3.8 Reasons for the Decline in Family Size in Modern Britain: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For questions that ask for two reasons or two examples give both in full sentences. Spend about 30 minutes on the whole pack.

1 Explain two ways greater female participation in the paid workforce can lead to smaller family sizes in Britain.

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

2 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that economic reasons are the main cause of the decline in family size in modern Britain. Write your answer in the context of the UK and refer to different sociological explanations.

(Total for Question 2 is 8 marks)

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3 Identify and explain one way wider access to contraception has contributed to smaller family sizes in the UK since the late 20th century.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Give one example of a financial reason why many UK couples choose to have fewer children today, and briefly explain it in the context of raising a child in Britain.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

5 Explain two reasons why changing cultural attitudes in Britain have contributed to families choosing to have fewer children.

(Total for Question 5 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.8 Reasons for the Decline in Family Size in Modern Britain: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies first way, e.g. conflict between career and childrearