust from peers and teachers

### The unification of others in society 2.1.2.3

Deviance has the capacity to **unify others** in a society by emphasising the shared norms between people in response to a distressing event. Usually when someone commits a particularly horrific or harmful act, a sense of solidarity and mutual support is felt among the majority group as members unite in repulsion, anger or distress. One notable example of this was the response to the stabbing murder of local cafe owner Sisto Malaspina in a terrorist incident in Melbourne, which led to more than 1300 people attending his state-funded funeral in 2018.

-  Konrad Marshall, 2018. "Farewell old buddy, I'll miss you": City celebrates Sisto Malaspina'. *The Age*. [theage.com.au/national/victoria/crowds-gather-for-state-funeral-of-slain-cafe-owner-sisto-malaspina-20181120-p50h2y.html](https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/crowds-gather-for-state-funeral-of-slain-cafe-owner-sisto-malaspina-20181120-p50h2y.html)

**Unification of others** refers to the sense of solidarity and mutual support experienced when people unite in response to a deviant act that has caused harm or distress.



The memorial to Sisto Malaspina at Pellegrini's Espresso Bar in Bourke Street.  
Credit: Mattinbgn, 2018.


Functionalists do not suggest that these types of tragic events are *good* for society – they simply observe and try to understand the dynamic that emerges from them, where members of a society can form stronger connections as they support each other through these types of traumas.

### Promoting social change 2.1.2.4

Structuralism notes that deviance and deviants serve as agents for social change by challenging social norms. When people respond positively to a form of deviance, over time it becomes normalised and thus **promotes social change**. A relatively recent example of this is the marriage equality campaign in Australia of the early-21st century. In 2004, in light of the Howard government's moves to amend the *Marriage Act 1961* to include specific reference to marriage being 'between a man and a woman', polling showed that support for marriage equality for same-sex couples was in a minority – approximately 38 per cent of the population.

**Promoting social change** refers to deviance challenging and at times changing existing social norms.

In the following years, that minority or 'deviant' view about marriage developed into a majority, largely in response to concerted campaigning by advocates alongside millions of conversations in the community among friends and family. In 2017, the majority view was affirmed in law when the Australian public voted in favour of amending the *Marriage Act* to permit two adults to marry regardless of the sex or gender of either partner. After many hundreds of years of same-sex couples being ostracised and excluded from popular understandings of marriage, these significant legal changes reflected a shift in social norms around relationships. Notably, support for same-sex marriage (the new 'norm') continued to grow, from 61.6 per cent at the 2017 plebiscite to around 75 per cent in 2023 (the latter according to analysis by Pew Research).

 Pew Research Centre, 2023. 'How people in 24 countries view same-sex marriage'. [pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/13/how-people-in-24-countries-view-same-sex-marriage](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/13/how-people-in-24-countries-view-same-sex-marriage)



Marriage equality campaigners in 2017. Credit: Paris Buttfield-Addison. [flic.kr/p/XtMszb](https://flic.kr/p/XtMszb)



Learn more about the history of same-sex marriage in Australia here:

-  Paul Karp, 2017. 'Australia says yes to same-sex marriage in historic postal survey'. The Guardian. [theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/15/australia-says-yes-to-same-sex-marriage-in-historic-postal-survey](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/15/australia-says-yes-to-same-sex-marriage-in-historic-postal-survey)
-  ABC News, 2017 (via YouTube). 'The moment Parliament said yes to same-sex marriage'. [youtu.be/fVm4eW8wjY](https://youtu.be/fVm4eW8wjY)
-  National Museum of Australia, 2022. 'Defining moments: Marriage equality'. [nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/marriage-equality](https://nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/marriage-equality)



## Activity G – Functionalism and the nature and purpose of deviance

- 1 Which of the following statements do you think reflect functionalism's view of deviance?
  - a Deviance serves no purpose in modern society.
  - b Deviance is a normal and necessary part of social life.
  - c Deviant behaviour can help to reinforce and clarify social norms and values.
  - d Deviance can contribute to social change and progress in a society.
  - e Deviance is a result of individual physical and/or biological illness.
- 2 Imagine a society where deviant behaviour does not exist; all people happily abide by and conform to the rules and expectations of the majority.
  - a What would life be like in this society?
  - b What would some of the advantages and disadvantages of total conformity be, for both individuals and society as a whole?
- 3 Imagine a society without any clear and established social norms, rules or expectations.
  - a Describe what everyday life might be like.
  - b How do you think most people would behave in such a society?
- 4 Compare your reflections and responses to the two previous questions with those of one of your classmates. What was similar or dissimilar in your perspective?



## The Bourke Street tragedy

In January 2017, a car was intentionally driven into pedestrians on Bourke Street in the centre of Melbourne. This incident resulted in the loss of six lives, as well as leaving 27 others with lifelong injuries and trauma. A 10-year-old boy and a 3-month-old baby girl were among those who died. The police who responded to this event described it as a deliberate act of violence. The perpetrator, James Gargasoulas, was charged with multiple offenses, including six counts of murder. Prior to his trial Gargasoulas was diagnosed with 'treatment resistant paranoid schizophrenia'.

In the days after this event, approximately \$700 000 was crowd funded by community members to help financially and emotionally support the victims and their families. A further \$200 000 was pledged by the Federal and Victorian governments.

In February 2019, Gargasoulas was found guilty of the six murders and 27 counts of reckless conduct endangering life. He was later sentenced to life imprisonment by the Supreme Court of Victoria, with a non-parole period of 46 years.

This event, which was later referred to as the Bourke Street rampage, had a profound impact on the victims, their families and the Melbourne community. In order to avoid a similar event from happening in the future, concrete bollards were placed in high pedestrian traffic areas. The incident also prompted debate about the lack of psychological support and intervention

for people with mental illness. These matters as well as policing strategies were addressed in a formal coronial inquest in 2019.

Further information about this event is available at:

- 🔗 ABC News, 2020. 'Time bomb: The making of Bourke Street killer James Gargasoulas'. [abc.net.au/news/2019-06-10/bourke-street-attack-making-of-killer-james-gargasoulas/11133576](http://abc.net.au/news/2019-06-10/bourke-street-attack-making-of-killer-james-gargasoulas/11133576)
- 🔗 ABC, 2019. 'The making of the Bourke Street murderer'. *Four Corners*. [youtu.be/VkdomRLEOv8](https://youtu.be/VkdomRLEOv8)



## Activity H – The Bourke Street tragedy

- 1 Using examples from the Bourke Street tragedy case study provided, explain what is meant by:
  - a deviance
  - b social norms
  - c affirmation of cultural norms and values
  - d clarification of a society's moral boundaries
  - e unification of others in society
  - f promoting social change.

### Travis Hirschi's social control theory of deviance and the relationship between weak bonds and deviance <sup>2.1.3</sup>

Theories of social control focus on explaining how deviant behaviour can be prevented. They do this by identifying and exploring the factors that increase the risk of a person breaching social norms.

The social control theory of deviance suggests that deviant behaviour occurs because of inadequate inner personal restraint and a lack of outer social control.

For example, imagine a young teenager who experiences bursts of extreme anger. In frustration they throw things when they have difficulty processing intense emotions. Now imagine that this same young person does not have a parent or carer who will challenge this unhelpful behaviour and/or seek assistance for them. The combination of these factors (*lack of inner personal restraint expressed through intense anger and lack of outer social control as seen through lack of care*) increase the risk of the young person engaging in deviant behaviour (*throwing things when upset*).

This theory also emphasises the importance of the process of sanctions. Sanctions refer to a society's reactions to deviant behaviours. Positive or negative sanctions can be used to control undesired and encourage desired behaviour: for example, parental discipline and the enforcement of school rules are examples of negative sanctions. I am sure that you or a friend would have observed the impact of loss of privileges at home or at school. It is a common and often helpful way to control behaviour and therefore reduce deviancy.



Credit: Shutterstock/koumaru.

### External constraints

Relating to a person's environment, such as their community and political and legal structures

### Internal constraints

Relating to a person's interpersonal relationships, such as their family, school and community

Social control and restraints can be internal or external.

Essentially, social control theory looks at what binds people to society and the influence that this bond has on a person's behaviour. A strong bond is developed through an individual's personal relationships and general environment. The stronger the bond, the less likely they will engage in deviant behaviour. This bond keeps a person committed to conforming to the norms of their inner and outer spheres of influence.

Bonds are strengthened through investment in personal relationships. The more effective these bonds are, the less likely it is that an individual will engage in deviant behaviour.

“A strong relationship or bond prevents deviance; a weak or broken bond permits and ensures deviance.”

Clinard B. Marshall and Meiner F. Robert, 2011. *Sociology of Deviant Behaviour*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

People who have **weak bonds** are more likely to deviate from social norms.

American sociologist Travis Hirschi (1969) developed a theory of social control. He argued that four core bonds help to reduce the risk of deviancy: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in social values.

**Weak bonds** refers to an individual's lack of strong and stable attachments to others within society.



## Activity I – Social control

- 1 Watch the two short (5 min) YouTube clips provided below and then create a dot-point summary based on the sentence stems below.
  - 'Social Control Theory'. Book Synopsis. 2020 (5 min). [youtu.be/-NDxm1SCXQ0z](https://youtu.be/-NDxm1SCXQ0z)
  - Craig Gelling, 2020. 'Functionalist Theories of Crime & Deviance'. Tutor2u. [youtu.be/-DcJS-Qts8E](https://youtu.be/-DcJS-Qts8E)
  - a Deviance is caused by ...
  - b Social control theory argues that all people are at risk of deviance because ...
  - c Weak bonds increase the risk of deviance because ...
  - d The four risk factors for deviance are ...
  - e The role of socialisation in deviancy is ...
- 2
  - a Explain the concept of weak bonds.
  - b Discuss this concept with your classmates. Together, write a list of factors that could strengthen a person's bonds with others.
  - c Write a paragraph explaining how important social bonds are in reducing the risk of deviancy.

### Attachment 2.1.3.1

When individuals care about what influential people think due to a strong emotional **attachment**, they are most likely to avoid deviancy. According to Hirschi's theory, the amount of affection a child receives from their parent(s) is a risk factor for delinquency.

For example, children whose parents are aware of their whereabouts hold a stronger emotional tie with their parents and are less likely to be delinquent. These children have a close relationship with their parents and a stronger bond. Similarly, children who enjoy school and respect the opinion of their teachers are less likely to be delinquent compared to children who see school as less effective.

**Attachment** refers to bonds between people, encouraging conformity to shared social norms.

### Commitment 2.1.3.2

Individuals with legitimate goals, **commitments** and aspirations will avoid sacrificing these through acts of deviance. Hirschi suggests that an individual who wants to act in a deviant way will consider the costs and benefits of committing a crime. If the individual weighs the potential costs of committing a crime and they are high, they are less likely to commit a crime. For example, a student who receives a high grade-point average is more likely to engage in further study and will be less likely to commit crime and encounter police.

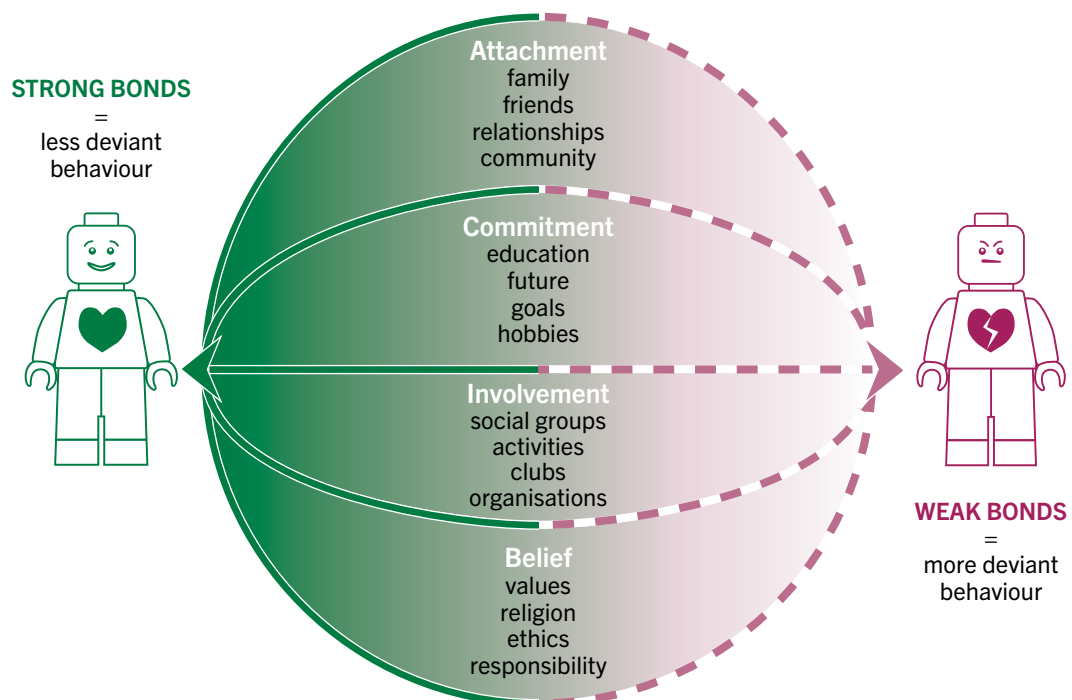
**Commitment** refers to an individual's investment of time and energy in conventional behaviour.

### Involvement 2.1.3.3

Hirschi's theory suggests that individuals **involved** or engaged in socially approved activities such as school, sport, work or extracurricular activities are less likely to encounter opportunities to deviate. It is believed that young people who are actively engaged in legitimate

**Involvement** refers to the fact that someone who is intensively involved in socially approved activities has less time and opportunities to deviate.

## Travis Hirschi's theory of social control



activities have less free time and therefore fewer opportunities for deviancy. In addition, making friends during these activities can help to improve social bonds, which can further decrease the risk of youth breaching social norms.

### Belief in social values <sup>2.1.3.4</sup>

**Belief in social values** relates to a person's convictions about what is right or wrong. Hirschi argued that these beliefs influence our decision making when presented with opportunities to deviate. Those with beliefs that conform to established social norms and laws are less likely to engage in deviant behaviour. This acceptance reduces the risk of deviancy through the desire to conform to social norms and avoid formal legal punishments.

**Belief in social values** refers to holding shared values about what is important in life, resulting in agreement and the reduction of deviancy.



## Activity J – Hirschi's social control theory

Complete the following multiple-choice questions relating to Travis Hirschi's social control theory of deviance.

- 1 Which of the following is not one of the four risk factors for deviant behaviour?
  - a Attachment
  - b Commitment
  - c Social change
  - d Involvement
- 2 Which of the following best explains the meaning of 'attachment'?
  - a Having respect for social norms and cultural values
  - b Participating in social activities and schooling
  - c Having strong relationships and connections with parental figures and/or role models
  - d Rebelling against unfair school rules
- 3 According to Hirschi's theory, how can a lack of 'belief in social values' increase the risk of deviancy?
  - a It can lead to a lack of conformity to social norms.
  - b It can weaken healthy connections with school friends and teachers.
  - c It can promote involvement in crime.
  - d All of the above
- 4 In the context of Hirschi's theory, which of the following best describes the meaning of 'commitment'?
  - a The willingness to engage in legitimate social activities
  - b The amount of time spent at school and completing homework
  - c The depth of connection a young person has with their family
  - d The level of conformity a person has to social and cultural norms
- 5 According to social control theory, 'weak bonds' can lead to which of the following?
  - a An decrease in positive behaviour
  - b An increase in rebellious behaviour
  - c An increased risk of engaging in criminal behaviour
  - d All of the above



## I am Jack, but who is Jack?

Excerpt from Matt Noffs and Kieran Palmer, 2018. *Addicted*. Harper Collins Publishers. This publication documents their work with young people with serious and often debilitating drug addictions.

A young male client (let's call him 'Jack') once explained to me what it was like to be him, and at the same time not feel like him at all.

Jack had grown up in one of the poorer suburbs of Melbourne. His father spent lengthy periods of time incarcerated for a number of crimes, the details of which were not known by Jack. Jack's mother worked long hours, often covering night shifts, leaving Jack to pack his own lunch and get himself off to school most mornings.

When Jack was ten, his father left suddenly and moved permanently overseas, at which point Jack's mother began drinking alcohol regularly. He would often find himself alone at home. His mother, as well as still having to work long hours, would often be away from home for days at a time, staying with friends and drinking heavily. On more than one occasion Jack would come home from school to find her unconscious from a heavy drinking session.

During these times a neighbour and long-term family friend would 'look after' young Jack. This person would spend large amounts of time focusing his energy on building what on the surface appeared to be a trusting relationship with Jack. What started out as expressing an interest in Jack's favourite sports and video games would soon become physical wrestling. This person would take Jack shopping for clothes and toys, a treat Jack had barely experienced in his life. Jack liked shopping. Nobody had ever given him so much time and attention, and certainly nobody had ever spent so much money on him. Birthdays and Christmases had never meant a great deal to Jack.

This continued for a number of months – until finally the most detestable of crimes took place. Jack started being sexually abused by the neighbour. Jack would be told constantly that their relationship was special, and that he was more grown up than other kids. The regular showering of gifts was extended to the provision of alcohol, often combined with thinly veiled threats that if Jack ever told anybody about their relationship, serious harm would come to his mother, and it would be Jack's fault.

This behaviour continued, on and off, for a number of years, until Jack was old enough simply to run away. He was twelve.

What Jack ultimately ran to was safety. He spent the following 18 months sleeping on friends' couches and living on the streets.

He had already begun experimenting with alcohol on his own at 11 years old. By the time he was 12 and a half he was regularly smoking cannabis, and at 13 he first tried ice. For Jack, smoking ice in public bathrooms and wandering aimlessly through parks at night was safer than living at home.

Child services were involved at this point, of course, but Jack had developed such an incredible skill at disappearing that any intervention was near impossible. For all intents and purposes, Jack had become a ghost. He would occasionally check on the welfare of his mother, but rarely would he return home. If he did, it wasn't for long.

Jack's drug use would increase to the point where the only way to support his addiction and gain any sense of success or achievement in life was to engage in crime. He became the perfect accomplice for the much older drug dealers in the area, whom he adopted as his new 'street family'. The penalties for a 13-year-old criminal were negligible compared with the penalties for a 30-year-old. Jack was fast and small and seemed to be utterly fearless. He could break into houses quickly, and best of all, he was happy to work for drugs. So he began to form his self-identity around the only thing he had ever really been good at: crime.

The criminal lifestyle eventually caught up with Jack, however, and just before his 14th birthday he was caught leaving a property with mobile phones and jewellery. His new street family, who had assured him they would never leave him high and dry like his actual family, were, of course, nowhere to be found. Jack was left to take the full blame for the crime.



## Activity K – Using social control theory to understand ‘Jack’

Read the ‘I am Jack, but who is Jack?’ case study provided and answer the following questions.

- 1 Create a table or dot-point summary based on the model below. List all the acts/actions that might be considered deviant by Jack and others mentioned in the representation. Consider age, context, gender and role.

Describe the action or behaviour.	To whom (and by whom) is the behaviour directed?	Which social norms are being breached?	What makes the action or behaviour deviant?
Grooming and sexual abuse of a child	The family's neighbour sexually abused Jack from when he was 10 until he was 12 years of age.	The norm of not abusing a child	As a society we wish to protect our children as they are young and vulnerable. This act is traumatic and distressing. Therefore, it is deviant because the abuse is opposed to our values.  It is also deviant as it formally breaches Australian laws.

- 2 Outline some of the reasons why Jack engaged in deviant behaviour.
- 3 Apply Travis Hirschi's social control theory to help explain Jack's deviancy. In your answer refer to how weak bonds, including attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in (or lack of) social values can increase the risk of deviant behaviour.

## Howard S. Becker's labelling theory of deviance <sup>2.1.4</sup>

Howard S. Becker's notion of **labelling** is associated with interactionist theory. These theories argue that deviance occurs as part of a process of interactions between deviants and non-deviants. Labelling theorists seek to understand why some people are labelled as deviant and others are not. They are also curious about who has the power and authority to create and attach these labels to individuals and groups. Further, they are interested in how deviance is responded to via sanctions and other forms of social control.

**Labelling** refers to a sociological theory which suggests that no status or behaviour is inherently deviant until other people have judged it and categorised it as so.

Interactionist theory considers deviance to be an idea people have created. As such, what is labelled as deviant in one culture or time period is not necessarily so in another. This relates to the idea that deviance is 'relative', as explored earlier in this chapter. Those who research labelling, focus on the societal reaction to a behaviour or event, rather than on the individual and/or group labelled as deviant.

According to Howard Becker's 'labelling theory', deviance is:

“... (A) consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an ‘offender’. The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied, deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label.”

Marshall Clinard and Robert Meyer, 2015. *Sociology of Deviant Behavior*. Cengage Learning.



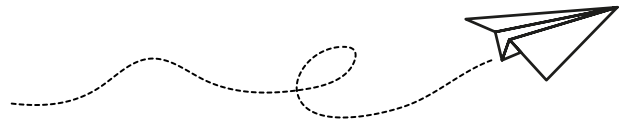
## Activity L – Young people and deviance

In Unit 1, you explored the experience of youth. You probably found that young people are generally represented in negative ways. It is common for the media to label young people as deviant or behaving in deviant ways.

- 1 Think back and brainstorm all the ways that young people are viewed and/or labelled as deviant.

### The process of labelling <sup>2.1.4.1</sup>

Becker divided the process of labelling into two distinct categories. These involve the labelling of the deviant and the behaviour.



The first category involves the identification of the person or group who are being labelled for their violation of social and/or cultural norms. Various factors can influence this classification, such as the person's social and economic status, stereotypes, cultural norms and an individual's lived experience.

The second category concerns the specific behaviours that society views as deviant. These labels are vast and are reflective of established social and cultural norms. When a person is labelled, it simultaneously categorises their action, as well as influencing how people view them and their social status within society.

For example, if a young person steals a chocolate bar from their local convenience store they will be labelled as a thief. In this instance the young individual is identified (first category) for their violation of social norms (to not shoplift). As a result, their stealing leads them to be labelled as a thief (second category). This label can have lifelong impacts on the experiences and opportunities available to this young person.

### Responses to labelling <sup>2.1.4.2</sup>

Labelling can have significant personal consequences, as these labels may encourage more deviant behaviour. For example, a person labelled as a criminal or an addict might find it hard to shake this label – even in the way they view themselves. As a result, they may sometimes behave in ways that are consistent with this label, resulting in further deviancy. This is what sociologists refer to as a **self-fulfilling prophecy**.

**Self-fulfilling prophecy** refers to when a person behaves in a way that matches a label they have been given, thus reinforcing that label.

The self-fulfilling prophecy is used to describe what happens when a person starts to behave in a way that matches the label they have been given, thus reinforcing that label. As a result, something that started as a small temporary deviation can escalate into something more serious and long lasting due to the process of labelling and the **stigma** caused by it.

**Stigma** refers to being disgraced based on a particular quality or circumstance.

For example, if someone has a hidden issue with gambling or shopping addiction and no one knows about it, they avoid being labelled. However, if they are discovered, they likely to be labelled, which can lead them further to further deviancy.

This is what Becker had to say about self-fulfilling prophecies:



“Treating a person as though he were generally rather than specifically deviant produces a self-fulfilling prophecy. It sets in motion several mechanisms which conspire to shape the person in the image people have of him.

It the first place, one tends to be cut off, after being identified as deviant, from participation in more conventional groups, even though the specific consequences of the particular deviant activity might never of themselves have caused the isolation had there not also been the public knowledge and reaction to it.

For example, being a homosexual may not affect one’s ability to do office work, but to be known as a homosexual in an office may make it impossible to continue working there. Similarly, though the effects of opiate drugs may not impair one’s working ability, to be known as an addict will probably lead to losing one’s job ... The homosexual who is deprived of a ‘respectable’ job by the discovery of his deviance may drift into unconventional, marginal occupations where it does not make so much difference. The drug addict finds himself forced into other illegitimate kinds of activity, such as robbery and theft, by the refusal of respectable employers to have him around.”

Howard S. Becker, 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. The Free Press.

### Becker’s labelling theory

1. Deviant behaviour that breaches social norms is observed.

2. Social reaction based on biases occurs.



3. The behaviour is labelled as deviant by observers.

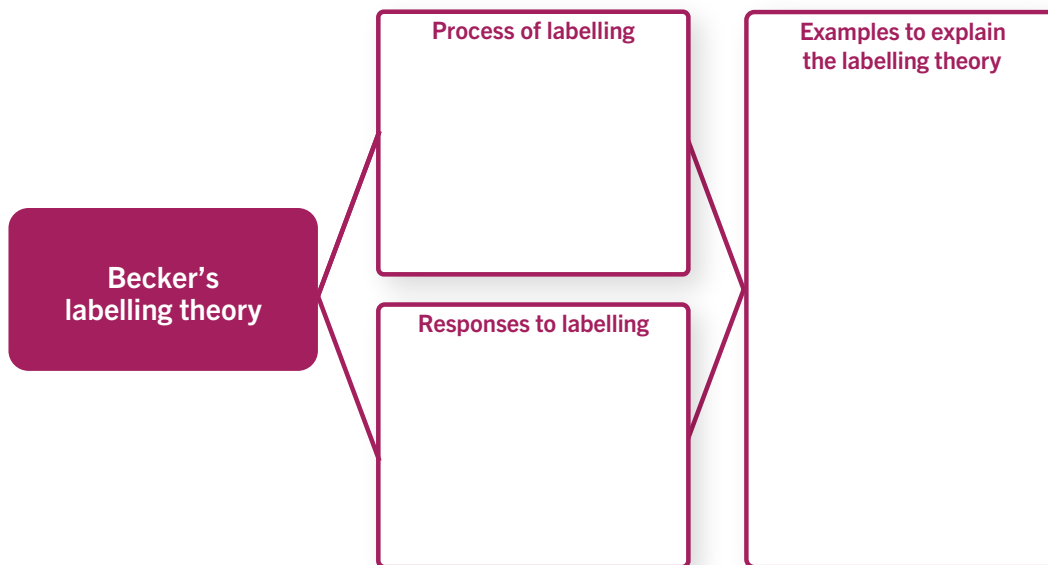
4. ‘Deviant’ status can lead to self-fulfilling prophecy.

5. The potential for an ongoing cycle of deviance develops.



### Activity M – Explain Becker’s labelling theory

- 1 a Watch the following short (5 min) YouTube clips.
  -  ‘Interactionist Theories of Crime & Deviance’. tutor2u, 2020. [youtu.be/rYFnUKT\\_YKI](https://youtu.be/rYFnUKT_YKI)
  -  ‘Labeling theory’. Sociology Live, 2015. [youtu.be/QHSvZZ1pnm0](https://youtu.be/QHSvZZ1pnm0)
- b Referring to the clips provided and the reading you have done in this chapter, complete a summary based on the concept map overleaf.



2 Read the 2018 SBS article ‘The label #AfricanGangs is dehumanising’ by Kathomi Gatwiri and then answer the following questions.

[sbs.com.au/voices/article/the-label-africangangs-is-dehumanising/fj2x8d02na](https://www.sbs.com.au/voices/article/the-label-africangangs-is-dehumanising/fj2x8d02na)

- a What is meant by labelling? Give an example from the article to support your response.
- b According to the article, what are the negative impacts of labelling for African Australian young people. Use evidence (quotations) from the article to support your response.



### Child Q

This is an extract from Nicole Nyamwiza, 2022. ‘Black people are often associated with deviance – but I never understood the true impact until I was racially profiled’. *The Conversation*. [theconversation.com/black-people-are-often-associated-with-deviance-but-i-never-understood-the-true-impact-until-i-was-racially-profiled-179259](https://theconversation.com/black-people-are-often-associated-with-deviance-but-i-never-understood-the-true-impact-until-i-was-racially-profiled-179259)

The horrifying experience of Child Q, a 15-year-old girl who was subjected to a strip search by police officers in her school in Hackney, London, is a harrowing example of how British society associates Blackness with deviant behaviour.

The subsequent child safeguarding review into Child Q’s case has concluded that ‘racism (whether deliberate or not) was likely to have been an influencing factor in the decision to undertake a strip search.’

The child’s teachers wrongly suspected she had cannabis on her and called the police. The police then strip searched her, without the teachers or the child’s parents present. The ordeal has left Child Q traumatised.

It is likely that racial profiling plays a role in the disproportionately high numbers of young Black people in the justice system. A recent study shows that Black boys and young men are overrepresented at every stage of the youth and adult justice systems in England and Wales. Black children account for only 4 per cent of 10- to 17-year-olds in England and Wales, but make up 34 per cent of the children in custody on remand.

What’s more, a recent personal experience of being racially profiled has also led me to understand quite how harmful profiling and labelling is. This experience spurred my doctoral research into the troubling connection British society at large – and not just its justice system – too often makes between Black people and deviance.

### Assumptions of deviance

Sometime in 2021, I went into a supermarket in south London to purchase cough sweets. They cost around 70p. As I was leaving the store, I was asked by the shop attendant – in front of the other customers – whether I had paid for my items. They asked me to provide a receipt, as proof.

I was horrified and embarrassed. I was the only person at the self-checkouts that was asked to produce evidence of my purchase. I felt that there was no plausible reason other than my race that would explain why I was suspected of deviant behaviour.

In sociology, the concept of deviance is best described as a lack of compliance with social norms. Most citizens, at some stage in their life, will be deviant.

The term does not necessarily relate to criminal behaviour. For example, in British culture jumping a queue can be viewed as deviant, and will mostly likely offend or upset someone. However, it is not a criminal offence, and as such there will be no legal implications.

With that said, deviance is often connected to criminal behaviour. Research shows that this misconception causes people to assume that certain groups are more likely to engage in criminal behaviours than others.

For example, media representations of young people wearing attire such as hoodies and caps suggested that those particular items of clothing were associated with crime and violence. This in turn influences public perceptions.

In my previous role as a probation officer working in an inner London borough, I often had young Black men tell me that they felt that society automatically associated them with crime and deviance, even before they had committed a crime. This, they said, impacted their identity and how they viewed themselves.

These young men's experiences are widely supported by research. There are double standards in how deviance and criminality is viewed dependent on a person's ethnic background.

Studies also show that this in turn causes disparities in our understanding of what behaviour is deviant. It shapes our assumptions about some groups being more deviant than others.

While I had taken on board these young men's testimonies, I had not fully understood the true impact this can have on a person's sense of identity, and how harmful this profiling or labelling can be, until it happened to me.

### The impact of identity

I recognised that being a well-educated, professional Black woman – what identity experts would define as my positionality – had somewhat blinded me to the reality of everyday experiences for young Black men.

Positionality is the social and political context out of which a person's identity is created. It relates to their race, class, gender, sexuality and level of ability, and can both influence and bias their understanding of the world. If people have not had certain experiences as a result of their positionality, they can fail to truly understand them.

It is the reason some people who have never experienced racial profiling, for example, can misconstrue other people's comments or criticisms about racial inequality and discrimination as having 'a chip on their shoulder'.

We all have to recognise the harm this causes, and not wait until we or someone close to us experiences it, before we act on it. We should investigate and question discrimination from the perception of those who experience it.

This principle was articulated by the 1999 Macpherson Report into institutional racism in the UK, which was prompted by the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence, a young Black man, in 1993. Unfortunately, the findings from the report still ring true nearly 30 years after it was written.

My own profiling experience left me questioning how I am viewed in wider society. For me, the experience reinforced what research has shown about how Black people, from all backgrounds, too often have feelings of both invisibility and hyper-visibility.

Invisibility in areas that matter: good job prospects, positive representations in popular culture, political debate. And hyper-visibility in the criminal justice system, negative portrayals in popular culture and general disenfranchisement in society.

What's more, in connecting Black people and subcultures with deviance, British institutions such as the criminal justice system, schools and even health services criminalise Black people. Social institutions are crucial in shaping societal views, precisely the kind that foster phenomena such as racial profiling.



## Activity N – The experience of racial profiling

Read the case study about Child Q provided and then complete the response questions below.

- 1 Outline the Child Q case. In your response include the key events and the nature of her experience.
- 2 What conclusions does the author come to about British society in the context of Child Q's experience?
- 3 Briefly describe what happened to the author in 2021.
- 4 How did the author respond to her experiences of being 'labelled and racially profiled'?
- 5 Describe two additional responses to labelling that were explored in the representation. Support your response with quotations from the article.

## The nature of positive deviance <sup>2.1.5</sup>

The theory of **positive deviance** argues that traditionally the study of deviance has focused on negative behaviour. In doing so it has paid little attention to those in society who 'are positive types of human beings' (Heckert, 1998). Positive deviance is a more recent concept that refers to any action that deviates from social norms but has beneficial effects or outcomes for an individual and/or society.

**Positive deviance** is any action that deviates from social norms but has beneficial effects or outcomes for the individual and/or society.

Like labelling, positive deviance involves a processual explanation for the occurrence of deviance in a society. Positive acts of deviance occur when a person behaves or performs above expected social norms. This focus is on those who perform well above expected behaviour in contrast to the average person. Most of the society fits within this 'average' category. It is these very 'special' individuals who overperform who are viewed as 'positive deviants'. The classification of an individual or behaviour as positively deviant can often hinge on the opinions or values of the person making the judgement – because different people have different ideas of what might actually qualify as a 'positive'.

There are five ways that positive deviance acts have been observed and categorised: altruism, charisma, innovation, supraconformity and innate characteristics.



## Altruism

**Altruism** refers to selfless actions taken by an individual to assist others. These behaviours are carried out to benefit others without any expectation of reward or recognition. Altruistic behaviour goes beyond usual acts of kindness, such as making charitable donations or offering to help someone lift a heavy pram off public transport. Self-sacrificing heroes are altruistic. Similarly, people who donate a kidney or their egg/sperm to strangers, putting other people's needs above their own, are also viewed as altruists.

A prominent contemporary altruist is the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani women's education activist. Having survived an assassination attempt, Yousafzai risked her personal safety by continuing to advocate for the right of others to receive an education.

**Altruism** refers to an action that is performed to help a person or group without reward or acknowledgement.



## Charisma

A **charismatic** positive deviant is someone who has the capacity to inspire and lead others. Some may describe them as charming and/or motivational. They tend to be natural leaders who are highly regarded by their supporters or followers. For a charismatic relationship like this to exist, there needs to be a group who want to be led – and a leader who can capture this sentiment and who has the capacity to achieve the group's objectives. Examples of this type of positive deviance might include figures such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, who led the civil rights movement in the United States, or Steven Biko, who led the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa during Apartheid.

More recently, the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky might be considered as a charismatic positive deviant. Zelensky was named TIME magazine's person of the year in 2022. He has received considerable praise from Ukrainians and parts of the international community for not fearing the 'front line' of the Russian war on Ukraine over independence and territory and has gained respect from global leaders for his apparent strength of character in the face of this conflict.

**Charisma** refers to a compelling attractiveness or personal charm that sets an individual apart from others.



## Innovation

Positive deviants bring about social change through their creation or modification of important ideas. This process of **innovation** can occur in any area: science, the arts, food, technology and so on. Innovators who might represent positive deviance include Steve Jobs, who revolutionised technology with the introduction of the iPhone and iPad; Sigmund Freud, who founded the practice of psychoanalysis; and chef Heston Blumenthal, who merged cooking with chemistry to create new dishes and flavours.

Interestingly, these innovators, much like charismatic deviants, are often initially viewed as agitators. Sometimes the changes they champion contradict societal norms. This can lead to the view that they are 'odd' or 'too radical'. For example, historically many artists were initially misunderstood due to their use of materials, subject matter or the composition of a piece. It is often only later, sometimes after

**Innovation** is the process of introducing new ideas or methods that deviate from established norms or traditions.

their death, that their ‘genius’ and contributions are celebrated. Vincent van Gogh and the Impressionist movement were not accepted at first and now they are notable parts of art history.

Some might consider South African–born American entrepreneur Elon Musk a positive deviant due to his significant investment in the first mass-produced electric vehicle, the Tesla, as well as his involvement in driving and promoting SpaceX as the most prominent privately owned spacecraft manufacturer and operator. Musk’s thinking is innovative, in part, because he consistently tests the limits of conventional thinking about complex matters.



### Supraconformity

**Supraconformity** is a form of positive deviance whereby an individual performs beyond the normal expectations set by a society. They excel to the extent that they approach the ‘ideal’ of the thing they’re best known for. Only a small number of people can achieve this status. Examples of individuals performing at an idealised level might include straight-A students and elite sportspeople, such as Sam Kerr in soccer, Ash Barty in tennis, sprinter Usain Bolt, or Formula One racing champion Max Verstappen.

**Supraconformity** refers to an individual’s capacity to perform at a level beyond the normal expectations set by a society.

Supraconformity is not limited by age. Thirteen-year-old Arisa Trew from Queensland is a champion skateboarder, who aims to represent Australia at the Paris Olympic Games in 2024. In 2023, Trew who at the time was ranked 14th in the world, shocked audiences by being the first female to land a 720 (two mid-air rotations) in competition. Trew’s physicality extends far beyond the level of performance from her peers, thus demonstrating positive deviance due to supraconformity.



### Innate characteristics

**Innate characteristics** refers to the possession of natural traits such as intelligence, beauty or talent. It is important to note that these qualities are determined by the social norms of each society. As such, they are not universal but are subject to cultural interpretation and agreement. An example of this might be former model Megan Gale, who when starting her career found it difficult to break into the industry in Australia as she was seen as ‘too big’ to be a model. Nonetheless, she was embraced in Italy and her career flourished there first and she then gained worldwide recognition.

**Innate characteristics** are inherent traits or qualities that an individual is born with.

“Italians, though, know all about beauty; they have lived with it for centuries, in the buildings, the art, the women, the culture. Voluptuous is sexy, and they went crazy for the curves that were so unappreciated at home.”

Megan Gale, cited in Susan Chenry, 2009. ‘Gale force’. Sunday Life. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

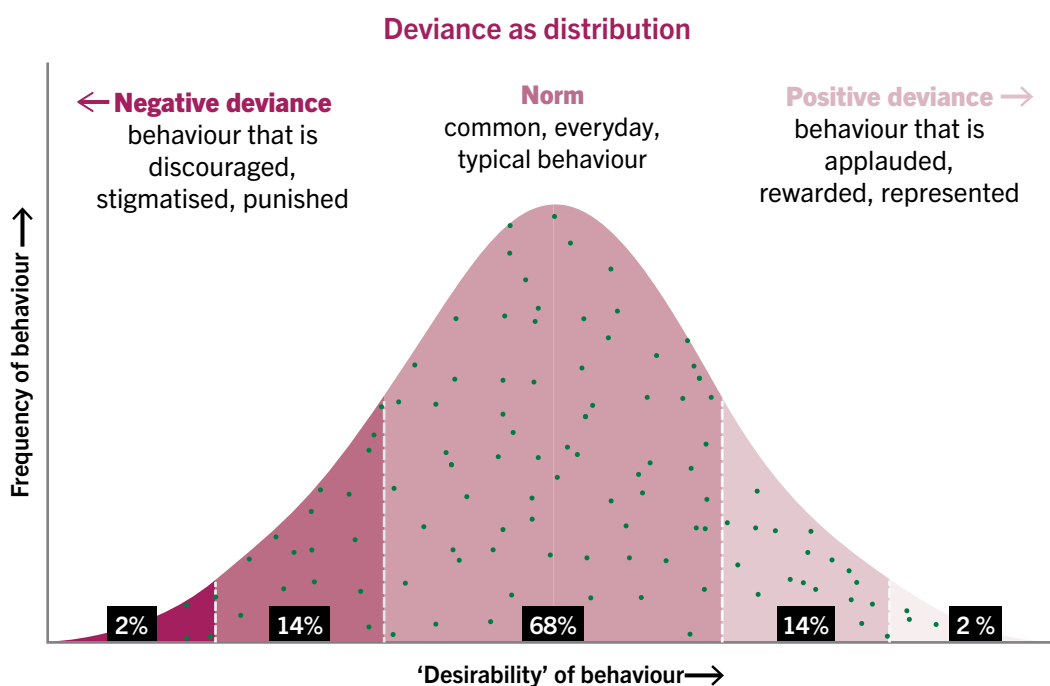
Another example is the Australian singer-songwriter Toni Watson, better known as Tones and I. She became the first artist to spend 24 weeks at #1 on the ARIA singles chart with her global hit ‘Dance Monkey’. Since its release in 2019, the single has reached #1 in 30 countries and has been streamed more than 7 billion times. Her positive deviancy relates to her innate engaging writing skills, exceptional voice and unique sound.

## Observations on positive deviance

People naturally possess many traits, some of which may extend into ‘extreme’ deviance, either positive or negative. For example, a very charismatic figure may also be remarkably innovative.

It’s important to remember that, as sociologists, our use of the qualifiers ‘positivity’ and ‘negativity’ in regards to deviance are highly relative and socially constructed – like all value judgements. Just because we provide an example of negative deviance doesn’t mean we agree it is negative (or vice versa). We are more interested in the how deviance operates as a *dynamic*.

The theories focusing on negative or positive deviance have one thing in common: they both describe individuals who go beyond accepted norms and expected behaviour.



We can imagine picking any category of behaviour and plotting how often and to what extent different responses emerge amongst a particular group. Data-driven approaches like this often tend to reveal a great proportion of results falling closer to the average, with more deviant results becoming rarer the further they are from the average, both in ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ directions. This graph demonstrates this using what’s known in statistics as a ‘normal distribution’.



## Activity 0 – Exploring positive deviants

- 1 Read the 2020 ACMI article ‘The goddesses of early cinema’ by Chelsey O’Brien.

[acmi.net.au/stories-and-ideas/goddesses-of-early-cinema-female-trailblazers](https://acmi.net.au/stories-and-ideas/goddesses-of-early-cinema-female-trailblazers)

After reading the article, outline the types of positive deviance that three of the female trailblazers demonstrated.

- 2 Watch a film or documentary about a positive deviant, then complete the questions below. Some films and documentaries that would be suitable are:

- *He Named Me Malala* (2015) – about the Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai
- *The Movement Begins: One Dream* (2014) – A documentary series based on Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘I have a dream’ speech and the start of the civil rights movement

- *Embrace* (2016) – by the 2023 Australian of the Year body positivity activist Taryn Brumfitt
  - *The Elon Musk Show* (2022) – a documentary series.
- Identify the types of positive deviance displayed by the central person in the film or documentary.
  - Explain how this positive deviance is demonstrated. Use evidence (quotations) to support your explanation.
  - Explain how other people respond to this positive deviant. Use evidence (quotations) to support your response.
  - Explain how society was changed by and/or benefited from the positive deviance.

## Stanley Cohen's theory of moral panics <sup>2.1.6</sup>

A **moral panic** is a widespread feeling of fear, often irrational, that an evil person, group or thing threatens society in some way. The term was developed by South African born British sociologist Stanley Cohen.

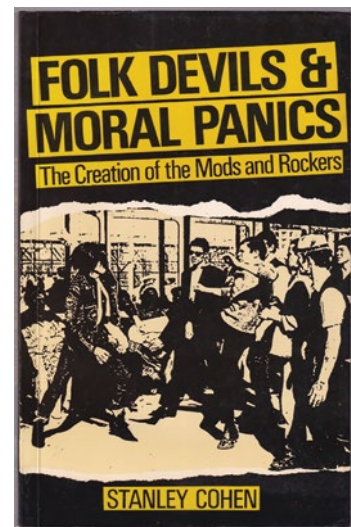
In the late 1960s, two groups of young people at a beach town, Margate in England, were involved in a scuffle – mainly out of boredom and a reaction to some previous tensions. This event escalated in the media. Cohen investigated this event and its further escalation in his PhD thesis.

Influenced by the labelling theory, he asked questions about the Margate clash between two youth subcultures, mods and rockers. Importantly, he was more interested in the reaction to the event rather than the actions of the young people.

Cohen found that the media had exaggerated the 'newness' (mods versus rockers) of the clash, the violence that took place and the drama of the event. The media had created a specific narrative, telling the public a story that exaggerated what had happened. This led to the creation of a social division that had not previously existed.

Through his study, Cohen was able to show that the media can portray a group as a threat to the values of a society by misrepresenting them in a negative way. This in turn leads to the creation and in some cases maintenance of labels and/or stereotypes.

Another interesting observation Cohen made in his research was that the groups of young people who were identified and labelled began to act in accordance with the media depiction of them: they experienced the self-fulfilling prophecy.



**Moral panic** refers to an intense emotional reaction (usually communicated through the mass media) to an issue that is perceived to threaten the social order.



### Activity P – Mods, rockers and moral panics

Watch this short (5 min) YouTube clip on mods and rockers and answer the questions that follow.

🔗 'Mods, Rockers and Moral Panics'. Luxury milk, 2009. [youtu.be/r61ks18Bd7I](https://youtu.be/r61ks18Bd7I)



- 1 How do each of these people interpret the events?
  - a Legal authorities
  - b Mods
  - c Rockers
  - d Media – reporters
  - e Stanley Cohen
- 2 What did Cohen realise about media coverage?

### The creation of folk devils 2.1.6.1

According to Cohen (1972) **folk devils** are groups or individuals that are portrayed or referred to as deviant or delinquent. The media often play a role in characterising a group or individual as a folk devil. Casting an individual or a group as a folk devil involves a series of sequential stages. First, they are singled out as a threat due to their behaviour, beliefs and/or appearance. Next, those labelled as deviants are vilified by the media and influential members of society, who describe them in an exaggerated and/or unfair manner. As a result, the public responds to the media messaging in a way that is out of proportion to the actual level of threat from the ‘folk devil’. Finally, politicians and other formal agencies respond, perhaps by introducing new laws or increasing police numbers, in order to be seen to be addressing the exaggerated threat. Often these events fade away quickly with the rapid news cycle. Examples of Australian moral panics over the past few years include media-generated fear about Sudanese gangs, asylum-seekers and same-sex marriage.

**Folk devils** are groups or individuals who are portrayed in folklore or referred to in the media as deviant or delinquent.

Cohen believed that behaviour – and in some instances the types of clothes worn by those labelled as folk devils – threatened the social norms of society. Like Cohen, people have debated whether current groups of people who congregate to share their mutual enjoyment of riding motorcycles are involved in organised crime.

#### Stanley Cohen's sequential stages of a moral panic





Credit: God's Squad Australia

In the 2012 SBS *Insight* episode called 'Uneasy Riders', Brotherhood Christian motorcycle club rider Greg Hirst argued his club is not a 'one percenter' group (one that engages in illegal activity). Groups such as Hells Angels Motorcycle Club and the Bandidos Motorcycle Club are one percenters.

These groups are known for trafficking large quantities of drugs, laundering money and possessing firearms.

Like the Brotherhood Christian motorcycle club, there are other Christian motorcycle clubs of people who ride motorbikes and wear motorcycle jackets and vests with their club's logo and colours. For example, the God's Squad Christian Motorcycle Club (GSCMC), founded in 1971 in Sydney, argue they congregate to spread the word of Jesus. They engage in volunteer work to assist people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, advocate for the rights of First Nations peoples and provide ministry services to people incarcerated and in schools. This shows how a group of individuals may be inaccurately deemed deviant based on their behaviour (riding a motorcycle) and choice of clothes. On the other hand, law enforcement agencies have reported that most motorcycle gangs engage in criminal activity.

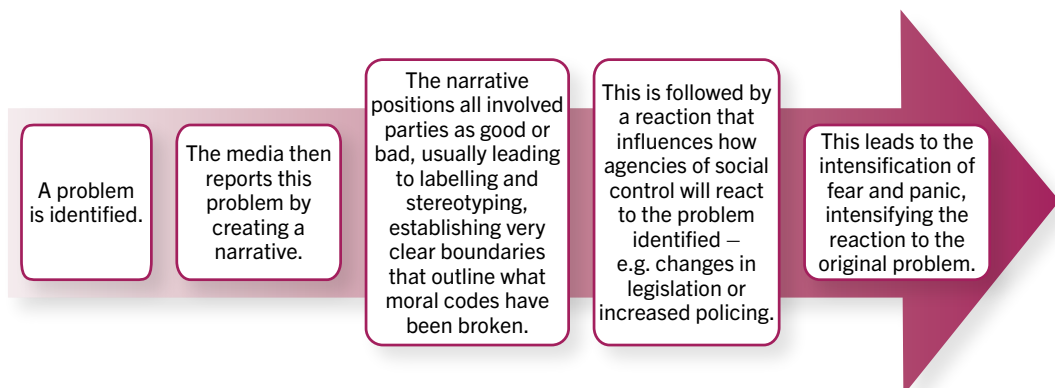
Want to learn more about this subculture? Start here:

- 📖 God's Squad Motorcycle Club: [gscmc.com](http://gscmc.com)
- 📖 Melanie Gardiner, 2013. 'God's Squad founder reverend John Smith defends motorcycle clubs'. *The Herald Sun*. [heraldsun.com.au/gods-squad-founder-reverend-john-smith-defends-motorcycle-clubs/news-story/144082396a9c392f63855f9c146f0892](http://heraldsun.com.au/gods-squad-founder-reverend-john-smith-defends-motorcycle-clubs/news-story/144082396a9c392f63855f9c146f0892)
- 📖 'Making sense of Life (John Smith, God's Squad) 40 Stories Project'. YouTube (11 min). 2022. [youtu.be/25yEptOT-Fk](https://youtu.be/25yEptOT-Fk)
- 📖 David Rowsome, 2021. 'Bikie Gangs and the Image of God: John 'Bullfrog' Smith and the God Squad'. [blog.canberradeclaration.org.au/2021/08/30/bikie-gangs-and-the-image-of-god-the-ministry-of-john-bullfrog-smith](http://blog.canberradeclaration.org.au/2021/08/30/bikie-gangs-and-the-image-of-god-the-ministry-of-john-bullfrog-smith)

### The role of the media in assisting in the creation of moral panics 2.1.6.2

As previously noted, a moral panic occurs when the media inflames a social issue, with the intent of causing public outrage. The purpose of this action is to create fear among members of the public. An example of this fear creation occurred during the 1980s during the HIV/AIDS health crisis. The media at the time contributed to a

#### The role of the media in contributing to a moral panic





Newspapers referred to AIDS as 'the killer plague' or 'the gay plague'.

Credit: Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

moral panic related to same-gender couples. In fact, HIV/AIDS was dubbed the 'gay plague', unfairly stigmatising same-sex-attracted men. This misconception continued into the 1990s even as scientists gained a better understanding of the nature of the disease.

Read the following article to learn more:

- 📖 Olivia Willis, 2020. 'The man who died before his disease had a name'. ABC. [abc.net.au/news/2020-09-16/mystery-death-rewrote-history-of-killer-disease-hiv-aids/12639410](http://abc.net.au/news/2020-09-16/mystery-death-rewrote-history-of-killer-disease-hiv-aids/12639410)

In addition to identifying and inflaming an issue, there are many other ways that media can create and/or maintain a moral panic: for example, through the oversimplification of complex matters and engagement in distorted and/or sensationalised coverage of issues without sufficient evidence to support their claims. Additionally, when politicians or other public figures respond in accordance with the moral panic, some media outlets may choose not to challenge unsubstantiated or inaccurate claims. Finally, the media can 'recycle' moral panics due to the pressure of the 24-hour news cycle, which helps to keep the panic alive.



## Activity Q – The media and moral panics

- 1 Create a dot-point summary that lists the various ways that the media can contribute to a moral panic. Start with the material in this chapter. Try to add your own examples to this list.
- 2 Read the following article and then answer the questions below.
  - 📖 John Budarick, 2018. 'Why the media are to blame for racialising Melbourne African Gang Problem'. The Conversation. [theconversation.com/why-the-media-are-to-blame-for-racialising-melbournes-african-gang-problem-100761](http://theconversation.com/why-the-media-are-to-blame-for-racialising-melbournes-african-gang-problem-100761)
  - a Briefly describe the moral panic described in this article.
  - b Explain how two different forms of media contributed to the moral panic.
  - c Discuss with a classmate how people can attempt to challenge moral panics. Compare ideas and briefly describe your two best strategies.

## The impact of moral panic on individuals and groups considered to be deviant<sup>2.1.7</sup>

Over time moral panics have caused great distress and trauma to individuals and groups labelled as deviant. Sometimes moral panics can exacerbate the division between social groups. For example, in 2018 there was extensive media coverage about supposed Melbourne African youth gangs committing crime 'daily', despite no arrests being made. At the time young people from a Sudanese background were being portrayed in the media as a threat to the public. Due to this unfounded fear, police began targeting young Sudanese people who were publicly socialising in groups. Many parents within the Sudanese community were concerned about the welfare of their children (Vedelago and Millar, 2021).

In addition to the initial distress and trauma, moral panics can also have long-term impacts. For example, being subjected to sustained prejudice and discrimination can cause psychological and/or physical harm. Further, moral panics can also compromise social bonds and connection. And sadly, while community members are fighting among each other they are often neglecting more important social issues.

Finally, sometimes moral panics, while not desired, can have positive impacts. For example, by questioning the relevance of social norms and perhaps even prompting social change.



### The impact of moral panic – rap music

Adapted from Michael Sun, 2023. "Rapper music' is luring Sydney youth into a life of crime? We've heard this one before'. The Guardian. [theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/apr/07/rap-music-youth-crime-royal-easter-show-nsw-police](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/apr/07/rap-music-youth-crime-royal-easter-show-nsw-police)

This week we reached a new frontier of the fun-policing many in New South Wales have come to expect: an announcement so stunningly inane it could only have been written by Mad Libs. This time, \*spins wheel\* rap music has been banned! From where? \*Spins wheel\* Sydney's Royal Easter show! But why? \*Spins wheel\* Gang violence!

The crackdown is part of a joint safety effort by Easter show organisers and NSW police, after the fatal stabbing of a 17-year-old Easter show employee last year. The police, of course, must respond – but their statement this week blaming 'violent crime' on hip-hop borders on self-parody.

'The Comanchero bikie gang last year particularly and proactively procured youths through rapper music,' assistant commissioner, Stuart Smith, said on Tuesday, before doubling down in another sentence that made just about as much sense. 'Through rapper music investment they procured a significant youth gang problem to carry out violent crime.'

I wonder how exactly these masterminds are recruiting members through music. You can almost imagine the image running through Smith's mind: crime dons meeting up over showbags and dagwood dogs, before stuffing homemade mixtapes into jewel cases and hawking them on the street.

The solution to this so-called problem? Preventing ride operators at the Easter show from playing hip-hop and reducing the volume of any music that *is* allowed to be played – or as I like to call it, year seven camp after lights out.

'We've got all the evidence we need to demonstrate that rapper music is being used to lure youth into a life of crime,' Smith continued. It's hard to understand why we should place any stock in a man who uses the term 'rapper music' no less than three times, but let us take his claim in earnest. Earnestly, I say: it is completely insane – though it pales in comparison to similar statements issued by Murray Wilton, the Easter show's general manager.

'If you look at the psychology of music ... there is scientific fact the type of music that is played actually predicts somebody's behaviour,' Wilton told the ABC, denying that the move was racist – despite the fact that the rap music scene in western Sydney is overwhelmingly dominated by Pasifika and Black communities.

NSW police have since distanced themselves from the decision: deputy commissioner Mal Lanyon said show organisers had decided what styles of music could be played, adding: 'We haven't asked for a ban on the playing of rap music.' The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW chief executive Brock Gilmour disputed that rap music was targeted at all, telling the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Wednesday that they did not want ride operators to play any music that contained swearing or 'aggressive tones'.

At best, this crackdown on rap music reeks of a moral panic: youth culture has always incited a particularly aggrieved, outsized reaction from certain sectors. Maybe you're old enough to remember the widespread anguish directed towards a few hip gyrations in the 1950s, deemed far too improper for any decent set of eyes. Or the UK's mods v rockers a decade later, when, for some reason, everyone was afraid of people who dressed like bankers. Or the 1980s 'satanic panic', when heavy metal suddenly became the battleground for a cadre of conspiracy theorists. Or the post-Columbine shooting freak-out over Marilyn Manson and video games.

We don't even have to go that far back. Remember when the media thought teens everywhere were eating Tide pods? Or that bad people were wasting their precious drugs on poisoning children at Halloween?

At worst, the Easter show ban forms part of a wider effort to stigmatise hip-hop. We can't look at it without considering the long-running police campaign against western Sydney drill group OneFour – who are incredibly beloved by streaming metrics and who have been prevented from playing live at every turn by NSW police. 'I'm going to use everything in my power to make your life miserable, until you stop doing what you're doing,' one policeman told OneFour through the ABC in 2019. OneFour's lyrics have been used against them in court. The police have tried – and failed – to remove the group's music from streaming services.

It's all too reminiscent of the US war on hip-hop, with everyone from Tupac to NWA documenting the pushback they experienced from cops. Except that was four decades ago. The NSW police's fear of hip-hop remains alive and well – and it is so far out of date that it's practically antique.

There is one upside. Now that there's precedent in banning any genre that even mildly rankles a select few, let me be brave enough to say it: let's ban Michael Bubl  in Westfield.






## Activity R – Moral panics

- 1 Create a table using the model provided below to summarise the moral panics mentioned in the case study on rap music provided.

Moral panic	Description/evidence	Subject of moral panic	How did the media contribute?	What is the impact on the subject of the moral panic?
Example – Banning of rap music at the Sydney Easter Show, 2023				

- 2 Thinking back to the content covered in 1.1: Youth, explain how a person's ethnicity or culture could be linked to moral panics.

- 3 Research one of the moral panics mentioned in the article on rap music in more detail.
- Select one of the artists/bands mentioned in the article.
  - Go to YouTube and browse through songs and clips from your chosen artist/group.
  - Identify the ways that this song/clip could be seen as deviant. In your response refer to the definitions of deviance and social norms, and state which social norms are being challenged.
  - Do you think that the reaction from groups and government fit with Stanley Cohen's theory of folk devils and moral panic? Explain why with reference to theory and evidence from the article.
- 4 Read the following article by Dr Zuleyka Zevallos (2020) relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and moral panic. Then complete the following questions.
-  'Pandemic, race and moral panic'. The Other Sociologist. 2020.  
[othersociologist.com/2020/07/05/pandemic-race-and-moral-panic/#more-26508](https://othersociologist.com/2020/07/05/pandemic-race-and-moral-panic/#more-26508)
- a Briefly describe two pre-COVID-19 moral panics described by Dr Zevallos.
  - b Create a brief dot-point summary of how COVID-19 evolved into a moral panic. Focus on the content in 'Table 1: Construction of a moral panic of COVID-19'.
- 5 Read the following ABC (2022) article 'How Harry Potter and Dungeons and Dragons brought 'satanic panic' into the suburbs' and then complete the following tasks.
-  [abc.net.au/news/2022-10-02/harry-potter-dungeons-dragons-satanic-panic-america-australia/101483054](https://abc.net.au/news/2022-10-02/harry-potter-dungeons-dragons-satanic-panic-america-australia/101483054)
- a Create a timeline of the games/books/films mentioned that were the subject of moral panics.
  - b Explain the positive and negative impacts of one of the moral panics described in the article.
- 6 Review the full episode listing for each series of the ABC program *You Can't Ask That* (2015–), available on iview. This can be completed either as a whole class or as an individual.
-  [iview.abc.net.au/show/you-can-t-ask-that](https://iview.abc.net.au/show/you-can-t-ask-that)
- Note down every episode which you think would address topics that could be considered 'deviant'. Then rank your selections from least to most deviant. Think of this as a continuum of deviance. Explain the reason for the ranking choices that you made.
- a What factors meant that the topic was deviant?
  - b What social norms are being challenged or broken?
  - c What social values are being upheld?
- 7 Explain how ABC's *You Can't Ask That* is either challenging or adding to moral panics in Australian society. Support your answer with reference to Stanley Cohen's theory.

# Revision questions

## Short-answer questions

- 1 What is meant by the term 'deviance'? Support your answer with an example.
- 2 What is the relationship between deviance and social norms?
- 3 Explain how and why deviance is a relative concept. Support your answer with two examples.
- 4 Provide an outline of Durkheim's functionalist theory of deviance.
- 5 Provide an outline of Hirschi's social control theory of deviance.
- 6 Explain what is meant by the process and response to labelling.
- 7 Explain what is meant by positive deviance. Support your answer with three examples.
- 8 Explain what is meant by the creation of 'folk devils'.
- 9 Explain how the media can contribute to the creation of a moral panic. Support your answer with an example.

## Extended response questions

- 1 According to functionalism, deviance is necessary for society to run smoothly. Explain the nature of Émile Durkheim's theory of deviance. Support your response with examples studied this year.
- 2 Analyse how 'weak bonds' can increase the likelihood of a person engaging in deviant behaviour. Support your response with evidence from material studied this year.
- 3 Analyse how Howard S. Becker's theory can help to explain the impact of labelling on a group people. Support your response with reference to a group studied this year.
- 4 Analyse the process and impact of a moral panic on an individual or group studied this year. Support your response with evidence.

## Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: [sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12](http://sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12)

### Articles

Jessica Brown, 2017. 'The powerful way that 'normalisation' shapes our world'. BBC Future. [bbc.com/future/article/20170314-how-do-we-determine-when-a-behaviour-is-normal](http://bbc.com/future/article/20170314-how-do-we-determine-when-a-behaviour-is-normal)

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### Books

James Arvanitakis, (ed.), 2016. *Sociologic: Analysing Everyday Life and Culture*. Oxford University Press.

Erich Goode, 2015. *The Handbook of Deviance*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Matt Noffs, 2016. *Breaking the Ice*. HarperCollins.

Matt Noffs and Kieran Palmer, 2018. *Addicted?* HarperCollins.

Evan Willis, 2011. *The Sociological Quest: An Introduction to the Study of Social Life*. 5e. Allen & Unwin.

### Videos

ABC BTN, 2023. 'Protest laws'. (4 min). [abc.net.au/btn/classroom/protest-laws/102421434](http://abc.net.au/btn/classroom/protest-laws/102421434)

Megan Steyn, 2019. 'How the left-hand has been seen as evil throughout history'. (2 min). [youtu.be/lzLSIZPeko0](https://youtu.be/lzLSIZPeko0)



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Cohen, S. 1972. *Moral Panic and Folk Devils*. MacGibbon and Kee.

Heckert, D.M. 1998. 'Positive deviance: A classificatory model'. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*, vol. 26, iss. 1.

Hirschi, T. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. University of California Press.

Vedelago, C. and Millar, R. 2021. 'One election later: The lessons from Melbourne's African gang panic'. *The Age*. [theage.com.au/national/victoria/one-election-later-the-lessons-from-melbourne-s-african-gang-panic-20211118-p59a4u.html](https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/one-election-later-the-lessons-from-melbourne-s-african-gang-panic-20211118-p59a4u.html)



# 2.2

## Unit 2, Area of study 2:



**Crime**

## “Unit 2, Area of Study 2: Crime

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss crime in Australia and evaluate the effectiveness of methods of punishment in the judicial system for shaping human behaviour.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

### Key knowledge

- 1 the sociological concept of crime:
  - 1.1 the relationship between norms, law and crime
  - 1.2 the various types of crime, such as: crimes against the person, crimes against property, victimless crime, white-collar crime and corporate crime, hate crime and organised crime
- 2 Australian data related to crime rates, including age, gender, country of birth, seriousness of offence and types of crimes committed
- 3 the international nature of some types of crime, such as the illegal drug trade, people trafficking and terrorism
- 4 the various ways that other nations deal with crime
- 5 a range of factors that lead people to commit crimes, including the strain theory of crime
- 6 the sociological concept of punishment, including the rationale and aims of punishment: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, societal protection and restoration
- 7 the concept of recidivism, including the effectiveness of restorative justice and prison sentencing on reducing recidivism
- 8 the effectiveness of alternative sentencing models on reducing recidivism, such as the Victorian Drug Court and the Koori Court.

### Key skills

- i explain and apply sociological concepts
- ii discuss the various types of crime
- iii analyse Australian data related to crime rates and identify differences according to age, gender, country of birth, seriousness of offence and types of crimes committed
- iv compare the various ways that other nations deal with crimes
- v describe a range of factors that lead people to commit crimes
- vi evaluate the effectiveness of restorative justice and sentencing on the aims of punishment and on reducing recidivism
- vii gather and use a variety of relevant source materials to support observation and analysis

viii evaluate sources and critically reflect on their own and others' approaches to understanding the social world

ix synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

## Preface

In this area of study, students develop an understanding of the concept of crime. They learn that crime and its definition are shaped by a community's sense of what is considered right and wrong. Some sociologists take a broader view of the definition of crime and include acts that harm other individuals or the environment. Generally, crime refers to an act that violates the written criminal laws of society enacted by local, state and federal governments. There are several categories considered by sociologists to be criminal in nature; these include crimes against the person, including hate crimes, crimes against property, victimless crime, white-collar crime, corporate crime and organised crime. Students use Australian data to examine and analyse crime rates and consider the various factors that may contribute to people committing crimes. It may be helpful to engage in sociological thinking during the consideration of these factors. They investigate the international nature of some types of crime and examine the various ways that other nations deal with crime in comparison to Australia.

Students examine the aim and rationale of punishment in Australian society, including retribution and just punishment, deterrence and denunciation, rehabilitation, incapacitation and societal protection and restoration. Each of these rationales for punishment aims to shape the behaviour of the offender and/or the behaviour of members of society, with a focus on how and why we punish. Students also explore the effectiveness of prison sentencing and restorative justice as ways of reducing recidivism. ”

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2023.  
'VCE Sociology Study Design 2024–2028'.  
[vcaa.vic.edu.au/documents/vce/sociology/2024sociologySD.docx](https://vcaa.vic.edu.au/documents/vce/sociology/2024sociologySD.docx)



# Crime

“ Society prepares the crime; the criminal commits it. ”

English historian Henry Thomas Buckle, 1857.

It is in our nature as humans to be fascinated by crime. Since the inception of crime as a literary genre in the 19th century, people have been intrigued by the Sherlock Holmes–style *who, what, how, where* and *why* mysteries of criminal activity. Crime is something that unites communities due to the threats it poses to the safety of citizens and to the stability of the society in which the criminal acts are occurring.

## The sociological concept of crime <sup>2.2.1</sup>

A **crime** occurs when a person breaks a law, committing an offence against the community – whether that be the wider community or an individual person. Crimes can be punishable by the **law**.

When a crime is committed, this often means a person or group of people have had their rights violated in some way. Consequently, when a person has broken the law there is an expectation from the **victims** of crime, as well as from the society at large, that the offender is punished in accordance with the law. In Australia, **punishments** vary depending on the type of crime committed, where in the country the crime takes place and the age of the offender.

Crime is tightly linked to the politics of a country. Political institutions have the power to create laws that in turn label the crime. The involvement of the community at large in seeking justice when a crime is committed impacts political institutions who are – in democratic countries – representatives of the people. As crimes and reactions to crimes are behavioural in nature, sociology seeks to understand how crime impacts society.

**Crime** refers to an offence that is punishable by law.

**Law** refers to a set of rules that are created and are enforceable by social or governmental institutions to regulate behaviour.

**Victim** refers to a person who is harmed, injured or killed because of a crime, accident or other event or action.

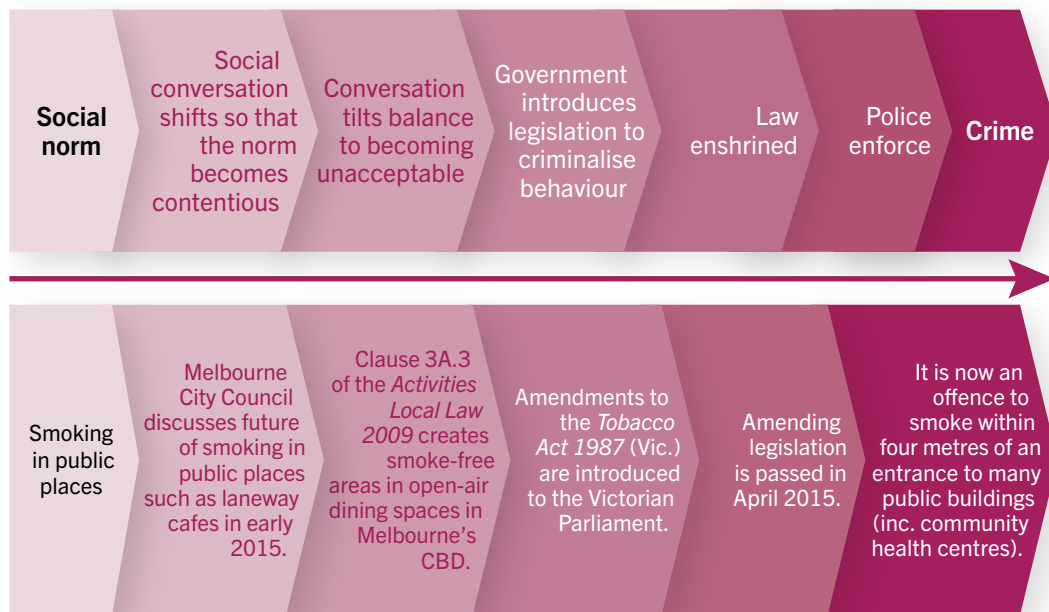
**Punishment** refers to the process whereby someone faces a penalty as retribution for an offence they have committed; it could be physical (such as being withheld in prison) or financial (such as a fine).

## The relationship between norms, law and crime <sup>2.2.1.1</sup>

It is important to note that crime is a product of social processes. What this means is that a crime cannot exist without a label. The labels are defined and redefined based on social norms, which are fluid and ever-changing. An act that is a crime today might not be a crime tomorrow, and so it makes sense that those who have been labelled as criminals for crimes of the past may not be criminals in the society of today.

One example of a social norm becoming a criminal offence is the prohibition of smoking in certain public places. In the past, smoking in public spaces such as restaurants and bars, and even on aeroplanes, was a widely accepted practice.

However, as awareness grew regarding the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and importance was placed on creating smoke-free environments, many jurisdictions passed laws to ban smoking in these settings. What was once considered socially acceptable behaviour became a criminal offence punishable by fines or other penalties. This shift in social norms reflected a broader understanding of public health concerns and the need to protect individuals from the dangers of second-hand smoke.



The sociology of crime (also known as **criminology**) seeks to understand why crimes are committed and the impact they have on society. The first step is defining the relationship between the norms, laws and crime.

**Criminology** is a branch of social science that studies crime, criminal behaviours and criminals.

### Types of crime 2.2.1.2

#### Crimes against the person

**Crimes against the person** include threatening, harassing or injuring another person or depriving them of their freedom. Crimes against the person can be classified as either fatal or non-fatal.

**Crimes against the person** refers to criminal acts that involve threatening, harassing or injuring another person or depriving them of their freedom.



#### One Punch Law

Following a spate of alcohol-related violence resulting in significant injury or death, the Victorian Government introduced new legislation known as the One Punch Law, which made the offence of 'unlawful striking causing death' a criminal offence. Prior to this introduction, the previous laws did not necessarily offer an outcome for this behaviour that satisfied the community.





## Activity A<sup>1</sup> – Crimes against the person

Read the news article about the One Punch Law and answer the questions that follow.

📖 'One-punch killers to spend 10 years in jail under new Victorian laws'. ABC News. 2014. [abc.net.au/news/2014-08-17/one-punch-killers-to-get-10-years-jail-under-new-victorian-laws/5676346](http://abc.net.au/news/2014-08-17/one-punch-killers-to-get-10-years-jail-under-new-victorian-laws/5676346)

- 1 How does the introduction of the One Punch Law reflect the role that community expectations have on the labelling of crimes?
- 2 How is 'unlawful striking causing death' a crime against a person?
- 3 How did social norms influence the changes in law?

### Crimes against property

The Australian Institute of Criminology describes crimes against property as the most common crimes in Australia. Crimes against property include damage or destruction of homes, businesses and land, as well as all types of burglary and theft.

**Crimes against property** refers to criminal acts that involve the unlawful interference, damage, theft or destruction of someone else's possessions, including buildings, vehicles, belongings or intellectual property.



## Bushfire arson

In October and November 2020, NSW Rural Fire Service volunteer Brendan Piccini used a cigarette lighter to start 10 fires over a four-week period. As a volunteer, he would later respond to the fires he lit. His motivation in lighting the fires was that he wanted to feel part of a team.



## Activity A<sup>2</sup> – Crimes against property

Read the news article about the Piccini case and answer the questions that follow.

📖 Ryan Young, 2022. 'Rural Fire Service volunteer Brendan Piccini deliberately lit 10 fires'. News.com. [news.com.au/national/nsw-act/crime/rural-fire-service-volunteer-brendan-piccini-deliberately-lit-10-fires/news-story/90984c7d7b89f6fc13bf2ee4d284de1d](http://news.com.au/national/nsw-act/crime/rural-fire-service-volunteer-brendan-piccini-deliberately-lit-10-fires/news-story/90984c7d7b89f6fc13bf2ee4d284de1d)

- 1 Some factors about Piccini's childhood were considered when sentencing him in this case. What were these?
- 2 How does this case connect to the definition of crimes against property?
- 3 What role did social norms play in this case?

### Victimless crimes

**Victimless crime** is a term used to refer to behaviour that is illegal but does not violate or threaten the rights of anyone else. It can include situations where an individual acts alone, as well as consensual acts in which two or more persons agree to commit a criminal offence in which no other person is involved. For example, driving a car without a seatbelt would be considered a victimless crime.

**Victimless crime** refers to a criminal act that is consensual in nature, where there is no direct harm or unwilling participant involved, such as certain drug use or prostitution offenses.



## Driving while using your phone

The use of technology while driving has been a contentious issue between the states in Australia. In Victoria, new laws have been established that acknowledge the technology used in cars while also protecting drivers from becoming distracted while driving.



## Activity A<sup>3</sup> – Victimless crime

Read the article about driver distraction laws and answer the questions that follow.

📖 Ben Zachariah, 2023. 'Victoria expands driver distraction laws to keep up with technology'. Drive Magazine. [drive.com.au/news/victoria-expands-driver-distraction-laws-to-keep-up-with-technology](https://drive.com.au/news/victoria-expands-driver-distraction-laws-to-keep-up-with-technology)

- 1 How has technology impacted the need for changes in driving laws?
- 2 Identify how, despite recent legal changes, the continued use of smartphones and other technologies while driving might still contribute to overall rates of 'victimless' crime. When writing your answer, ensure you make connections to the definition of victimless crime, and to the impact social norms might have in this scenario.

### White-collar crime

**White-collar crime** was first defined by American sociologist Edwin H. Sutherland in 1939 as 'a crime committed by a person of high social status and respectability in the course of [their] occupation'. In developing the term, Sutherland wanted to shift people's perceptions that only people of low socio-economic status were likely to commit crimes. In defining white-collar crime, Sutherland pointed out that those in the



upper social classes could also have criminal behaviour. These days, white-collar crime is generally understood as non-violent crime involving some type of deceit to obtain money, avoid losing money or gain some type of personal or professional advantage. Examples of white-collar crime include tax fraud and embezzlement.

**White-collar crime** refers to criminal acts of a generally non-violent nature, perpetrated in order to obtain money, to avoid losing money, or to gain some types of personal, professional or political advantage.



## Plutus Payroll

The founders of a free payroll service known as Plutus Payroll defrauded the Commonwealth Government of \$105 million from 2014 to 2017, through an elaborate scheme of falsified records and second-tier companies. The case is considered to be one of the largest examples of tax fraud in Australia's history.



## Activity A<sup>4</sup> – White-collar crime

Read the article about the Plutus Payroll case and answer the questions that follow.

📖 Jamie McKinnell, 2023. 'Fifth member of Plutus Payroll's \$105 million tax fraud behind bars after guilty verdict'. ABC News. [abc.net.au/news/2023-03-21/patrick-willmott-found-guilty-of-105-million-ato-tax-fraud/102123700](https://abc.net.au/news/2023-03-21/patrick-willmott-found-guilty-of-105-million-ato-tax-fraud/102123700)

- 1 How is the case of Plutus Payroll connected to the concept of white-collar crime?
- 2 How might social norms influence the outcome of this case?

## Corporate crime

**Corporate crimes** are those committed by large corporations. These crimes can impact individuals, groups, other corporations and society. There are six types of corporate crime violations:

- administrative (paperwork or non-compliance)
- environmental (pollutions, permit violations)
- financial (tax violations, illegal payments)
- labour (working conditions, hiring practices)
- manufacturing (product safety, labelling)
- unfair trade practices (anti-competition, false advertising).

**Corporate crime** refers to the use of illegal or unethical actions by corporations or individuals within a business setting, often involving offenses such as fraud, corruption or environmental violations.



## Misleading advertising

False or misleading advertising is a tactic sometimes employed by businesses to increase their profits. In Australia, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) identifies that businesses should be accurate and truthful in advertising regarding:

- information on prices
- images and descriptions of what is offered
- claims about the value, benefits, qualities or performance of products and services
- shipping options and delivery times.

Emirates Airlines has been found guilty of not complying with these strict guidelines.



## Activity A<sup>5</sup> – Corporate crime

Read the article about the Emirates misleading advertising case and answer the questions that follow.

Ben Schlappig, 2023. 'Emirates fined for misleading business class advertising'. One Mile at a Time. [onemileatatime.com/news/emirates-misleading-business-class-advertising](https://onemileatatime.com/news/emirates-misleading-business-class-advertising)

- 1 How does this case connect to corporate crime?
- 2 What precedent does it set for other companies in the aviation industry and the consumers that use them?

## Hate crime

**Hate crimes** have been defined in Australia since the introduction of the *Racial Discrimination Act (1995)*, wherein it was made unlawful to 'insult, humiliate, offend or intimidate another person or group in public based on the basis of their race' (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2002). For a person to be criminally charged with a hate crime, three elements must be met:

- The act must be done in a public place.
- The act must be done with the intention to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate.
- The attack must be based on race, colour, or national or ethnic origin.

**Hate crime** are criminal acts committed against an individual or group based on their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or other protected characteristics, motivated by prejudice, bias or hate.




## The Islamophobia Register

The Islamophobia Register Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that collects, analyses and tracks data on Islamophobia in Australia. When the Islamophobia Register was first established in 2014, the rise of extremist fundamentalists such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was a focus for many Australian media outlets. This led to an increase in anti-Islamic sentiment, with many far-right organisations launching anti-mosque protests (as seen in the regional Victorian city of Bendigo) and anti-halal protests. The most recent report released by the Islamophobia Register, in partnership with Charles Sturt University and Islamic educational institute ISRA, showed that, in the period between 2020 and 2021, 930 incidents of hate towards Australian Muslims were recorded and reported to the police.



## Activity A<sup>6</sup> – Hate crime

Read the article about the latest Islamophobia Register report and answer the questions that follow.

 Rashida Yosufzai, 2023. ‘Don’t blow yourself up’: A Muslim employee read a book at work. His manager’s reply left him in tears.’ SBS News. [sbs.com.au/news/article/dont-blow-yourself-up-a-muslim-employee-read-a-book-at-work-his-managers-reply-left-him-in-tears/axhpqycxh](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/dont-blow-yourself-up-a-muslim-employee-read-a-book-at-work-his-managers-reply-left-him-in-tears/axhpqycxh)

- 1 How is Islamophobia a hate crime?
- 2 What is the impact of hate crimes on both the victim(s) and society at large? Give reasons for your answer, drawing on examples from the article.

### Organised crime

**Organised crime** is defined as a ‘formal organisation with a hierarchical power structure, a clear division of labour, and a network of resources that is focused on illegal activities such as drug trafficking or prostitution’ (Open Education Sociology Dictionary, 2023). Organised crimes are some of the most serious crimes. Types of organised crime include:

- illicit drug activity
- tax or other fraud
- identity or cybercrime
- money laundering
- crimes against people (such as human trafficking).

**Organised crime** refers to a structured and ongoing criminal business that involves multiple individuals or groups collaborating to engage in illegal activities for financial gain or exerting control over certain illicit markets.



## Taskforce Icarus

Crime syndicates are constantly needing to change the way in which they operate, to evade the law. In 2021, Victoria Police established a specialised task force (called Icarus) to try to intercept illicit drugs coming into Victoria.

One example of a case that involved the Icarus taskforce was the 2022 arrest of several people in Melbourne for the importation of methylamphetamine after police seized more than 3 kilograms of methylamphetamine, drug paraphernalia, weapons, passports and other materials used in the distribution of narcotics. The arrests were made after the group attempted to import approximately 40 kilograms of methylamphetamine (Australian Federal Police, 2022).



## Activity A<sup>7</sup> – Organised crime

Watch the video clips and answer the questions that follow.

- 📺 Organised Crime Micro-docs: Icarus Taskforce – Drugs in mail. Victoria Police, 2021 (3 min). [youtu.be/umiMrzDNqTQ](https://youtu.be/umiMrzDNqTQ)
- 📺 Organised Crime Micro-docs: Trident Taskforce – Protecting the borders. Victoria Police, 2021 (2 min). [youtu.be/mwo6HB1CR\\_4](https://youtu.be/mwo6HB1CR_4)
- 📺 Organised Crime Micro-docs: Operation Crossway – Illicit imports. Victoria Police, 2021 (3 min). [youtu.be/nRbxnw5cZ2A](https://youtu.be/nRbxnw5cZ2A)

- 1 Using an example from one of the clips, define organised crime.
- 2 What are the potential impacts to society for this type of crime?



## When society speaks

In March 2023, a group of far-right activists and anti-transgender protesters clashed with pro-transgender protesters in Melbourne. In their protest, the far-right group stood on the steps of the Victorian Parliament and performed the Nazi salute. In response to this incident and the public discourse that followed, the Victorian Government began to take 'active steps' to make the gesture a criminal offence.



## Activity A<sup>8</sup> – Criminalising a gesture

Read the article about the ban on the Nazi salute and answer the questions that follow.

- 📖 Adeshola Ore, 2023. 'Victoria to ban Nazi salute after 'disgusting' scenes at anti-trans protest'. The Guardian. [theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/20/victoria-to-ban-nazi-salute-after-anti-trans-protest-melbourne-australia](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/20/victoria-to-ban-nazi-salute-after-anti-trans-protest-melbourne-australia)

- 1 Identify and explain the type of crime that best fits this case study.
- 2 What social norms and/or laws have been breached? Use evidence from the article to support your answer.
- 3 Discuss how the labelling of this action as a crime potentially impacts on society.



Neo-Nazis saluting as they are ordered to leave a political rally in Melbourne in 2023.  
Credit: Michael Currie/Speed Media/Alamy

## Different approaches – the sociological theories of crime

As with any study, sociologists view and analyse situations through the lens of different theories and ideas. Comparing the different approaches can help to strengthen your own understanding of the topic. Let's consider five different theories and their approach to the concept of crime.

Theory	Overview	Sociologists
Functionalist	Crime is inevitable and universal. It occurs when individuals cannot achieve the goals of society.	<b>Émile Durkheim</b> argued that crime can be positive for society through maintaining boundaries, helping to change society when it is needed, acting as a warning to others and providing jobs. <b>Robert K. Merton</b> argued that crime occurs due to strains, wherein people cannot legally achieve their goals due to poor education/opportunities. (Read more about Merton's theory further in this chapter.)
Marxist	Crime is negative and helps to maintain capitalism/keep the class divide. The ruling class created laws that allow them to benefit by labelling a scapegoat as a criminal. In most cases, the criminal is a member of the working class, who is targeted more by the police and so is overrepresented in the statistics on crime.	<b>Laureen Snider</b> (1993) argued that 'many of the most serious anti-social and predatory acts committed in modern industrial countries are corporate crime'. She argues that laws reflect the interests of the bourgeoisie, protecting the property and interests of the capitalist elite.
Feminist	Crime is negative and helps to maintain the patriarchy in society. Crimes such as domestic violence and sexual crimes are not taken seriously, and female victims are not supported. Feminists also believe that female criminals are seen as double deviants as they go against the laws and expectations of society.	<b>Lawrence Henderson</b> argued that women have less opportunity to commit crimes due to having more controls on their behaviours, and thus are represented less in crime statistics as the offending criminal. <b>Pat Carlen</b> noted that female criminals had less to lose and could not conform to the ideals that society imposes on women.
Interactionist	Crime is caused by a disconnect between people's norms and values, and the norms and values that society imposes on them.	<b>Howard Becker</b> argued that crime provides a label to the criminal, which can then lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy of becoming a criminal 'master'.
Subcultural	Criminal subcultures involve young males who act in defiance against society's norms.	<b>Albert Cohen</b> argued that working-class boys experience status frustration and join delinquent subcultures to gain status and fight back against society.



## Activity B – Think like a sociologist

It's time to think like a sociologist. Choose one of the following crimes and complete the tasks that follow.



- 1 Provide a definition of your crime. In your definition, include what type of crime it is and how it impacts the norms and values of society in Australia.
- 2 Find a recent Australian example involving the type of crime you have chosen and write a summary of the specific crime. In your summary, make sure you include: the date, source, quotes, identification of the type of crime, the norms involved and any laws breached.
- 3 List the possible consequences of committing this crime using the following headings.
  - a Impact on the person committing the crime
  - b Impact on the victim of the crime
  - c Impact on society

### Australian crime rate data 2.2.2

The distribution of crime is often expressed in terms of crime rates. **Unpacking** statistics through various lenses allows sociologists to explore the impact that crime is having on all aspects of society. Statistics also allow for an intersectional look at the types of people charged with crimes, which can in turn impact social norms, values and changes.

**Unpacking** means analysing or evaluating.

While sociologists have access to a lot of useful and revealing data relating to crime rates, crime as a social phenomenon is often hidden, unreported and undetected. Therefore, it is important to consider the gaps and biases in statistics relating to crime.

### Age and crime

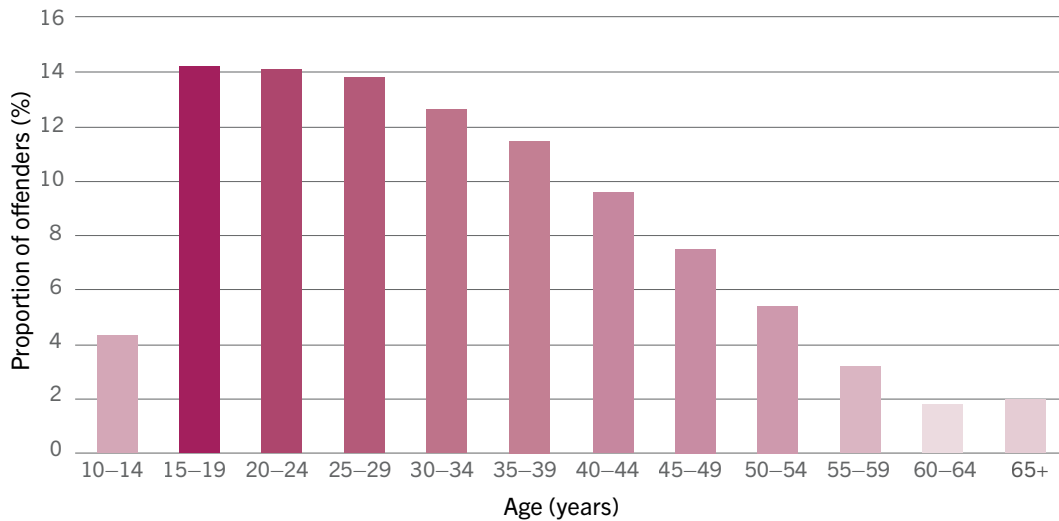
Official statistics show that there are certain patterns regarding age and criminal activity. Government statistics indicate that, on average, young people in Australia engage in a greater number of criminal offences than adults. This could be attributed to factors such as peer influence, socio-economic challenges, and the processes of personal and social development. Below is the most recent distribution of age for crime in Australia.

The 2021–22 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Recorded Crime summary found that police proceeded against 45 210 offenders aged between 10 and 17 years, an increase of 2% from 2020–21 (ABS, 2023a).

However, after accounting for population change in that time, the youth offender rate decreased slightly from 1785 offenders in 2020–21 to 1778 offenders per 100 000 persons aged between 10 and 17 years in 2021–22.

More than one in five youth offenders were charged with acts intending to cause injury. Miscellaneous offenses primarily related to COVID-19 were the next most significant offence type, while there was a 14% decrease in illicit drug offences from the previous year.

### Proportion of offenders by age group, 2021–22



Credit: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2023. 'Recorded Crime – Offenders'.  
[abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/recorded-crime-offenders/2021-22](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/recorded-crime-offenders/2021-22)

As seen in the statistics, young people are more likely to commit a crime. Consider your learnings from previous studies for youth and deviance – what are the contributing factors that might impact on a young person's propensity to commit a crime? As sociologists, we must consider the process of socialisation, the role of the family, access to opportunities (which could be linked to socio-economic status) and the influence of subcultures and the media.

### Gender and crime

As sociologists, we can build a deeper understanding of social standards by considering the gender of offenders. According to the 2021 ABS Census, three-quarters of offenders charged with a crime were male. These figures showed that there were:

- 2 482 male offenders per 100 000 males
- 789 female offenders per 100 000 females.

We may apply psychologist Alice Eagly's 'social role theory' to this statistical analysis to try to understand why there is such a significant discrepancy between the numbers of male and female offenders in Australia. Eagly's theory argues that 'widely shared gender stereotypes develop from the gender division of labour that characterises a society' (Ridgeway, 2001). For our context, we can simplify this to say that the gender socialisation of men to be tough 'risk takers' increases the likelihood of them committing a crime. Further to this, the significantly higher rate of incarceration for male offenders has a flow-on effect that sees an absence of male role models for young men to learn from in their own stages of socialisation.

It is also important to be critical of the statistics relating to the gender of criminals charged with crimes. Sociologist Otto Pollak talked of the 'chivalry thesis' in his 1950 book *The Criminality of Women*. He suggested that girls and women are perceived as being less deviant because the male members of society are supposed to 'protect' them, and this could be reflected in the leniency of criminal prosecution towards women.



Gender in crime can also be viewed through the victim lens. For example, according to the 2021 ABS Census, of 31 118 sexual-assault-related offences, the number of female victims was six times more than that of male victims. Furthermore, when looking at the statistics for family-domestic-violence (FDV)-related homicides, 58 per cent of victims were female. Thus, women are over-represented in the victims of crime data. However, if you consider the data for victims of violent crimes such as murder and manslaughter, male victims account for 70 per cent of the overall data.

### Country of birth and crime

When exploring country of birth in connection with crime, we are really considering ethnicity and crime. The country of an offender or victim's birth does not necessarily provide a clear determining factor for consideration in the statistics. For instance, a victim may be Australian with Sudanese heritage. If we are looking to unpack statistics connected to the over-representation of Sudanese people in the criminal justice system as either offenders or victims, we are unable to extract that data. As sociologists, considering the ethnicity and country of birth of offenders and victims can help to further understand how societies engage with ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, and to what extent a social group is inclusive or exclusive.

In Australia, the problems with over-representation of ethnic groups are clearest when we consider First Nations peoples in our criminal justice system. Despite making up only 2 per cent of Australia's total population, First Nations Australians are 10 times more likely to be imprisoned than other Australians (Amnesty International, 2022). For First Nations youth, the data indicates they are 26 times more likely to be incarcerated than their non-Indigenous peers.

According to the ABS, as of 30 June 2022, First Nations Australians accounted for 32 per cent of all prisoners in Australia. Of the First Nations prison population, 91 per cent were male and 9 per cent were female. More startling, and echoing the information released by Amnesty International, 78 per cent of all adult First Nations prisoners had prior experience of adult imprisonment. The number of First Nations offenders proceeded against by police increased during COVID-19, with New South Wales recording the highest number of offenders: 46 986 (or 68 per cent of all offenders proceeded by the police for COVID-19 offences). Overall, COVID-19-related miscellaneous offences increased by 96 per cent for First Nations peoples in the period between 2021 and 2022.

When exploring statistics related to crime and First Nations peoples, sociologists must consider the historical implications of systemic government policies against First Nations peoples, as well as the general political and socio-economic disadvantages that exist for First Nations Australians.

### Seriousness of offences

The definition of a **serious offence** in Australia is at times dependent on the type of crime. As a general point of consensus, offences such as murder, manslaughter, kidnapping or terrorism are considered serious offences.

From a sociological perspective, the seriousness of offences in Australia can be examined in the context of several factors such as social inequalities, structural issues and cultural influences. Sociologists analyse how these factors contribute to the committing of crimes and their impact on individuals and society.

**Serious offence** considered severe in nature, typically involving significant harm, violence or a significant threat to public safety or societal wellbeing.


A recent review of sentencing data from the last 20 years reveals that courts in Victoria are now more likely to send offenders to prison for serious offences and that those offenders are getting longer sentences (Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council, 2022a).

According to the Sentencing Advisory Council's annual report, from 1 July 2020 through to 1 June 2021 there were 2884 people sentenced to time in Victorian prisons for 4530 serious offences. In this instance, a serious offence is defined by the *Corrections Act 1986* (Vic) to include a serious violent offence such as murder or manslaughter and/or a sex offence such as rape or sexual assault.



## Activity C – Serious offences

Read the article about rates of imprisonment for serious offences and answer the questions that follow.

 'Victorian prison rate growing as sentences for serious crimes get longer, review shows'. ABC News, 2022. [abc.net.au/news/2022-09-13/harsher-penalties-contributing-to-victorias-growing-prison-rate/101430306](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-13/harsher-penalties-contributing-to-victorias-growing-prison-rate/101430306)

- 1 Identify a serious offence described in the article.
- 2 Outline what the statistics in the article indicate about the seriousness of offences in the criminal justice system of Victoria.
- 3 Describe one reason Victoria's imprisonment rates are rising.

### Types of crimes committed

As previously discussed, there are seven types of crime:

- crimes against the person
- crimes against property
- victimless crime
- white-collar crime
- corporate crime
- hate crime
- organised crime.



In reviewing data for a national commentary, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) analyses crime victimisation in Australia, looking at the most prevalent types of crime. In the period between 2021 and 2022:

- 386 000 persons (1.9% of the population) experienced physical assault
- 441 900 persons (2.2% of the population) experienced face-to-face threatened assault
- 194 100 households (2.0% of households) experienced a break-in
- 374 400 households (3.8% of households) experienced malicious property damage.

Of those who experienced a personal crime in the reporting period, 52 per cent of reports to police were for physical assaults, 39 per cent were for face-to-face threatened assaults, 32 per cent were for non-face-to-face threatened assaults and 45 per cent were for robbery (ABS, 2023b).

A point of consideration for sociologists when considering the data relating to crime is the inconsistency of reporting. ABS statistics are collated using recorded crimes to police, so the data does not consider the potential reports to police that do not result in a recorded note, or those that simply go unreported. Take the example of hate crimes. In Australia, there are some external agencies that collate data relating to hate crimes (for example, the Islamophobia Register), but they are unable to cover all forms of hate crimes due to a lack of resources. Other examples of areas where under-reporting impacts the accuracy of data are family violence and male victims of sexual assault. In both cases, there are a multitude of factors that may dissuade a victim from reporting their crime, including societal expectations about gender roles. Victoria Police collects information about crime motivations and discrimination, but this data is not consistent. Due to under-reporting and the lack of a unified data collection method, our ability to unpack the true rates of hate crimes is limited.



## Activity D – Exploring ABS statistics on crime

Use the ABS Crime and Justice statistics from the most recent Census, as well as the information you have studied in this course so far, to answer the questions that follow.

[abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice)

- 1 Of all the data categories explored, which (if any) is the strongest predictor of criminality? Explain your answer.
- 2 At what age do people have the highest rate of reoffending?
- 3 Outline two different factors that sociologists should consider when they examine gender and crime.
- 4 Looking at the data about country of birth, discuss why some ethnic groups might be overrepresented in the data.
- 5 What is the percentage of First Nations offenders in comparison to non-Indigenous offenders? What are some of the limitations of data when looking at statistics connected to First Nations peoples?
- 6 What factors do those in the criminal justice system need to consider when determining and/or classifying the ‘seriousness of the offence’?
- 7 Looking at the types of crime, create a list ranking them in order from most serious to least serious. Give a short justification for your answers.



## The international nature of some types of crime 2.2.3

**International crime** refers to criminal activities that occur across national borders, involving individuals or organisations from different nations. These can include serious crimes such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, cybercrime and terrorism. These crimes can have devastating consequences for vulnerable people and communities and, given the global nature of the crime, they can be difficult to stop. The term ‘international crime’ relates to serious violations of international law that include genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture and enforced disappearance. **Transnational crime** refers to organised crimes by offenders who operate transnationally for the purpose of obtaining power, influence or monetary/commercial gain.

**International crime** refers to a crime that violates the international laws agreed to within the United Nations Charter.

**Transnational crime** refers to crimes that have actual or potential effects across national borders.



The ICCCA falls under the Attorney-General's Department (Canberra headquarters pictured).

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), transnational organised crime threatens Australians' interests and the regional stability on which Australians depend. Crime is becoming increasingly complex and increasingly global. About 70 per cent of Australia's serious criminal threats have an international dimension (DFAT, 2017).

For matters of international crime, Australia's International Crime Cooperation Central Authority (ICCCA) is responsible

for the international transfer of prisoners (extradition) and for mutual assistance, in which international governments assist each other in criminal investigations and prosecutions. International crime cooperation relationships are governed by bilateral and multilateral treaties. Australia also has non-treaty arrangements with some countries. The ICCCA is also responsible for casework arising from the International Criminal Court and international war crimes tribunals, as well as issuing criminal justice certificates.

The international nature of some types of crime provides sociologists the opportunity to explore, analyse and evaluate the interconnectedness of societies. Sociologist Ian Taylor viewed the international nature of some types of crime through the Marxist lens of globalisation. Taylor (1997) argued that globalisation contributes to the increase of crime by increasing capitalist greed. What this means is that because people are focused on financial gains or profit, it has encouraged international criminals to travel transnationally in search of the greatest profit margin.

## The illegal drug trade

The **illegal drug trade** (also known as drug trafficking) is defined by the United Nations (2023a) as a 'global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws'. It involves the illegal market for drugs such as cocaine, heroin, methylamphetamine, marijuana (in states where it is illegal) and various synthetic drugs. The trade includes the cultivation or manufacture, transportation, smuggling and sales of drugs.

**Illegal drug trade** refers to the illegal global trade of substances that are subjected to drug prohibition laws. This can involve the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution and sale of substances.

In Australia, there are separate laws in each state and territory; however, the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) (2023) defines the crime of drug trafficking as a person(s) who:

- sells drug(s)
- prepares drug(s) with the intention of selling them, or believing another person intends to sell them
- transports drug(s) with the intention of selling them, or believing another person intends to sell them
- guards or conceals drug(s) with the intention of selling, or assisting another person to sell, any of them
- possesses drug(s) with the intention of selling them.

According to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (2022), the illegal drug trade in Australia is estimated to be worth \$10.3 billion per year. The so-called 'maritime corridor' that exists between Australia and the Asian and American markets has led to drug cartels, criminal organisations and local gangs all vying for profit connected to the increased demand for methylamphetamine and cocaine in Australia. The demand for the illicit product in Australia has impacted our neighbouring Pacific Islands as external organised crime groups establish production facilities closer to Australia to keep up with demand.

In 2022, Jose Sousa-Santos from the Lowy Institute released a report that showed how the deportation policies in Australia, New Zealand and the United States make the drug cartels in the Pacific even stronger. This affects the agreements between Australia and its Pacific neighbours, making it harder for the Australian Government to work together with them.

We should note that while much of the illegal drug trade has an international component to it there are still examples of illegal drug crime local to Australia.



## Activity E – The illegal drug trade

- 1 Read the Lowy Institute report and answer the question that follows.

[loyyinstitute.org/publications/drug-trafficking-pacific-islands-impact-transnational-crime](https://www.loyyinstitute.org/publications/drug-trafficking-pacific-islands-impact-transnational-crime)

Explain, in your own words, how the illegal drug trade impacts the international community at a global level, and how it directly impacts Australia.

- 2 Read the following two articles and answer the questions that follow.

[abc.net.au/news/2023-05-11/drug-lab-bunker-found-at-reynella-east-home-police-say/102335180](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-11/drug-lab-bunker-found-at-reynella-east-home-police-say/102335180)

[geelongindy.com.au/news/31-03-2022/six-charged-in-major-drug-bust](https://www.geelongindy.com.au/news/31-03-2022/six-charged-in-major-drug-bust)

- a How do the articles connect to the definition of the illegal drug trade?
- b Identify and define the types of crimes referenced in the articles.
- c Explain how the crimes referenced in the articles may be considered serious offences.
- d What is the impact on the local communities where illegal drug activity is occurring?



## 'Cocaine Cassie'

The 'Cocaine Cassie' story revolves around Cassandra Sainsbury, an Australian woman who gained media attention in 2017 when she was arrested at an airport in Colombia with several kilograms of cocaine concealed in her luggage. The case garnered significant international interest as it unfolded, with people speculating about her involvement and motives, and discussion of the risks associated with drug trafficking. Ultimately, Sainsbury was sentenced to a lengthy prison term in Colombia before being released on parole after serving a portion of her sentence. The story highlights the consequences of and dangers associated with involvement in drug-related activities abroad.



Cassandra 'Cassie' Sainsbury was arrested in Colombia for smuggling cocaine in 2017. Photo: Colombia National Police



## Activity F – ‘Cocaine Cassie’

Watch the 2020 *60 Minutes* interview with Cassie Sainsbury (‘Time’s Up’, 25 mins) and answer the questions that follow.

[youtu.be/zMqAYJg7acE](https://youtu.be/zMqAYJg7acE)

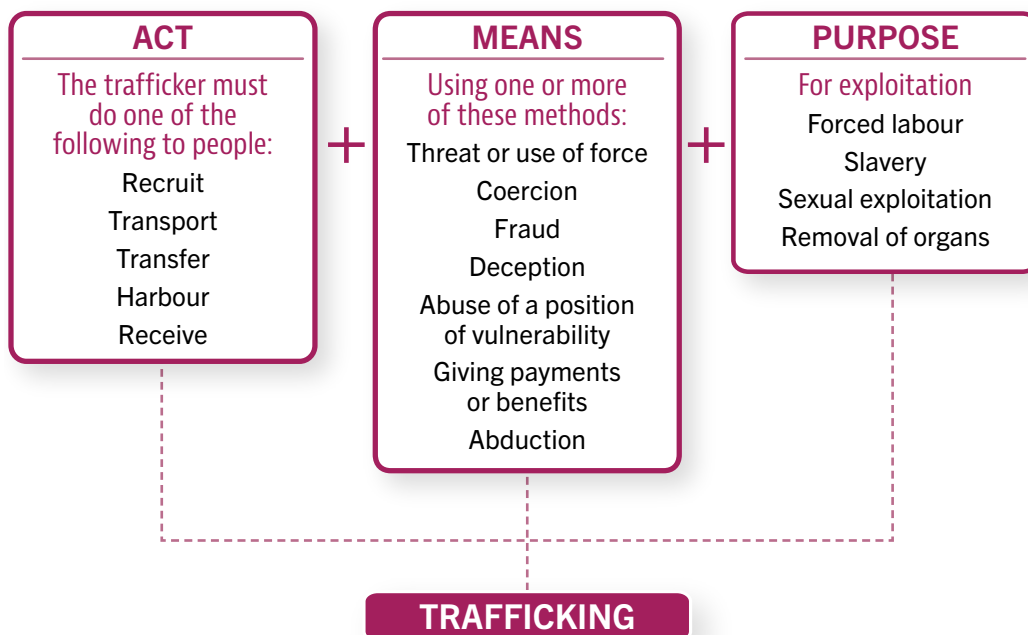
- 1 What factors might have contributed to Sainsbury becoming involved in criminal behaviour(s)?
- 2 What type of crime has she committed?
- 3 What is the international nature of this crime?

### People trafficking

**People trafficking** (otherwise known as human trafficking) is defined by the United Nations (2023b) as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. Men, women and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world. The traffickers often use violence or fraudulent employment agencies and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick and coerce their victims.

**People trafficking** refers to the illegal transportation of individuals across borders, typically for financial gain, bypassing immigration controls and endangering the lives and wellbeing of those being smuggled.

There are three elements to human trafficking: the act itself, the means and the purpose. Often victims of trafficking will experience physical abuse, blackmail, sexual abuse and emotional manipulation, and may even have their official documents (such as a passport) taken away as a method of coercive control. Exploitation can take place in the victim’s home country, during migration or in a foreign country.



Adapted from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2021.  
'Human trafficking: the crime'. [unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/crime.html](https://unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/crime.html)

There are many different forms of human trafficking.

- **Sexual exploitation:** When people are forced or tricked into doing sexual activities, such as prostitution or pornography, against their will.
- **Forced labour:** Making people work under unfair, unsafe or unhygienic conditions by using force or lies, especially in places such as hotels or in the entertainment industry.
- **Debt bondage:** Forcing people to work to pay off a debt that they can never really pay, which leads to ongoing exploitation.
- **Domestic servitude:** Trapping people in situations where they have to work as servants in homes, often facing abuse and not being able to leave.
- **Organ removal:** When organs are taken from people without their consent or knowledge, often to be sold illegally.
- **Forced begging:** Making people beg on the streets against their will, controlled by others who exploit them.
- **Child soldiers:** Forcing or tricking kids to join and fight in wars, where they face violence and are manipulated.
- **Forced marriage:** Making people, especially girls, get married without their choice or consent, leading to abuse and violating their rights.



### Global trafficking syndicates

In October 2022, an investigation was launched into a global human trafficking syndicate operating in Australia. While there is yet to be a legally enforced resolution to the operation, it has sparked reviews at the national level in Australia regarding the immigration system – specifically, the accessibility of some visas.



### Activity G – Trafficking in Australia

Read the following collection of articles published by The Age about global human trafficking.

 'Trafficked: An international investigation'. [theage.com.au/national/trafficked-20221030-p5bu3z.html](https://theage.com.au/national/trafficked-20221030-p5bu3z.html)

- 1 What type of crime is being committed?
- 2 What type of crime data is available? Give examples from your readings.
- 3 What factors increase the risk of people trafficking?

### Terrorism

Terrorism is a term that you may have heard. Its meaning can vary depending on where you are in the world. Terrorism refers to violent acts or threats intended to create fear, panic and intimidation among people. It is often carried out by individuals or groups who have political or religious motivations. The key goal of terrorism is to spread fear and disrupt society by targeting innocent civilians or critical infrastructure.

Strong laws are important for any country in dealing with potential or actual acts of terrorism. Australia's laws against terrorism are found in Part 5.3 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Criminal Code)*. Australia also has laws against foreign incursions and recruitment, which are in Part 5.5 of the Criminal Code. The department responsible for enforcing these laws is in charge of the Criminal Code.

Australia's counter-terrorism laws cover different areas, including:

- offences related to terrorist acts
- dealing with terrorist organisations
- stopping the financing of terrorism
- prohibiting violence and advocacy of terrorism
- addressing foreign incursions and recruitment
- implementing control orders
- enforcing preventative detention orders.

In Australia, a terrorist act is an act, or a threat to act, that meets both the criteria listed below.

- It intends to coerce or influence the public or any government by intimidation to advance a political, religious or ideological cause.
- It causes one or more of the following:
  - death, serious harm or danger to a person
  - serious damage to property
  - a serious risk to the health or safety of the public
  - serious interference with, disruption to or destruction of critical infrastructure such as telecommunications or electricity networks.

Advocating, protesting, dissenting or taking industrial action are not terrorist acts where the person doing the activity does not intend to cause serious harm to a person or create a serious risk to public safety. Anyone guilty of committing a terrorist act could face up to life imprisonment.

According to the Global Terrorism Index, Australia was ranked 69th in the world for terrorist incidents in 2022, indicating that no recorded terrorist attacks took place within the country during that year. In contrast, Afghanistan held the 1st rank, with 225 recorded terrorist incidents between 2021 and 2022 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023). While Australia has a comparatively minimal risk, our political alliances, such as with the United States, can still impact our citizens. For instance, if a terrorist attack occurs in a country allied with Australia, our military may be deployed to help. The Global Terrorism Index serves as a ranking system that measures and compares terrorism levels worldwide, gathering data on the number of attacks, affected individuals and societal impacts. This index helps us gain a better understanding of global terrorism and enables governments, researchers and individuals to comprehend where terrorism occurs and its effects. It plays a crucial role in promoting peace and developing strategies to combat terrorism.

Sociologists try to understand terrorism as a social phenomenon. What factors influence a person's decision to perform an act of terror? When analysing the sociological connections of terrorism, it is important to consider the political, social, geographic and economic history of the country where the terrorist attack takes place, as well as the country that the terrorist attacker is from. Often, complicated intersections of history lead to feelings of oppression and anger – a shared characteristic of many contemporary terrorist attackers.





## Christchurch mosque shootings

On 15 March 2019, Brenton Harrison Tarrant – an Australian citizen – opened fire in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The two consecutive attacks left 51 people murdered and another 40 people injured.



## Activity H – The Christchurch bombings

Watch the ABC 'Four Corners' investigation of the Christchurch massacre (44 min).

[youtu.be/EUVychuUnPk](https://youtu.be/EUVychuUnPk)

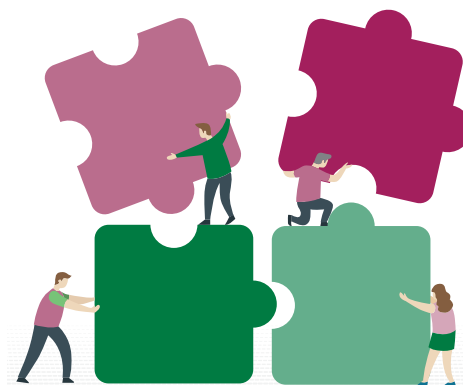
- 1 Describe the factors that contributed to the perpetrator committing this crime.
- 2 What type of crime is this?
- 3 How does this crime connect to the definition of terrorism? Give specific examples to support your answer.



## Activity I – Media representations of global crime

Working in a group of two or three, pick one of the three global crimes discussed (illegal drug trade, people trafficking, terrorism). Once you have decided on the topic, create a multimedia presentation that includes the following:

- an outline of the crime
- a detailed description of the factors that contribute to people committing the crime, including evidence for your answer as well as explicit links to the definition of international crime
- an evaluation of the effectiveness of global and national responses to the crime in the shaping of human behaviour (i.e. how are people either deterred or encouraged to participate in the crime?)



## Ways that other nations deal with crime <sup>2.2.4</sup>

Australia's political and legal systems are often compared to those of the UK and the US because Australia took inspiration from them when it was formed as a country. In today's globalised world, we can also compare how different nations handle similar crimes. Let's explore a few examples of how different countries approach crime compared to Australia.

### Crime and punishment: A comparative case study of criminal justice systems in Australia and Norway

The Norwegian prison system is renowned as one of the most effective and humane criminal justice systems in the world. With approximately 3000 offenders in jail, Norway has one of lowest rates of incarceration of any nation. What makes it so effective, and how does Australia compare?



## Nordic criminal justice: How does it differ from Australia and does it work?

Nick Baker and Annabelle Quince, 2022. 'Nordic criminal justice: How does it differ from Australia and does it work?'. ABC RN (Rear Vision), 2022.  
[abc.net.au/news/2022-10-05/what-are-nordic-prisons-like-criminal-justice/101481590](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-05/what-are-nordic-prisons-like-criminal-justice/101481590)

When John Pratt visited one of Sweden's 'open prisons' outside the capital Stockholm, he was shocked at what he saw.



Dining facilities in Larvik prison in Norway.  
Credit: Sean Hayford O'leary. [w.wiki/6eck](https://www.wiki/6eck)

'There was a carpark for the inmates and they commuted to Stockholm during the day for work,' he tells ABC RN's Rear Vision.

'If they were going to be back late at night, they would phone the prison and a meal would be left out for them when they got back.'

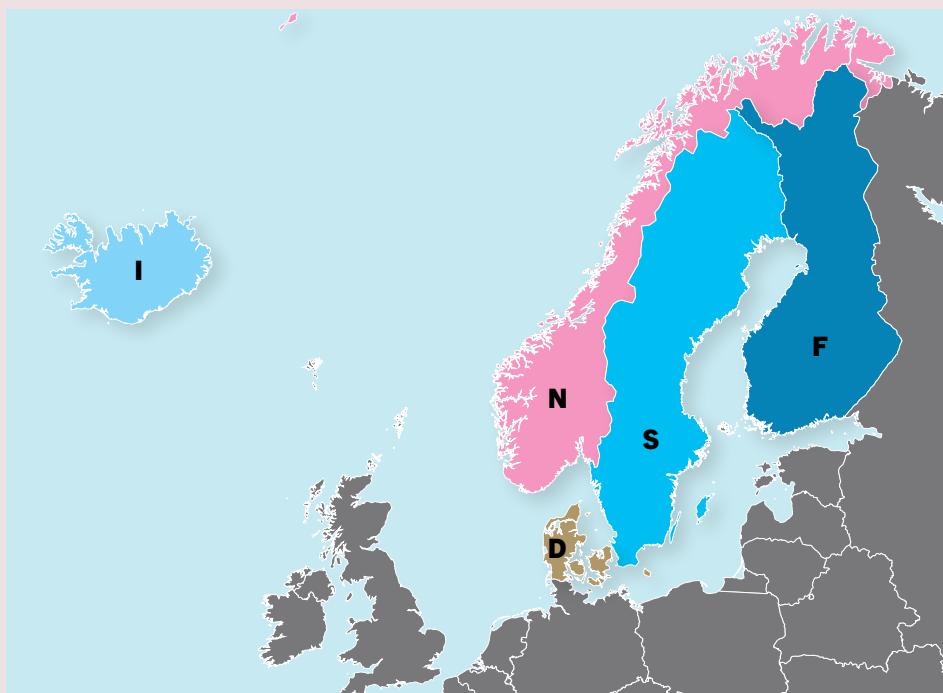
Pratt, an emeritus professor from the Institute of Criminology at the Victoria University of Wellington, says it was all 'difficult to digest ... but that's how it works'.

Open prisons can be found across the Nordic countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, and are just one element of criminal justice systems that are very different to Australia.

There, it's generally accepted that punishment and rehabilitation go hand in hand, and that prisoners, no matter what their crime, have certain rights.

And it appears to be working – these countries have some of the lowest crime rates and lowest rates of recidivism in the world.

So what are these Nordic countries doing differently and what can Australia learn from them?



The Nordic countries. Sweden, Norway and Denmark are also collectively known as 'Scandinavia'. (Note: Greenland, an autonomous region of Denmark, and Arctic islands administered by Norway are not pictured.)

### Keeping people out of prisons

Baz Dreisinger is a professor and executive director of the Incarceration Nations Network. She has an in-depth knowledge of criminal justice systems across the world.

Dreisinger says, first up, these Nordic countries have excellent social services, which have important flow-on effects.

‘Because of strong social services, crime is less likely to occur,’ she says.

But when crime does occur, these countries work hard to keep people out of the prison system.

‘People don’t automatically get sent to prisons as a knee-jerk, immediate response ... there’s very strong mediation programs that are capable of diverting people out of the system to begin with,’ Dreisinger says.

Across Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, the prison population is about 17 000. This compares to about 42 000 in Australia and more than 2 million in the US.

These countries also have very different attitudes around sending children to prison – they very rarely do it.

As Dreisinger says: ‘Sending a young person to detention is the absolute, complete last resort ... It [only] happens in extreme circumstances’.

In Norway, for example, the age of criminal responsibility is 15 years old. But even then, there’s only a handful of under-18s behind bars.

‘There are just a few inmates in Norway under the age of 18. They have committed serious crimes,’ says Jan-Erik Sandlie, the deputy director general in the Norwegian Directorate of Correctional Services.

‘At the moment, I think it’s two or three under-18s in Norwegian prisons.’

It’s a different story in Australia.

Here, the age of criminal responsibility is 10 years old. And according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, on an average night in 2021 there were 819 young people between the age of 10 and 17 years in youth detention.

### Shorter sentences

People who do end up in Nordic prisons can spend a much shorter period there than offenders in other countries.

The maximum term in the Norwegian criminal justice system, for example, is 21 years.

‘They have provisions for indefinite sentences as well. But these are very, very rarely used. And as far as I’m aware, there’s only a handful of prisoners serving those sentences,’ Pratt says.

One of these prisoners is Anders Behring Breivik, the far-right terrorist who murdered 77 people in 2011.

Of the Breivik case, Dreisinger says: ‘If there are scenarios where someone is clearly a great danger to society, and needs to be deprived of liberty for extensive periods of time, that person will be held.’

‘It’s not as if the system there is naive, in terms of not recognising that there are some people, if you place them in the world, that will cause extreme harm. It’s just that that’s not the starting point for the Norwegian system.’

### What are the prisons like?

So, when it comes to the bricks and mortar, and what happens inside, just how different are the prisons?

In Australia, prisons are often removed from communities, but in these Nordic countries, they can be found in the middle of towns and cities.

‘So if you go to prison, it’s highly likely ... your family will be able to see you with relative ease,’ Pratt says.

Then there's the distinction between 'open' prisons and 'closed' prisons.

Peter Scharff Smith, a professor in the sociology of law at the University of Oslo, says open prisons are a big part of the systems, especially in Norway and Denmark.

'In open prisons, it's not very difficult to escape if you wanted to. But the reason that people don't escape is if they get caught, they wind up at a closed prison with a longer sentence.'

Conversely, Dreisinger points out: 'You can increasingly move yourself toward more freedom, more openness ... as your sentence goes on.'

Pratt recalls another open prison he visited in Finland.

'[The inmates] were making some quite sophisticated looking speedboats and they were getting good wages. But they would have to pay a sum from those wages for their board and keep in the prison, as if they were renting their cell,' he says.

'They would [also] have to donate money from the wages to pay off fines or to compensate the victims and they would save the rest of the money.'

Crucially, Pratt says: 'They weren't totally shut out of society, as we tend to treat prisoners here.'

### Guiding principles

Many of the characteristics of Nordic prisons that set them so far apart from other countries are because of a certain set of principles.

The first is what's known as the principle of 'normality'.

Dreisinger says the idea is that 'life inside prisons ought to resemble life outside as closely as possible'.

'So that means wearing your own clothes, cooking in communal kitchens, having a fair amount of mobility in different spaces, having a cell that isn't really a cell but more of a dorm, and then very, very critically, receiving the same services that you would receive as if you were on the outside.'

Next up, the principle of 'reintegration' or 'progression'.

'There's a tremendous emphasis from day one on what's going to happen when you leave the system – when you come out, when you go home,' Dreisinger says.

And finally, there's the principle of 'dynamic security' or 'relational security'.

'There's a very different relationship between the officers and the incarcerated individuals,' Dreisinger says.

'Correctional officers act as guides, as educators. They have a relationship with the people who are incarcerated and are working together with them, to move them to a better place in life and opportunities when they come out.'

In short: Incarceration is all about rehabilitation.

### Less likely to return when released

Whatever your thoughts on these systems, one thing is clear: The rate of recidivism is much lower than in other countries.

'When people come out of prison, their likelihood of going back in is low. It hovers somewhere around 20 per cent. And that is compared to 60-something per cent in most of the rest of the world. So there's a significant difference,' Dreisinger says.

In Australia, 53 per cent of released prisoners return to corrective services within two years.

Dreisinger credits lower rates of recidivism to how the reintegration process is handled.

'The very fact of moving down in security levels as your sentence goes on – moving to an open prison, where you're permitted to come and go, is critical to the reintegration process, because it means you are already reintegrating,' she says.

### The pre-trial period

But these systems are not all as rosy as they seem.

Experts point out that before a person is convicted – so, while in custody and waiting for their day in court – they actually have fewer rights than those in other countries.

‘Before you’re sentenced in Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden and Denmark, it’s a very, very different matter. The state allows itself to restrict the rights of pre-trial detainees in ways which are not possible in England, for example,’ Scharff Smith says.

For example, in Denmark, during pre-trial, you’re not allowed to use the phone and there are very strict restrictions around visitors.

‘Pre-trial is a huge chunk of the prison population. If you look at Denmark, it’s more than 30 per cent [of those in prison],’ Scharff Smith says.

‘A lot of things that go on in the remand system have nothing to do with penal exceptionalism. It does not live up to the principle of normalisation.’

### Systems under threat?

While there is local support for these systems, there has also been growing opposition in recent years.

‘We’ve seen ‘tough on crime’ policies becoming more and more popular,’ Scharff Smith says.

He says this is particularly acute in Denmark where ‘it’s been a competition of who can be the toughest’.

‘And ironically, it’s created a crisis in the Danish prison system, because prison officers are quitting.’

He says, ‘in my mind, these politicians, they’ve attacked the heart of the Danish prison service or the principle of normalisation, and as a result, the prison system is currently in a severe crisis’.

### Lessons for Australia

So, can Australia learn any lessons from these very different systems? Should we adopt any of these measures?

‘It’s hard to say, because we’re talking about differences that have evolved over something like 200 years,’ Pratt says.

‘[But] I think one of the things that has struck me most is the importance of having informed debates about crime and punishment issues.’

Pratt cites how during a Norwegian election in 2009, one of the pre-election debates was held in a prison, with an audience of prisoners and officers.

‘That’s the kind of importance they place on giving all sections of society an opportunity to speak on such occasions, and making sure that the political debate doesn’t just end up as a shouting match,’ he says.

‘Imagine yourself being in prison. Imagine how you would like to be treated. Let’s start treating prisoners like that. That would be a starting point for reform.’



## Activity J – Unpacking Nordic approaches to criminal justice

- 1 What is an ‘open prison’? How does this compare with the various types of prisons found in Australia?
- 2 How might a strong social services system impact the factors that might otherwise contribute to a person committing a crime?
- 3 How does the criminal age of responsibility compare between Australia and Norway?

- 4 What is the standard maximum prison sentence in Norway?
- 5 Where might you find a prison in a Nordic country?
- 6 What is the Nordic principle of 'normality' in their criminal justice system?
- 7 What role do correctional officers take in Nordic countries?
- 8 How does the recidivism rate compare in Norway and Australia?
- 9 How does the pre-trial period compare between the Nordic and Australian systems?
- 10 How is a shift in stance towards criminal punishment impacting the prison system in Denmark?



The infamous image of Dylan Voller that became the catalyst for review into the youth justice system in the Northern Territory. Credit: royalcommission.gov.au/child-detention/final-report

## Youth crime

In Australia, children from the ages of 10 through to 18 are 'of age' for criminal responsibility. Since the ABC's *Four Corners* program aired an investigation into the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre in 2016, there has been increased scrutiny of the operation of Australian state and territory youth justice systems.

The number of children in detention in Australia is growing exponentially. So, what exactly are the rules when it comes to Australian youth in the criminal justice system?



## Unlocking the rules: Youth detention in Australia

Aleisha Orr, 2022. 'Youth detention in Australia: What are the rules around imprisoning juveniles?'. SBS News. [sbs.com.au/news/article/youth-detention-in-australia-what-are-the-rules-around-imprisoning-juveniles/pyt1xvbjf](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/youth-detention-in-australia-what-are-the-rules-around-imprisoning-juveniles/pyt1xvbjf)

Hundreds of children – some as young as 10 – will have their dinner and settle in for the evening in an Australian youth prison tonight.

Most of them are detained in concrete prison cells the size of a carpark space with minimal natural light, according to Monique Hurley, the managing lawyer at the Human Rights Law Centre.

Figures from the June quarter of this year showed an average of 818 children were kept in juvenile detention facilities around the country each night during that period.

Children as young as 10 years of age can legally be detained as that is the age of criminal responsibility across Australia.

The Northern Territory became the first Australian state or territory to up that age, increasing it to 12 at the start of December.

The Tasmanian government plans on increasing the minimum age of those in youth detention to 14, while keeping the age of criminal responsibility at 10, and the ACT has indicated it plans to raise its age of criminal responsibility to 14.

Figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show most of those held in juvenile detention were 'unsentenced', meaning they were awaiting the outcome of their legal matter or sentencing.

The number of unsentenced children in detention has grown each quarter since September 2020.

In the June quarter this year, there were three-and-a-half times as many young people who were being held without having been sentenced, compared to those in detention with a sentence.

### **What is the experience of those in youth detention?**

As detailed in a page on the Queensland state government's website, children are not free to move around facilities as they wish.

'There are times during the day and night when they will be locked in their room. When your child is locked in their room (including overnight), we check on them at least every 15 minutes,' it reads.

While education is provided within youth detention facilities, youth advocates query the ability of children to fully engage with educational opportunities within such settings.

Cheryl Axleby, co-chair of Change the Record said: 'All the medical evidence shows that detention only causes harm to children and young people. This harm can be life-long.'

### **The children most likely to be detained**

The vast majority of the juveniles detained in Australia are male, with just 10 per cent of those in youth prisons being female.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are drastically and disproportionately detained, and the imbalance has become even more obvious in the past 12 months.

Despite making up less than 4 per cent of the Australian population, they made up 49 per cent of those in youth detention in the June 2021 quarter and 56 per cent in the most recent figures.

A recent submission to the United Nations on behalf of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, Change the Record and the HRLC said a First Nations child was 14.4 times as likely to be incarcerated than a non-Indigenous child, and 30 times as likely to be incarcerated in the NT.

'It is not rare for 100 per cent of children in custody in the Northern Territory to be Aboriginal,' it said.

Ms Axleby said: 'Governments should be building homes, not prisons, and making sure kids and families have access to the services they need and aren't forced to live in poverty.'

### **'Victims of abuse, trauma or neglect'**

Ms Hurley said youth detainees are subject to practices that breach international human rights laws such as solitary confinement and strip searches.

'Children can spend 22 hours or more per day alone in a cell without any meaningful human contact,' she said.

Earlier this year, Western Australia was found to have broken its own laws about the amount of time detention centre staff kept a teenage boy in solitary confinement.

Ms Hurley said, 'given that a significant number of children and young people in youth prisons are also the victims of abuse, trauma or neglect', the potential for young people who undergo strip searches to be harmed was high.

'Evidence from Australia and around the world shows routine strip searching does not have a deterrent effect, and that reducing strip searches does not increase the amount of contraband in prisons,' she said.

Ms Hurley said there was no need for 'a practice that will likely scar them for life' to be used when alternatives such as wands and X-ray body scanners, similar to those used in airports, could be used instead.

The plight of those in youth detention in the Northern Territory's Don Dale Youth Detention Centre prompted outrage when highlighted on national television in 2016.

An image of a teenage boy strapped to a chair wearing a spit hood, which covered his entire head, shocked many.

Despite calls for the facility to be closed, it remains operational and, along with Banksia Hill Detention Centre, was listed as a facility of particular concern in the joint submission to the UN made earlier this year.

The NT Government earlier this month announced a ban on the use of spit hoods on young people in police custody after having banned the use of them on children in detention. But earlier this year, it was revealed they were still being used.

### Changes afoot

In October, Western Australia's Corrective Services Minister Bill Johnston announced a review of its *Young Offenders Act*, which will consider the isolation and separation of detainees.

Mr Johnston admitted 'few would argue against the need for greater diversionary and rehabilitative measures', but said: 'Youth justice is a highly complex area involving extremely challenging young people who have committed crimes or are at risk of doing so.'

WA's youth detention system has been in the spotlight in recent months since a group of young people were moved from Banksia Hill Detention Centre to a unit at an adult prison, but separate from adult prisoners.

Tasmanian Premier Jeremy Rockliffe apologised in September to those people whose experiences within youth detention in his state had not been fair or humane.

The apology came after evidence about the mistreatment of young people in the state's Ashley Youth Detention Centre was aired in an inquiry.

The Tasmanian Government has said it plans to close its one youth detention centre and 'transition to contemporary therapeutic facilities and models of care' by the end of 2024.

Ms Axelby said the closure was the first step but added: 'If the Tasmanian Government just replaces Ashley with two more prisons to warehouse our kids, we will change nothing for future generations.'

Queensland is looking at expanding its youth justice detention capacity and could build a fourth such facility in Cairns.

The state's minister for youth justice, Leanne Linard, said as well as investing in diversion and intervention services, Queensland had the toughest bail laws for young people who are serious repeat offenders.

'This means we're detaining more young people and we're detaining them for longer,' she said.

'Forecasts indicate more permanent infrastructure will be needed and we are in the early planning stages.'

Ms Axelby said she was 'disturbed' to hear the Queensland Government 'boasting' about the number of children it was locking up and 'opening more prisons for children would do nothing to reduce the massively disproportionate incarceration of First Nations children and close the gap'.

### The future of youth justice

Youth advocates say states should move away from youth detention. Ms Axelby said there are effective alternatives that should be funded rather than detention facilities.

'We need to be caring for kids who are in trouble in their communities and on Country, not locking them in prisons and punishing them for needing support,' she said.

'The alternatives to youth detention exist, we just need governments to fund them so they can grow and help more kids.'

SBS News asked federal Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus whether a national approach should be taken to youth justice.

A spokesperson for Mr Dreyfus did not comment on the wider issue, but said the government was working closely with state and territory governments on the issue of raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility.



In comparison to Australia's approach to juvenile detention, Norway uses a system of restorative justice that is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is no special legislation that caters for young offenders. The Norwegian Government's position is clear: no person under the age of 18 should be imprisoned unless exceptional circumstance is deemed by the courts. In 2019, only eight juveniles were imprisoned in Norway. By comparison, Australia had an average 949 young people imprisoned each night that year.

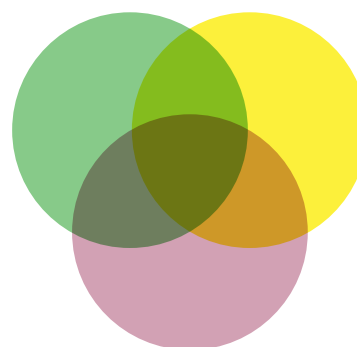
Instead of burdening the criminal justice system with legislation for youth, the Norwegian model focuses its energy on the child welfare system. The Norwegian model focuses on supporting young people and their families when they are in demanding situations, providing protection and solutions. From birth, parents in Norway have access to guidance and advice for families, and can also access parent groups, specific contact support within the Department for Children's Welfare, and financial support for kindergarten, day-care, school, sports and creative activities, as well as free services for counselling.



## Activity K – Making connections

Research another country's youth criminal justice system (e.g. the UK, US, Brazil).

- 1 Complete a Venn diagram to highlight the similarities and differences between the three systems of justice (i.e. that of Australia, that of Nordic countries and that of the country you have researched).
- 2 Which model is best? Write a 500-word reflection that articulates which of the three countries/regions you think has the better criminal justice system, making sure to include reasons to justify your choice.



## Dealing with gangs

**Criminal gangs**, while uncommon, exist in all Australian states and territories. They are opportunistic and are involved in a wide range of serious crimes, including drug trafficking, money laundering, extortion, firearm offences and high-level violence. Australia addresses the issue of gangs through a comprehensive approach that combines law enforcement efforts, community engagement, prevention programs and legislation. Law enforcement agencies work to disrupt and dismantle gang activities through targeted investigations and prosecutions. Collaboration between law enforcement agencies at the federal, state and local levels is crucial in addressing gang-related crimes. Additionally, community-based initiatives aim to prevent gang involvement by providing support, mentorship and diversion programs for at-risk youth. Legislation, such as anti-gang laws, allows authorities to target and prosecute individuals involved in organised criminal activities. To tackle the issue of gangs in the community, the Australian Federal Police established a special task force known as Morpheus. In 2019–20 Morpheus achieved 2393 arrests and seized 170 firearms and \$4.3 million in cash (Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, 2021).

**Criminal gangs** are organised groups involved in illegal activities, often engaging in violence and operating through a hierarchical structure.



The first arrivals of gang members to the El Salvador mega prison, built to stamp out gang culture and violence in the country.

If a person is arrested and charged for being part of a gang (which in Australia are primarily outlawed motorcycle gangs), then – depending on the state/territory specific law – they would face a prison sentence of up to five years or a fine of up to \$60 000 for consorting with other gang members. The sentences for other crimes would follow the laws of the specific state or territory where the crimes were committed.

In comparison, the Central American country of El Salvador recently built a ‘mega prison’ to address the country’s high levels of gang-related violence and criminal activities. As gang-related violence surged in El Salvador, its president, Nayib Bukele, declared a state of emergency and gave the police commissioner executive powers to arrest all known and associated gang members. More than 64 000 people have been arrested, with the first 2000 moved into the mega prison in Tecoluca (located 74 kilometres south-east of San Salvador).

El Salvador’s mega prison, officially known as the ‘Centro Penal de Izalco’, is a maximum-security correctional facility built to house more than 40 000 inmates. The prison was built with the intention of consolidating and isolating incarcerated gang members from different factions in a single complex, and prisoners are restricted in space and amenities. It aims to enhance security measures and prevent gang leaders from continuing their criminal activities from behind bars. The facility incorporates strict surveillance systems, advanced technology and stringent control measures to maintain order and minimise the influence of gangs within the prison.



## Activity L – Measures to combat gang-related crime

The excessive measures used in the El Salvador mega prison contrast with the more ‘democratic’ system of justice that exists in Australia. How might social inequality and class contribute to this sort of crime?

## Gun crime – comparing Australia with the US

In 1996, Martin Bryant opened fire at the Port Arthur historical tourist site, killing 35 people and injuring a further 40. Using a semi-automatic weapon that was purchased legally with a license, Bryant's actions were one of the deadliest mass shootings that Australia had ever witnessed.

Within four months of the tragedy, the recently elected Howard Federal Government implemented new, tighter gun-control laws – some of the strictest in the world. While public opinions differed greatly – pro-gun lobbyists were against the restricting of firearms – the government implemented new legislation that banned all fully and semi-automatic, pump-action and self-loading weapons. There were also stricter conditions applied to those seeking to qualify for a firearm licence. A mandatory 28-day cooling-off period was established, meaning that anyone who purchased a firearm from a licenced seller was not able to receive their weapon for 28 days.

For those who had weapons now considered to be illegal, there was a gun amnesty wherein people could surrender their weapons without legal consequence, and they were given a payment for doing so. There have been no mass shootings in Australia since the Port Arthur massacre, and gun-related suicide rates have also decreased since the gun laws were changed.



An estimated 650 000 guns were confiscated in the 1996 gun amnesty.

Credit: William West/AFP via Getty Images.

By comparison, gun violence killed more than 44 000 people in the United States in 2022. US gun-control laws are restricted by that country's Constitutional 'right to bear arms'. According to the Pew Research Center, Americans are divided as to whether a restriction in gun ownership would lead to fewer mass shootings. In 2022, there were 647 mass shootings in America; in 2021 there were 690 and in 2020 there were 610 (Schaeffer, 2021). A mass shooting is an incident where four or more people are killed.

In 2023, US President Joe Biden signed an executive order entitled 'Reducing Gun Violence and Making [Our] Communities Safer'. In the order, the Biden implored policy-makers to join in bipartisan support of stricter gun-control measures. The difficulty in the US is that while there is broad partisan support for gun policy changes, such as preventing those with diagnosed mental illnesses from purchasing guns, they start to differ when it comes to the idea of guns for protection. For example, 80 per cent of Democratic voters polled in 2020 were in favour of a national database to track all gun sales and of banning assault-style weapons and high-capacity ammunition holds that can carry more than ten rounds of ammunition. Most Republican voters oppose this. Another example is when it comes to being allowed to carry a concealed weapon (such as teachers and school officials): 72 per cent of Republican voters are in favour of this, whereas just 20 per cent of Democrats were in favour (Schaeffer, 2021).



## Activity M – Gun violence and gun control

- 1 Compare the US Government's approach to gun violence to that of former Australian Prime Minister John Howard.
- 2 How might gun-control conversations be influenced by race, class and politics?
- 3 Consider the two approaches to gun violence. Which is the more effective in addressing gun crime? Provide evidence in your response.



## Activity N – The criminalisation and decriminalisation of cannabis

In groups of three, create a podcast or a video that discusses how Australia, the US and the Netherlands approach the issue of cannabis consumption and trade.

Questions you might consider include the following.

- 1 Is cannabis legal? If so, when did it become so? Include reference to political campaigns and social commentary on the issue.
- 2 What laws exist regarding cannabis in each of the three nations?
- 3 What education exists in the countries surrounding use of cannabis?



Credit: Chloe Zola. [instagr.am/czillustration](https://www.instagram.com/czillustration)

- 4 What are the social norms relating to cannabis use in the countries?
- 5 If cannabis is illegal, how many people are imprisoned per year because of it? Refer to available data in your response.
- 6 What is the overall impact of the criminalisation/decriminalisation of cannabis in the countries of focus? In your response consider the impacts on:
  - the individual
  - the family
  - the community
  - the economy
  - mental health systems
  - the prison system.

## Factors that lead people to commit crimes <sup>2.2.5</sup>

“Crime and bad lives are the measure of a state’s failure; all crime in the end is the crime of the community.”

H.G. Wells, 1905. *A Modern Utopia*.

Sociologists explore all the factors that contribute to and impact an individual’s potential to commit crime. However, it should be noted that sociology considers factors that may *contribute* to a person’s behavioural choices, but it does not stipulate that identifiable factors *cause* behaviour – especially when considering the concept of crime. Sociology in the study of crime is more about risk – the more risk factors that are identified, the higher the risk of involvement in crime.

The sociological imagination when connected with crime should be employed to identify any potential biases of opinion. Sociologists should not make judgements, but rather highlight the evidence and facts in connection to theory to make impartial conclusions.



### Remember Mills and the sociological imagination?

Developed by C. Wright Mills, the sociological imagination refers to the ability to see and understand the connections between individual experiences and larger social structures and forces. It encourages individuals to examine how their lives are shaped by social institutions, cultural norms, historical contexts and power dynamics. It enables individuals to recognise that personal troubles are often rooted in social issues, encouraging critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between individuals and society.



So, what are some factors that might lead people to commit crimes?

### Education

Adequate schooling provides individuals with education, skills and opportunities, and this in turn can impact on the likelihood of a person engaging in criminal behaviour. Access to quality education can enhance social and cognitive

development, promote positive values, teach problem-solving skills and offer alternatives to illegal activities. It can also increase employment prospects, improve socio-economic conditions, and foster a sense of belonging and connection to the community, all of which contribute to a decreased likelihood of involvement in criminal behaviour. Additionally, schools play a role in crime prevention through the implementation of supportive and inclusive environments, anti-bullying programs and interventions targeting at-risk students, thereby reducing the risk factors associated with criminal involvement.

### Lack of employment opportunities and appropriate housing

Lack of employment and housing can have a significant impact on crime by creating conditions that increase the likelihood of individuals engaging in illegal activities. When individuals face unemployment or unstable employment, they may experience financial strain and limited opportunities to meet their basic needs. This can lead to desperation, frustration and a higher susceptibility to turn to criminal activities as a means of survival or to obtain resources. Similarly, inadequate or unstable housing situations, such as homelessness or precarious living conditions, can contribute to feelings of marginalisation, hopelessness and social exclusion. These circumstances can foster an environment where individuals may resort to criminal behaviour – such as theft, drug-related offenses or property crimes – to address their immediate needs or to cope with their difficult circumstances. Addressing the issues of unemployment and housing stability through employment programs, social support systems and affordable housing initiatives can play a crucial role in reducing the risk factors associated with crime.

### Mental health issues

Mental health can have a complex effect on crime. When someone has untreated or poorly managed mental health issues, it can increase the chance of engaging in criminal behaviour. Some mental health conditions affect judgement and impulse control, making it harder to make good decisions. Inadequate support can lead to feelings of loneliness and frustration, which may push someone toward substance abuse or risky actions. Additionally, the **stigma** surrounding mental health can limit opportunities, leading to financial struggles that might in turn lead to criminal activity. It is important to remember that most people with mental health issues do not commit crimes, but providing early support, proper treatment and reducing stigma can help prevent negative outcomes.

**Stigma** refers to being disgraced based on a particular quality or circumstance.

### Increasing availability and use of alcohol and drugs

The increasing availability and use of alcohol and drugs can have a big impact on crime. When people abuse substances, it can affect their ability to make good decisions and control their behaviour. This can lead to actions such as driving under the influence or getting into fights. Substance abuse can also be connected to illegal activities such as drug trafficking, which can involve violence and other crimes. Using drugs or alcohol can cause financial problems and can strain relationships, making it more likely for someone to turn to criminal behaviour. It is important to understand the risks of substance abuse and to support prevention, treatment and law enforcement efforts to create safer communities.



Factors contributing to crime. Adapted from image courtesy of Calgary John Howard Society, 2019. cjhs.ca



## Activity 0 – Factors contributing to crime

- For each of the factors listed below, explain how and why it may make an individual predisposed or vulnerable to committing and/or being a victim of crime. In your response, provide referenced evidence to justify your answer.
 

a age	g mental health issues
b gender	h lack of appropriate housing
c socio-economic conditions	i the increasing availability of drugs and alcohol
d ethnicity	j the increase and diversity of the population
e low- or under-education	k social exclusion
f lack of employment	l systemic discrimination
- Approach the following as an extended response question: Critically analyse the multiple factors that contribute to the occurrence of crime in society, providing detailed explanations and examples for each. How do these factors interact and influence one another? Additionally, discuss the challenges in addressing these factors effectively to reduce crime rates and promote safer communities.



Robert K. Merton (1910–2003)

## Merton's strain theory

“A cardinal American virtue, ‘ambition’, promotes a cardinal American vice, ‘deviant behaviour’.”

Robert K. Merton, 1996. *On Social Structure and Science*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Strain theory, developed by sociologist Robert K. Merton, suggests that social pressures can drive people towards committing crimes. Merton believed that these pressures, or strains, exist within different levels of society and affect individuals based on their personal needs. In society, there are commonly shared aspirations, such as the ‘Australian Dream’, which is centred around obtaining a good job, owning a home and starting a family. However, this dream does not consider the social and economic differences that exist in society (e.g. gender or racial discrimination when seeking employment).

As a result, people face challenges in trying to achieve these personal goals when there are structural barriers impeding them.



## Activity P – Strain theory

- 1 Watch the following 2021 overview of Merton's theories from Booksmart Tutors UK (7 min):  
[youtu.be/oSqK2Nw\\_UAM](https://youtu.be/oSqK2Nw_UAM)
- 2 Explain Merton's strain theory and how it relates to the occurrence of deviant behaviour among individuals in society. Provide relevant examples to support your explanation, and discuss the potential criticisms or limitations of this theory in understanding crime and deviance.

Merton's strain theory suggests that when people in society are unable to achieve their goals in the accepted and legal way, it creates tension or strain. Society often promotes the idea of achieving material success, wealth and social status, but not everyone has the same opportunities to achieve those goals.

Merton calls this tension ‘anomie’, which refers to a state of normlessness or a breakdown in the norms that guide our behaviour. When people feel strained or frustrated because they can't achieve their goals in the usual way, they may adapt in different ways.

Merton identified five ways people might react to this strain.

- **Conformity:** People who conform believe in the goals of society and follow the established rules to achieve them. They work hard, get an education and try to succeed in their careers within the system.
- **Innovation:** Innovators also want to achieve society's goals, but they may not follow the accepted rules to get there. They might resort to illegal or unconventional methods to gain wealth and success, such as stealing or selling drugs.



- **Ritualism:** Ritualists give up on achieving society's goals because they feel it's impossible. Instead, they focus on following the rules and routines without any real ambition for success. An example of this is someone who goes to work every day but doesn't have any desire to move up the career ladder.
- **Retreatism:** Retreatists give up on both the goals and the means of society. They withdraw from society and often turn to things like substance abuse or choose to live in isolation.
- **Rebellion:** Rebels reject both the goals and the means of society, but they also want to change the system. They actively challenge the existing norms and work to create new goals and ways of achieving them. This can include things such as political activism or advocating for social change. In the extreme it can result in terrorism.

### Conventional ways to achieve goals

		ACCEPTANCE	REJECTION
SOCIETAL GOALS	ACCEPTANCE	<p><b>CONFORMITY</b></p> <p>People will continue to try to achieve their goals through legitimate means – conforming to society's norms and values.</p> <p>e.g. 'I will work hard and get that promotion.'</p>	<p><b>INNOVATION</b></p> <p>People realise they will not achieve their goals through legitimate means, so they create innovative ways to achieve them.</p> <p>e.g. 'I'm unable to work enough to get the financial outcomes I want, so I will rob a bank to get my money.'</p>
	REJECTION	<p><b>RITUALISM</b></p> <p>People will give up on their goals but continue to cycle through the motions of life like a ritual.</p> <p>e.g. 'I hate my job, but it pays the bills, and I cannot be bothered to find other employment.'</p>	<p><b>RETREATISM</b></p> <p>People give up on their goals and reject any means that might help them achieve what they want to do. Instead, they opt to reject mainstream society.</p> <p>e.g. 'I am not able to get the job I want to because I do not have the qualifications, so instead I am going to quit my job and become a drug addict.'</p>
		<b>NEW WAYS TO ACHIEVE GOALS</b>	
		<b>REBELLION</b>	
		<p>People reject all of society's goals and instead rebel against everything society suggests is the norm.</p> <p>i.e. 'I am going to quit my job and become a terrorist.'</p>	
		<b>NEW GOALS</b>	

Ideas taken from Robert Merton, 1968. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Simon and Schuster, New York.

It's important to remember that people can show different combinations of these adaptations at different times. Merton's theory helps us understand how the structure of society and the pressure to achieve certain goals can lead to different forms of deviant behaviour.

This theory also has its limitations. Some critics argue that it oversimplifies human behaviour and does not give sufficient consideration to other factors, such as personal characteristics or social interactions. It also focuses mainly on economic goals and might not account for other values and aspirations that people have.

Overall, Merton's strain theory gives us valuable insights into how societal factors can influence people's behaviour, but it is not the only explanation for why people engage in deviant actions.



## Activity Q – Applying Merton's theory

- 1 How does strain theory fit with the idea that there are factors that contribute to criminal behaviour?
- 2 Using the scenarios provided below, determine which form of strain theory would fit each one best, and provide an explanation for your answer. The first scenario includes an example response.

Scenario	Form	Justification
<b>a</b> Mila wants to work as a sales executive; however, she does not have the required experience as listed in the job advertisement. Mila lies on her résumé and in subsequent interviews about this experience and is hired for the role.	Conformity <b>Innovation</b> Ritualism Retreatism Rebellion	According to Merton's theory, innovative deviance comes when an individual sees the reward as being greater than the risk. This is an example of innovation because Mila acts fraudulently in her application and interview to get a job that would be considered acceptable by social norms.
<b>b</b> Caleb has just been promoted at work. All his peers drive luxury model cars. To fit in, Caleb steals a Lexus.		
<b>c</b> At home, Jesse's parents are alcoholics and pay him little attention. Despite trying hard at school, Jesse just does not have the support needed to succeed, so he quits school and turns to selling drugs.		
<b>d</b> Aaliyah's family are working class with little disposable income. Aaliyah wants to get into a special program at a prestigious music school. She cannot afford the tuition, so she works hard and applies for a scholarship to be able to attend.		

Scenario	Form	Justification
e Oliver hates capitalism and how greedy it makes people. He refuses to participate in school as he believes it contributes to the continued corruption of capitalist greed. Oliver starts to watch conspiracy videos on an online video streaming platform and starts to learn about an extremist group that is violently against capitalist regimes. Oliver joins this group and works with its members to try to overthrow anything and everything to do with capitalism.		
f Alex hates their job. They have worked in the same role for the past 20 years. Instead of trying to upskill or change roles, Alex has decided to stay doing what they are doing because it is considered a respectable job by those around them, and they do not want to cause too much change in their everyday life.		

## The sociological concept of punishment 2.2.6

Punishment is a tool that is often used to control and reduce crime. The sociological concept of punishment is relative in nature, just as the perception of what constitutes criminal behaviour is relative to time, place and circumstance.

Sociologist Émile Durkheim argued in his 1893 work *The Division of Labour in Society* that the function of punishment is to uphold and reinforce shared values. The process of punishment allows for people to express their outrage and re-establish boundaries. Traditional close-knit societies in times gone by had a keen sense of morality, and so, when there was a perceived breach of that morality, punishment was retributive, severe, cruel and public. Nowadays, as we have shifted to a more independent society, punishment tends to be more restitutive, used to restore order and relationships.

### Australia's prison system

There are three types of prisons in Australia: maximum-, medium- and minimum-security prisons. A maximum-security prison is for offenders with an 'A' classification – these may be extremely violent offenders or those with long sentences. Medium-security prisons are for those with 'B' classifications and those on remand awaiting sentencing. Minimum-security prisons are for offenders with 'C' classifications.



Silverwater Correctional Centre, a maximum-security prison in western Sydney.  
Credit: Tim Hunter.



Beechworth Correctional Centre is a minimum-security prison in Victoria.

The difference between each of the types of prisons is the liberties extended to those imprisoned there. In a maximum-security prison, inmates are out of their cell from 7 am to 3 pm, but are still contained within strict yard limitations. In a medium-security prison, inmates may be able to leave their cells from 7 am to 5 pm, and at times have access to recreation yards. Minimum-security prisons can differ around the country, but they are much more relaxed. For jails such as Glen Innes Correctional Centre in New South Wales, there are no fences; just a line marking the perimeter of the property.

### The rationale and aims of punishment

French sociologist Michel Foucault connected the rationale and aims of punishment to power. In his text, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975 [French]; 1977 [English]), Foucault wrote about how punishment served to enforce two main types of power: sovereign and disciplinary.

**Sovereign power** was drawn from punishment before the 19th century, when punishment would take place as a public spectacle, with events such as hangings and stockades. It was a way to reaffirm the sovereign power of the monarch over its citizens. **Disciplinary power** came after the decline of sovereign power, when punishment was enacted not only on the physical body but also on the mind and/or soul in the context of surveillance, control and discrimination of prison inmates.

Punishment has five recognised aims: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, societal protection and restoration. The purpose of punishment is to prevent future crimes.

### Retribution

“ [I]f any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. ”  
King James Bible, Book of Exodus (21: 23–25), circa 6th century BCE.

In the theories offered by many noted sociologists, **retribution** is the oldest justification of punishment. It operates on the premise that if an individual commits a crime, then punishment should be proportional to the crime, and therefore justifiable. Austrian philosopher Kurt Baier (1977) summarised the premise of retribution as follows:

**Retribution** refers to the act of punishing someone as a form of justice or repayment for a wrongdoing they have committed.

- All those convicted of a wrongdoing or crime deserve punishment.
- Only those convicted of a wrongdoing or crime deserve punishment.
- The severity of the punishment should not be less than the gravity of the crime.
- The severity of the punishment should not be greater than the gravity of the crime.

Retribution seeks to restore the moral balance between the victim and the offender. Prior to the 19th century, when societies were religious and viewed crimes as an offence against God, punishment was harsh. In more contemporary times it has been established that the retributive approach does little to alter the offender's behaviour and that punishment ought to be more rehabilitative. That said, many people continue to believe that revenge is an adequate reason for punishment.



### Richard Glossip

In 1997, Justin Sneed, who worked as the maintenance man at the Best Budget Inn in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA, murdered the man who owned the hotel – Barry Van Treese – by bludgeoning him with a baseball bat. Sneed claimed to the police that he had been instructed to commit the crime by Richard Glossip, the manager of the hotel. Glossip was arrested and tried alongside Sneed.

Sneed was sentenced to life in prison in exchange for his testimony against Glossip. Glossip has consistently rejected Sneed's claims. Oklahoma practises capital punishment, which meant a guilty verdict against Glossip could lead to him being sentenced to death.

His conviction in 1998 was subsequently overturned on appeal; his second conviction by a jury in 2004 was clouded by claims that prosecutors had intimidated his defence attorney into resigning. A subsequent appeal was rejected by a very narrow margin, but his claims of innocence and evidence of police mishandling of the case continue to attract significant attention and calls for clemency.

As of 2023, Glossip remains scheduled for execution.



### Activity R – Retribution and clemency

1 Read the article below about the Glossip case and answer the question that follows.

Austin Sarat, 2023. 'Rejected Oklahoma plea for death penalty commutation highlights clemency's changing role in US death penalty system'. The Conversation. [theconversation.com/rejected-oklahoma-plea-for-death-penalty-commutation-highlights-clemencys-changing-role-in-us-death-penalty-system-204708](https://theconversation.com/rejected-oklahoma-plea-for-death-penalty-commutation-highlights-clemencys-changing-role-in-us-death-penalty-system-204708)

How does the discussion about clemency in this article connect to the idea of retribution?

### Deterrence

**Deterrence** is designed to prevent crime through the threat of punishment. There are two types of deterrence: specific and general. **Specific deterrence** refers to discouraging the offender from committing more crimes. **General deterrence** refers to the idea that potential offenders in the community will be discouraged from committing a particular crime when they see the penalty imposed on others for that kind of offence.

**Deterrence** refers to the use of punishment or the threat of punishment to dissuade individuals from engaging in illegal or undesirable behaviour.

The American National Institute of Justice released a paper in 2016 that collated existing research around the concept of deterrence in a criminal justice capacity. The report made five key findings:


- 1 The certainty of being caught is a vastly more powerful deterrent than punishment.
- 2 Sending an individual convicted of a crime to prison is not a very effective way to deter crime. Prisons work as punishment and keeping criminals off the street, but recidivism rates indicate that prison does not deter crime.

- 3 Police deter crime by increasing the perception that criminals will be caught and punished. For example, increasing the number of speed cameras in a particular area will deter people from speeding.
- 4 Increasing the severity of punishment does little to deter crime. Laws and policies are ineffective as the offender is often unaware of what the sanctions for specific crimes are.
- 5 There is no proof that capital punishment deters criminals.



## Activity S – Deterrence

- 1 Read the article about harsh jail penalties being used as a crime deterrent and answer the question that follows.

 Anoha Guha, 2023. 'Queensland's harsher jail penalties for young offenders may increase violent crime, not reduce it'. The Guardian, 2023.  
[theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jan/01/queenslands-harsher-jail-penalties-for-young-offenders-may-increase-violent-not-reduce-it](https://theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jan/01/queenslands-harsher-jail-penalties-for-young-offenders-may-increase-violent-not-reduce-it)

How might harsher sentences for violent youths fail to deter crime?

### Rehabilitation


The general premise of rehabilitation as a punishment is that it provides an opportunity for the offender to receive treatment and training that will enable them to return to society as a functioning and law-abiding citizen. When crime is the consequence of social problems (poverty) or personal problems (mental illness), then the justification for rehabilitation is that an improvement to the social conditions will result in an improvement of behaviour. Like deterrence, rehabilitation works on the premise that there is a motivating factor to conform to social norms and values.

**Rehabilitation** refers to the process of helping individuals convicted of crimes to reform, reintegrate into society, and lead law-abiding and productive lives.



## Activity T – Rehabilitation

- 1 Read the article about rehabilitative work at Greenough Regional Prison provided below and answer the question that follows.

 'Greenough prisoner work program equips inmates with new skills while renewing community spaces'. ABC News, 2023. [abc.net.au/news/2023-02-23/prisoners-work-on-geraldton-scout-hall/102005856](https://abc.net.au/news/2023-02-23/prisoners-work-on-geraldton-scout-hall/102005856)

Why is rehabilitation considered a more effective approach to criminal behaviour than punishment?

### Societal protection

**Societal protection** is aimed at protecting the wider community and valuing this over the rights or interests of the offender. Punishment with the aim of societal protection is administered through incapacitation. There are two types of incapacitation: geographical and physical. **Geographic incapacitation** usually involves incarceration, such as imprisonment or home detention. **Physical incapacitation** involves taking something away from the offender, such as suspending a driver's licence or seizing goods. It is believed that societal protection means creating a safe space for the community through the incapacitation of the offender, which denies them the opportunity to undertake criminal behaviour.

**Societal protection** refers to the implementation of measures and strategies aimed at safeguarding the wellbeing, safety and interests of the broader community by preventing or minimising harm caused by individuals who pose a threat, usually through incapacitation.



## Activity U – Rehabilitation

- 1 Read the media release outlining new powers given to South Australian police when dealing with law-breaking drivers, and answer the question that follows.
  - 📄 'Drug drivers to pay the ultimate price for selfish action.' Government of South Australia, 2023. [premier.sa.gov.au/media-releases/news-items/drug-drivers-to-pay-the-ultimate-price-for-selfish-action](https://premier.sa.gov.au/media-releases/news-items/drug-drivers-to-pay-the-ultimate-price-for-selfish-action)

Why might the immediate loss of a driver's licence be an effective form of punishment?  
How does it protect society?

### Restoration

While there are some variations to the definition of restorative justice, it is agreed that **restoration** is the process wherein all parties connected to a particular crime come together to collectively resolve their conflict and work through a pathway for the aftermath.

In Australia, the most common forms of restorative justice are victim–offender mediation, conferencing and circle sentencing.

Restorative justice focuses on repairing the harm caused by criminal behaviour.

- It promotes healing, accountability and restoration for victims, perpetrators and the community.
- It focuses on healthy conversations, developing empathy and understanding instead of just punishment.
- It gives victims a voice.
- It encourages the perpetrator to take full responsibility for their actions, promoting rehabilitation.

Restorative justice supplements but does not replace the formal criminal justice system.

**Restoration** refers to the approach or process of repairing harm caused by a wrongdoing, focusing on healing, reconciliation and addressing the needs of both the victim and the offender.



## Types of restorative justice

### Circle sentencing

This process of restoration sees a circle of representatives sitting together to decide a sentence that does not include jail terms. It is best illustrated in Australia with the Koori Court system, which was designed in response to the over-representation of First Nations peoples in Australian prisons. The circle discusses the background of the offender and the effects of the offence. It can involve meeting the victim and there is usually a resolution in the form of community work.

### Victim–offender mediation

Mediation is the process of bringing the victim and offender together with a trained mediator to facilitate the conversation. Both stakeholders have an opportunity to express how they feel about and/or perceive the criminal offence. The aim of mediation is to reach an agreement on how the offender will repair the harm suffered by the victim.

### Conferencing

Like mediation, conferencing includes a trained facilitator but also includes other stakeholders such as families, community support groups, social welfare officials and, at times, the police.

Restorative justice has been mainstream practice in Australia since 2001 for both adult and youth offenders. There are various models of restorative justice available in all states and territories of Australia. According to the Australian Institute for Criminology, the ability of restorative justice to reduce reoffending is still contested, but a focus on reoffending outcomes alone fails to capture the extent of other benefits, such as victim satisfaction, offender responsibility for actions and increased compliance with a range of orders, among others. Restorative justice is about more than traditional notions of justice – it is about repairing harm, restoring relationships and strengthening those social bonds that make a society strong (Larsen, 2014).



## Activity V – The benefits and costs of different ‘styles’ of punishment

- 1 Watch this short clip (2 min) about restorative justice from the UK and answer the question that follows.

‘Moving on’. Restorative Justice Council (UK), 2015. [youtu.be/fWtFtWY3Hh8](https://youtu.be/fWtFtWY3Hh8)

How does restorative justice support both the victim and the offender?

- 2 To investigate the power of restorative justice programs in operation in Australia, read this article and answer the questions that follow.

Rachael Dexter, Simone Fox Koob and Tammy Mills, 2021. ‘I felt lighter: Restorative justice gives sex crime survivors a different way forward’. The Age. [theage.com.au/national/victoria/i-felt-lighter-restorative-justice-gives-sex-crime-survivors-a-different-way-forward-20210817-p58jgj.html](https://theage.com.au/national/victoria/i-felt-lighter-restorative-justice-gives-sex-crime-survivors-a-different-way-forward-20210817-p58jgj.html)

- a What is the incentive for the perpetrator to cooperate with the restorative process?
  - b What are the scenarios where restorative justice can fill the gaps left by the criminal justice system?
  - c What is the benefit of a restorative process for the victim of crime?
- 3 Read the table provided and complete the tasks that follow.

	Cons – what are some of the negative aspects of the rationale?	Pros – what are some of the positive aspects of the rationale?	Who is the focus?
Retribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hypocritical – if you disagree morally with an action, you shouldn’t commit it yourself</li> <li>• Paints society in a negative light – as morally questionable as the offender</li> <li>• Does not teach the offender the right way to behave</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfills emotional desire for revenge</li> <li>• Deters the offender and others from committing the crime</li> <li>• Provides perspective on the impacts of offender’s actions on others</li> <li>• Holds the offender accountable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offender</li> </ul>
Deterrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to criminals could still make crime look appealing or glamorous – mixed results</li> <li>• Could be ineffective for reducing reoffending as the offender might perceive the punishment as unjust or too harsh and therefore commit the crime again</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could potentially discourage people from committing crimes if they see the consequences for someone else</li> <li>• The punishment could be perceived as too harsh for the crime and therefore it amplifies the reason not to do it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society</li> <li>• Potential offenders</li> </ul>



	Cons – what are some of the negative aspects of the rationale?	Pros – what are some of the positive aspects of the rationale?	Who is the focus?
Rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might not be effective for all offenders</li> <li>• Requires case-by-case consideration</li> <li>• Offenders need to want to change – they must be able to understand that what they have done is wrong and why it needs to be addressed</li> <li>• Does not feed our need for revenge</li> <li>• Does not act as a good deterrent because it could be seen as a lighter consequence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More likely to deter reoffending if the rehabilitation is effective and the underlying social problems are addressed</li> <li>• Depicts society as capable of forgiveness and kindness</li> <li>• Case-by-case basis decisions are based on the individual's unique set of circumstances</li> <li>• Focuses on all people involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offender</li> <li>• Society</li> <li>• Victim</li> </ul>
Societal protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being around other offenders could amplify criminal behaviour</li> <li>• Limited interaction with society could result in social ostracism (the offender is prevented from reintegrating effectively)</li> <li>• Likely to reoffend if social ties are weak</li> <li>• Discrimination/labelling/stigma</li> <li>• Emotional impact of the jail system is detrimental and could cause further harm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes the offenders value the rights and resources they had prior to committing the crime; therefore, they are less likely to reoffend</li> <li>• Keeps society safe – minimises harm to society; maintains order and balance</li> <li>• The consequence is related to the crime – e.g. driver's licence revoked for driving offence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offender</li> <li>• Society</li> </ul>
Restoration			

- Complete the last line of the table for restoration.
- Evaluate the rationales and determine whether one is more valid than the others.
- Discuss whether the rationales are still valid today.
- Should there be a new rationale added to reflect a changing time? Outline the justification for your answer.

## The concept of recidivism 2.2.7

**Recidivism** is a term used in the criminal justice system to refer to 'repetitious criminal activity, and is synonymous with terms such as repeat offending and reoffending' (Payne, 2007). Recidivism means that someone who has been in trouble with the law before

**Recidivism** refers to the tendency or likelihood of a previously convicted individual to engage in criminal behaviour again after their release or after the completion of a sentence.

goes on to commit more crimes after they have finished serving their sentence or finished a period of probation. It is like a pattern, where the person keeps getting involved in illegal activities even after they have been given a chance to change their behaviour. Recidivism is an important concept because it shows that simply punishing someone for their crimes does not always prevent them from committing more crimes in the future. It raises questions about how we can help people break this cycle and find better paths for their lives.

In Australia, recidivism is a significant issue, and the number of reoffending prisoners returning either to prison or to corrective services brings into question the effectiveness of our criminal justice model. Statistics from the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council (2022b) show that, in Victoria, 43.6 per cent of prisoners released during 2018–19 returned to prison within two years (to 2020–21). This rate is slightly lower than the overall Australian rate of 45.2 per cent. The Northern Territory had the highest rate (58.9 per cent) and South Australia had the lowest rate (33.2 per cent). Of the prisoners released during 2018–19 in Victoria, 52.5 per cent returned to corrective services (as opposed to prison itself) in the two years to 2020–21. This was similar to the national rate of 53.1 per cent.

The 2021 Australian Productivity Commission Report on Government Services revealed that Australia is putting more people in prison despite a fall in the number of criminal offenders. Furthermore, Australia has the highest level of recidivism when compared to other Western countries.

If the key objective of imprisonment is to rehabilitate offenders and create smooth reintegration and transition back into society, then recidivism rates should be low. Successful reduction of recidivism from a sociological perspective would have the flow-on effect of an increase in community safety and lower costs of crime – that is, it would have social, political and economic impacts.

So, as sociologists, we must ask the question: to what extent is Australia’s criminal justice system effectively working to reduce recidivism?

**Percentage of prisoners released during 2018–19 who returned to prison within two years**



Credit: Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council, 2022.  
[sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/sentencing-statistics/released-prisoners-returning-to-prison](https://sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/sentencing-statistics/released-prisoners-returning-to-prison)



## Activity W – Australia’s criminal justice system

- 1 In small groups, brainstorm and discuss the successes and limitations of the criminal justice system in Australia. Research and take notes on this topic, making sure to connect your findings to the factors that lead people to commit crimes. Use articles, case studies or statistics to help you with your research.
- 2 Once the research phase is complete, regroup as a class and discuss the following questions.
  - a How well does our criminal justice system address the underlying factors that lead people to commit crimes?
  - b What are the strengths and weaknesses of our system in terms of preventing, rehabilitating and reintegrating offenders?
  - c Can you identify any specific policies or practices that have been effective or ineffective in reducing crime rates?
  - d What changes or improvements could be made to enhance the effectiveness of our criminal justice system in addressing the root causes of crime?

### The effectiveness of restorative justice and prison sentencing on reducing recidivism

To understand the effectiveness of restorative justice and prison sentences, we can look at two important factors. First, recidivism rates provide statistical data on whether individuals who have gone through these systems end up committing more crimes in the future. Lower recidivism rates indicate a more effective approach. Second, it is crucial to consider victim satisfaction and the perpetrator’s perception.

While the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council (2022b) found that 43.6 per cent of prisoners released in 2018–19 returned to prison within two years, the 2021 ABS Census found that nationwide crime cases dropped by 4 per cent, with public order offences dropping 59 per cent since the previous year (ABS, 2023c, 2023a). The disconnect between the statistics and the intentions of our criminal justice system makes it difficult to understand its true effectiveness.

As sociologists, we must consider the role that public opinion plays in the way we label and punish crime. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, crimes and reactions to crimes are behavioural in nature, and sociology seeks to understand how crime impacts society.



Newspaper front page declaring new, ‘tougher’ government attitudes on youth crime



### Crime and punishment and rehabilitation: A smarter approach

Andrew Day, 2015. ‘Crime and punishment and rehabilitation: A smarter approach’. The Conversation. [theconversation.com/crime-and-punishment-and-rehabilitation-a-smarter-approach-41960](https://theconversation.com/crime-and-punishment-and-rehabilitation-a-smarter-approach-41960)

Although criminal justice agencies in Australia have, in recent years, adopted an increasingly ‘get tough’ approach, responses to crime that rely on punishment alone have failed to make our communities safer. Instead, they have produced an expanding prison system. This has the potential to do more harm than good and places considerable strain on government budgets.

Increasing prison sentences does little to deter criminal behaviour. Longer sentences are associated with higher rates of re-offending. When prisoners return to their communities, as the vast majority inevitably do, the problems multiply.

### **Exposing the limitations of punishment**

In this context, it becomes important to think carefully about public policy responses that aim to punish and deter offenders. Psychologists have been studying punishment under well-controlled laboratory conditions with both animals and humans for nearly 100 years. Its effectiveness in promoting short-term behavioural change, or even in suppressing negative behaviour, depends on rather specific conditions being in place.

For punishment to work it has to be predictable. Punishment also has to be applied at maximum intensity to work, or else tolerance and temporary effects result. Yet applying very intense levels of punishment for many offences goes against our sense of justice and fairness.

The threat of punishment, no matter how severe, will not deter anyone who believes they can get away with it. It will also not deter those who are too overcome by emotion or disordered thinking to care about the consequences of their behaviour.

Punishment also has to be immediate. Delayed punishment provides opportunities for other behaviours to be reinforced. In reality, it often takes months – if not years – for someone to be apprehended, appear in court and be sentenced.

### **Working towards more effective rehabilitation**

Many of the conditions required for punishment to be effective will not exist in any justice system. It follows that policies and programmes that focus on rehabilitating offenders will have a greater chance of success in preventing crime and improving community safety.

The origins of offender rehabilitation in Australia can be traced back to the early penal colonies and to the work of Alexander Maconochie, a prison governor on Norfolk Island in 1840. Maconochie introduced the idea of indeterminate rather than fixed sentences, implemented a system of rehabilitation in which good behaviour counted towards prisoners' early release, and advocated a system of aftercare and community resettlement.

Maconochie's ideas built on those of the great social reformers of 18th-century Britain, notably Quakers such as John Howard and Elizabeth Fry. They were among the first to try to change prisons from what they called 'institutions of deep despair and cruel punishment' to places that were more humane and had the potential to reform prisoners' lives.

These days, though, offender rehabilitation is often thought about in terms of psychological treatment. We can chart the rise of current programmes according to the broad traditions of psychodynamic psychotherapy, behaviour modification and behaviour therapy and, more recently, the cognitive-behavioural and cognitive approaches that characterise contemporary practice.

The earliest therapeutic work in the psychoanalytic tradition saw delinquent behaviour as the product of a failure in psychological development. It was thought this could be addressed through gaining insight into the causes of offending. A wide range of group and milieu therapies were developed for use with offenders, including group counselling and psychodrama.

In the 1980s, more behavioural methods – such as token economies, contingency management programmes and 'time out' – replaced psychotherapy.

There are good grounds to develop standardised incentive models in Australia's prisons. Community-style therapeutic programmes for prisoners with substance-use problems in Victoria, NSW and the ACT represent substantial advances in practice.

These programmes take advantage of the significant therapeutic opportunities that arise by looking closely at prisoners' social functioning and day-to-day interactions. They actively encourage offenders to assume responsibility not only for their own behaviour, but for that of others.

However, rehabilitation today is almost always associated with cognitive-behavioural therapy. This targets a relatively narrow range of crime-producing (or 'criminogenic') needs, including pro-criminal attitudes – those thoughts, values and sentiments that support criminal conduct. Programmes also dedicate a lot of time to trying to change personality traits, such as low self-control, hostility, pleasure- or thrill-seeking and lack of empathy.

Not everyone can be successfully treated. Substantial evidence now exists, though, to suggest that this type of approach does produce socially significant reductions in re-offending.

### Essential steps in making corrections policy work

The challenges lie in ensuring that the right programmes are delivered to the right people at the right time.

First, it is important that low-risk offenders have minimal contact with higher-risk offenders. Extended contact is only likely to increase their risk of recidivism. This has implications for prisoner case management, prison design and for the courts.

Courts have the power to divert low-risk offenders from prison and thus minimise contact with more entrenched offenders. Related to this is the need to develop effective systems of community-based rehabilitation, leaving prisons for the most dangerous and highest-risk offenders.

Second, concerted efforts are required to develop innovative programmes for those who identify with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural backgrounds. They are grossly over-represented across all levels of the criminal justice system.

Third, staff need to be properly selected, trained, supervised and resourced to deliver the highest-quality rehabilitation services to the most complex and challenging people.

Finally, it is important to demonstrate that programmes make offenders better, not worse. The types of evaluation that are needed to attribute positive change to programme completion are complex, require large numbers of participants and cross-jurisdictional collaboration. A national approach to programme evaluation is sorely needed.

This is not to suggest that criminal behaviour shouldn't be punished – only that we should not rely on punishment itself to change behaviour. We need to create a true system of rehabilitation that can enhance the corrective impact of punishment-based approaches.

It also doesn't mean that punishment never works. It may work reasonably well with some people – perhaps those who are future-oriented, have good self-monitoring and regulation skills, and who can make the connection between their behaviour and negative consequences months later.

Unfortunately, many people in prison simply aren't like this. The challenge, then, is two-fold: to find ways to make punishment more effective and to tackle the causes of offending through high-quality rehabilitation.

Correctional services often get little credit for their efforts. They are widely criticised when things go wrong. However, their efforts to rehabilitate offenders are not only sensible, but also cost-efficient and practical.

We need to support efforts to create a true system of rehabilitation. Such a system will be comprehensive, coherent and internally consistent in applying evidence-based practice at all levels.



## Activity X – Is youth incarceration effective?

In this section, you studied the diverse types of punishment in relation to the concept of recidivism, and earlier in this chapter you studied statistics on youth crime and the ways in which Australia deals with youth crime. Let's try to bring all that learning together.

Considering the information you've seen so far, and after reading through the resources provided below, evaluate the effectiveness of the custodial sentencing of Australian youth. Support your response with both qualitative and quantitative data.

This is an extended response task, so try to limit your answer to 500 words. Remember to use the extended response planning tool provided in the first chapter of this text.



Credit: Nadezha/Adobe.

*Recommended further reading to help with this task:*

- 🔗 Ross Homel, 2023. 'Why locking up youth offenders fails to reduce crime – and what we should be doing instead'. The Guardian. [theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/feb/21/why-locking-up-youth-offenders-fails-to-reduce-and-what-we-should-be-doing-instead](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/feb/21/why-locking-up-youth-offenders-fails-to-reduce-and-what-we-should-be-doing-instead)
- 🔗 Sumeyya Ilanbey, 2023. 'Jailing is failing': How to fix a justice system that punishes disadvantage'. The Age. [theage.com.au/politics/victoria/jailing-is-failing-how-to-fix-a-justice-system-that-punishes-disadvantage-20230320-p5ctsr.html](https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/jailing-is-failing-how-to-fix-a-justice-system-that-punishes-disadvantage-20230320-p5ctsr.html)
- 🔗 'Youth detention population in Australia'. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021. [aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-detention-population-in-australia-2021/contents/summary](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-detention-population-in-australia-2021/contents/summary)
- 🔗 'Empty commitment' does nothing to help children'. Raise the Age Coalition, 2022. [raisetheage.org.au/news-stories/open-letter-hjyyb](https://www.raisetheage.org.au/news-stories/open-letter-hjyyb)

## The effectiveness of alternative sentencing models on reducing recidivism <sup>2.2.8</sup>

Research increasingly shows us that alternative sentencing models are supporting the reduction of recidivism in societies around the world. In Australia, there are various alternative models available depending on which state or territory you reside in. In Victoria, there are two specific alternative courts that have been established to try to address two significant areas of crime: first, the increase in drug-related offences, and second, the over-representation of First Nations peoples in the Victorian criminal justice system.

### The Victorian Drug Court

The Drug Court in Victoria operates through the Magistrates Courts in Dandenong, Ballarat, Shepparton and Melbourne. The Drug Court was established to impose and administer an order called a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Order (DATO) under Victoria's *Sentencing Act (1991)* legislation. It provides a cost-effective response to alcohol and other drug issues, with the most recent review finding a return on investment of more than \$5 saved from other areas including justice and health related portfolios for every dollar spent on the Drug Court (Acumen Alliance, 2006).

To be eligible to be dealt with by the Drug Court, an offender must:

- plead guilty
- live in an area serviced by the Drug Court
- be dependent on drugs and/or alcohol and this must have led to the offence
- agree to comply with the DATO
- not be subject to a Parole Order, a Combined Custody and Treatment Order or a Sentencing Order of the County or Supreme Court
- have a maximum sentence of two years imprisonment and it must be likely that the offender would get a prison sentence.

Additionally, the offence(s) must not be sex offences nor offences involving actual bodily harm.

The aim of the Drug Court is to reduce recidivism and protect the community by taking greater control of alcohol- and other drug-related issues, and to provide support through a more thorough range of treatment options to ensure that the offender can reintegrate into society and become a positive participant in their community.

In a 2022 announcement by Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes, it was noted that the Victorian Drug Court model has been proven to work, with an evaluation of the Dandenong Drug Court showing a 29 per cent reduction in reoffending two years after completing a DATO. Serious offending was also lower, with a 90 per cent reduction in trafficking offences and a more than 50 per cent drop in weapons violence (Government of Victoria, 2022).

By breaking the cycle of reoffending, the program benefits not only its participants but the broader community – improving safety and reducing the burden on the courts and corrections systems.




## Activity Y – Breaking the cycle

- 1 Watch this (5 min) video for a summary of the work performed by the Drug Court of Victoria:

 [vimeo.com/771443222](https://vimeo.com/771443222)

Summarise this work in your own words.

- 2 Read this article about the Shepparton Drug Court and answer the question that follows.

 Anna McGuinness, 2022. 'Shepparton's Drug Court helping to break the cycle of offending'. Shepparton News. [sheppnews.com.au/news/sheppartons-drug-court-helping-to-break-the-cycle-of-offending](https://sheppnews.com.au/news/sheppartons-drug-court-helping-to-break-the-cycle-of-offending)

Describe how the Shepparton Drug Court addresses the concept of punishment and how it contributes to a reduction in recidivism in the local community.

## The Koori Court

The Koori Court is a court that operates in Victoria to support the needs of First Nations people who have taken responsibility and have pleaded guilty to a criminal offence. For a hearing to take place in a Koori Court, the defendant must be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent and elect to have their matter heard in this alternative setting.



The Koori Court 'round table' used at Broadmeadows Magistrates Court.

A Koori Court hearing is set up in a more informal manner to a Magistrates Court hearing. At Koori Court, the defendant sits around a table (the round table; see image above) with a magistrate, an **Elder** or respected person, a Koori Court officer, the prosecutor, a community corrections officer, the legal representative for the defendant and family members.

**Elder**, in a First Nations context, denotes recognition of an individual's wisdom and earned respect in the community (rather than their age).

Everyone sitting at the table is encouraged to participate in the conversation by having a yarn with the avoidance of legal jargon. The role of the Elder is to offer cultural advice to the magistrate so that any judgement is culturally appropriate and designed to minimise the chance of recidivism. The role of the Elders in the Koori Court is pivotal to its success.

The key aim of the Koori Court is to divert Koori offenders away from more serious contact with the justice system. While the imprisonment rate for First Nations peoples in Victoria increased by 3.1 per cent from 2020 to 2021, there has also been an increase in the number of offenders using the Koori Court system (Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council, 2023). With the first Koori Court established in Shepparton in 2002, there are now 15 Koori Courts throughout the state of Victoria. The statistics are still showing an overrepresentation of First Nations peoples in our criminal justice system, but operations such as the Koori Court are working towards better understanding the impacts of historical, economic and political disadvantage on First Nations offenders.





## Activity Z – Celebrating success

- 1 Watch this short (6 min) video from 2017 outlining the work of the Koori Court program in Victoria and answer the question that follows.

 [vimeo.com/219470887](https://vimeo.com/219470887)

What is the impact of the Koori Court on society?

- 2 Read the following article commemorating the 20-year anniversary of the first Koori Court in Victoria, and answer the question that follows.

 'Victoria's first Koori Court marks 20 years of improving experience of First Nations people in justice system. Courtney Howe, 2022. ABC News.  
[abc.net.au/news/2022-10-08/20-years-of-the-koori-court-in-victoria/101512746](https://abc.net.au/news/2022-10-08/20-years-of-the-koori-court-in-victoria/101512746)

How are the Koori Courts an example of self-determination, and why is it important from a sociological perspective to reduce recidivism and criminal offending within the First Nations community?

# Revision questions

## Short-answer questions

- 1 Define the following key concepts:
  - a recidivism
  - b social norm
  - c organised crime
  - d people trafficking
- 2 Identify two areas considered when looking at data related to crime rates in Australia.
- 3 Describe the difference between the Marxist and functionalist theories of crime.
- 4 Explain how crime is socially constructed.
- 5 Explain how factors that lead to crime can impact recidivism.
- 6 Explain the potential benefits of restorative justice for the victim and for the perpetrator of a crime.
- 7 Describe how the Victorian Drug Court works.

## Extended response questions

- 1 Discuss how labelling theory relates to crime.
- 2 Using your sociological knowledge, evaluate reasons why some people are more likely than others to be convicted of crime.
- 3 Analyse two reasons why white-collar crime may be less likely to be reported to police than crimes committed by working class people.
- 4 Evaluate the effectiveness of the Koori Court as an alternative sentencing model.

## Further resources

For more resources relevant to this area of study, access the online resource library associated with this textbook: [sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12](http://sev.asn.au/textbook-resources/soc12)

### Articles

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- Lubica Forsythe and Antonette Gaffney, 2012. 'Mental disorder prevalence at the gateway to the criminal justice system'. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 438. Australian Institute of Criminology.
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[humanrights.gov.au/our-work/racial-vilification-law-australia](http://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/racial-vilification-law-australia)
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# Glossary

**Adolescence** is the period of life following the beginning of puberty, during which a young person develops from a child into an adult.

**Affirmation of society's cultural norms and values** refers to the reinforcement of behaviour that is acceptable or unacceptable; deviant behaviour is used to confirm and clarify social norms.

**Altruism** refers to an action that is performed to help a person or group without reward or acknowledgement.

**Attachment** refers to bonds between people, encouraging conformity to shared social norms.

A **belief** is trust, faith or confidence in something; beliefs can be religious, cultural or moral.

**Belief in social values** refers to holding shared values about what is important in life, resulting in agreement and the reduction of deviancy.

**Blended families** comprise the merging of two or more previously existing families, often through marriage or remarriage.

**Capitalism** is a social and economic system where privately owned businesses produce goods and services for a profit; it usually features systems of private property, wage labour, market competition and the accumulation of capital (wealth).

**Charisma** refers to a compelling attractiveness or personal charm that sets an individual apart from others.

**Clarification of society's moral boundaries** refers to the limits and consequences used to indicate what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour; these define the boundary between conformity and deviance.

**Colonisation** is the process of settling among and establishing control over an indigenous group.

**Commitment** refers to an individual's investment of time and energy in conventional behaviour.

**Comparative methodology** is a form of research that explores the similarities and/or differences between social phenomena across social groups or societies.

**Concepts** are abstract ideas or general notions that represent something in the world.

**Confidentiality of data** means protecting data (information) gathered from research participants and storing it carefully and securely.

**Core values** are the common ideas and beliefs held by a group which underpin what is important, and how people in general behave; these can include equality, freedom of speech and family, and may vary across context, time and space.

**Corporate crime** refers to the use of illegal or unethical actions by corporations or individuals within a business setting, often involving offences such as fraud, corruption or environmental violations.

**Crime** refers to an offence that is punishable by law.

**Crimes against property** refers to criminal acts that involve the unlawful interference, damage, theft or destruction of someone else's possessions, including buildings, vehicles, belongings or intellectual property.

**Crimes against the person** refers to criminal acts that involve threatening, harassing or injuring another person or depriving them of their freedom.

**Criminal gangs** are organised groups involved in illegal activities, often engaging in violence and operating through a hierarchical structure.

**Criminology** is a branch of social science that studies crime, criminal behaviours and criminals.

**Cultural development** is the process of creating, protecting, and transmitting the beliefs, values, norms, customs, traditions and practices of a society, which are passed over time.

**Cultural factors** refer to a diverse set of learnt values, beliefs, customs and practices of a particular group or society.

**Cultural norms** refer to customs and values of a society that provide general guidelines to navigate everyday life and a common purpose.

**Culture** is the beliefs, values, customs and behaviours of a particular group or society, encompassing the ways of life, traditions and knowledge transmitted between generations.

A **demographic** is a particular sector of a society, for instance those grouped by age, gender, education level, economic status, ethnic background or and place of residence.

**Demographic shifts** are changes in the size, structure and distribution of population over time.

**Deterrence** refers to the use or threat of punishment to dissuade individuals from engaging in illegal or undesirable behaviour.

**Deviance** refers to actions that are considered to be outside the normal range of behaviour according to the majority of members of a society, or more formally, the violation of social norms.

**Discrimination** is the unequal treatment of a particular group of people.

**Economic factors** relate to the impact social class and socioeconomic status have on people within society.

**Economic development** refers to the process of improving people's access to financial resources; it is influenced by factors such as individual and collective contributions, charitable donations, government funding and the economic conditions of a society.

**Elder**, in a First Nations context, denotes recognition of an individual's wisdom and earned respect in the community (rather than their age).

**Ethical methodology** refers to the process used to conduct socially responsible research. The focus is on protecting the privacy, consent and confidentiality of the people who have agreed to participate in the research.

**Ethics** refers to the moral dilemmas researchers face when conducting and reporting on their research.

**Ethnicity** refers to a shared cultural heritage and way of life.

**Exclusion** is the extent to which individuals experience marginalisation and restriction of certain rights, resources and opportunities that are available to others.

**Experience of family** refers to what it is like to be a part of, and the level of connection with a family unit.

**Experience of youth** refers to the range of factors affecting the way young people feel and experience life; this includes feelings of belonging, inclusion and exclusion.

**Extended families** include relatives beyond the nuclear family, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

**Families of choice** are close-knit relationships between individuals who are not biologically related but who have formed deep bonds through their mutual support, care and love.

A **family** is a social unit consisting of people who are related to each other by blood, marriage, adoption or other forms of commitment.

**Feminism** is a political and social movement that advocates for the rights, equality and liberation of women.

**Folk devils** are groups or individuals who are portrayed in folklore or referred to in the media as deviant or delinquent.

**Functionalism** is a sociological perspective that views society as a system of interconnected parts that work together to meet the needs and demands of individuals.

A **generation** is all the people born and living around the same time.

**Globalisation** is the acceleration and intensification of exchanges of goods, services, labour and capital around the world, promoting global interdependence.

**Government assistance** is support and aid provided by a government to individuals, families or businesses facing financial difficulties or other challenges.

**Government policies** are the principles and objectives of a government and the actions it takes to address various issues affecting its citizens and the nation as a whole.

**Hate crimes** are criminal acts committed against an individual or group based on their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or other protected characteristics, motivated by prejudice, bias or hate.

**Heteronormativity** is the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and is the only natural or acceptable form of sexual orientation.

**Illegal drug trade** refers to the illegal global trade of substances that are subjected to drug prohibition laws.

**Inclusion** is the extent to which individuals experience a sense of belonging and participate actively in a society,

**Individualism** is a set of ideas emphasising the importance of the individual, individual freedom and individual choice.

**Information and communications technology (ICT)** is the equipment and machinery that is used to store and/or distribute information: for example, computers, mobile phones, Internet and social media.

**Informed consent** is the formal agreement of an individual to participate in research.



**Innate characteristics** are inherent traits or qualities that an individual is born with.

**Innovation** is the process of introducing new ideas or methods that deviate from established norms or traditions.

An **institution** is a complex social form that reproduces itself; institutions include organisations and other entities that exist to meet specific needs for the members of the society.

**International crime** refers to a crime that violates the international laws agreed to within the United Nations Charter.

**Involvement** refers to the fact that someone who is intensively involved in socially approved activities has less time and opportunities to deviate.

**Labelling** refers to a sociological theory which suggests that no status or behaviour is inherently deviant until other people have judged it and categorised it as so.

**Law** refers to a set of rules that are created and are enforceable by social or governmental institutions to regulate behaviour.

**Marxism** is a sociological perspective that argues social conflict occurs in society due to tensions between the bourgeoisie (upper class) and the proletariat (working class); it considers how resources are distributed and maintained.

**Media** refers to the various forms of communication used to transmit information, entertainment or ideas to a large audience: print, digital or electronic.

**Moral panic** refers to an intense emotional reaction (usually communicated through the mass media) to an issue that is perceived to threaten the social order.

**Multigenerational families** are families with at least three generations living together.

**Multicultural** means several different cultures coexisting peacefully and equitably in a single country.

**Non-conformists** are people who do not comply with the general norms set out by society.

**Nuclear families** are the most traditional family composition, consisting of a married or de facto couple and their biological or adopted children; also known as a conjugal family.

**One-parent families** comprise one parent raising children without the presence of a spouse or partner.

An **organisation** is a group of individuals or entities that work together towards a common goal or objective.

**Organised crime** refers to a structured and ongoing criminal business that involves multiple individuals or groups collaborating to engage in illegal activities for financial gain or exerting control over certain illicit markets.

A **patriarchy** is a social system or culture in which men hold more power and privilege than women.

**People trafficking** refers to the illegal transportation of individuals across borders, typically for financial gain.

A **personal trouble** is an issue for which people blame an individual's personal or moral failings.

**Perspectives** in sociology, are collections of theories that provide researchers with models to analyse and interpret the world around us.

**Positive deviance** is any action that deviates from social norms but has beneficial effects or outcomes for the individual and society.

**Power** is the ability to impose one's will on others, even if they resist in some way.

**Prejudice** is a positive or negative prejudgement (attitude) about an entire category of people.

**Privacy** is ensuring personal information (data) is held securely and is not available to the public.

**Promoting social change** refers to deviance challenging and at times changing existing social norms.

A **public issue** is a social problem affecting many individuals, stemming from the social culture and structure of society.

**Punishment** refers to the process whereby someone faces a penalty as retribution for an offence they have committed; it could be physical (such as being withheld in prison) or financial (such as a fine).

**Qualitative methods** are processes that generate descriptive data, including lived experiences and personal perspectives about social issues.

**Quantitative methods** are processes that generate data as, or that can be translated into, numbers.

**Race** is the categorisation of group of people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, eye shape, hair type and bone structure.

**Racism** is discrimination against a group of people based on their shared physical characteristics and/or culture.

**Recidivism** refers to the tendency or likelihood of a previously convicted individual to engage in criminal behaviour again after their release or after the completion of a sentence.

**Rehabilitation** refers to the process of helping individuals convicted of crimes to reform, reintegrate into society, and lead law-abiding and productive lives.

**Religion** is a set of beliefs and practices that involve the worship of a higher power or powers and often provide a moral code for believers to follow.

**Representation** refers to the way the 'reality' – of people, places, objects, events, cultural identities or intangible concepts – is portrayed in the media.

**Restoration** refers to the approach or process of repairing harm caused by a wrongdoing, focusing on healing, reconciliation and addressing the needs of both the victim and the offender.

**Retribution** refers to the act of punishing someone as a form of justice or repayment for a wrongdoing they have committed.

**Same-sex parent families** comprise two parents of the same gender raising a child.

**Sanctions** are a society's reaction to deviant behaviours, which can be either positive or negative; positive reactions reward behaviours that adhere to social norms, while negative reactions aim to discourage behaviours through punishment.

**Scientific methods** are the systematic gathering and analysis of data based on theories about social groups and human behaviour.

**Self-fulfilling prophecy** refers to when a person behaves in a way that matches a label they have been given, thus reinforcing that label.

**Serious offence** are criminal acts that are considered severe in nature, typically involving significant harm, violence or a significant threat to public safety or societal wellbeing.

**Sexual identity** is an individual's preference for emotional and sexual relationships with people of a particular gender; it encompasses a range of identities, including heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual and asexual, among others.

**Social category** refers to a group of people who share at least one similar characteristic but who do not necessarily interact with each other.

A **social construct** is a concept that is created and defined by society or a particular social group, rather than existing naturally; it is shaped by social norms, beliefs and values, and can vary across cultures and time.

**Social change** means adjustments or fluctuations in the views, values, norms or structures of society.

**Social control** refers to the process of enforcing conformity and minimising deviance by using authority to enforce norms.

**Social developments** are changes and progressions that occur within a society's social structure and norms over time.

**Social factors** refer to a broad range of variables, including level of education, employment opportunities, physical and psychological health, geographic location, gender and age.

**Social norms** are shared expectations or rules for behaviour within a particular social group or culture.

**Social phenomena** are observable and measurable patterns of behaviour, attitudes and interactions within a society or social group; these can be influenced by factors such as cultural norms, social institutions, economic systems and political structures.

**Socialisation** is the process by which individuals learn and internalise the norms, values, beliefs and behaviours of their culture or society.

**Societal protection** refers to implementing measures and strategies to safeguard the wellbeing, safety and interests of the community by preventing or minimising harm caused by individuals who pose a threat, usually through incapacitation.

**Socioeconomic status** is an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation.

The **sociological imagination** is an approach to thinking sociologically that involves looking at societal issues in a different way, removing biases and making links between personal troubles and public issues.

**Sociology** is a field of study that draws on scientific methods to understand how and why people behave the way they do when they interact in a group; it looks at how society's develop, how they are structured and how they function.

**Statistics** are numbers that summarise broad patterns in how society is structured.

**Stereotypes** are assumptions about individuals based on their social group membership rather than individual characteristics.

**Stigma** refers to being disgraced based on a particular quality or circumstance.

**Subcultures** are groups whose members share characteristics or interests, such as norms, values, ethnicity, social status or sexual and/or gender identity.

**Supraconformity** refers to an individual's capacity to perform at a level beyond the normal expectations set by a society.

**Technological developments** are advancements in technology that have improved and transformed various aspects of human life.

**Technological factors** are advancements in tools, equipment and systems that affect diverse facets of human life, such as communication, education, employment and socialisation.

**Theories** are explanations or models that describe or predict the way the world works based on evidence and logical reasoning; the role of sociological theories is to explain social behaviour in the real world.

**Transnational crime** refers to crimes that have actual or potential effects across national borders.

**Unification of others** refers to the sense of solidarity and mutual support experienced when people unite in response to a deviant act that has caused harm or distress.

**Unpacking** means analysing or evaluating.

**Values** are the beliefs and principles an individual or society considers to be important and desirable.

A **variable** is any characteristic, trait or attribute that can be measured or manipulated.

**Victim** refers to a person who is harmed, injured or killed because of a crime, accident or other event or action.

**Victimless crime** refers to a criminal act that is consensual in nature, where there is no direct harm or unwilling participant involved, such as certain drug use or prostitution offenses.

**Voluntary participation** is the willing involvement of research participants, including awareness of their right to refuse to participate in a research project without having to give a reason or justify their decision.

**Weak bonds** refer to an individual's lack of strong and stable attachments to others within society.

**White-collar crime** refers to criminal acts of a generally non-violent nature, perpetrated in order to obtain money, avoid losing money or gain personal, professional or political advantage.

**Youth** is an age-based socially constructed category in Western societies, usually defined as being between the ages of 12 and 24.





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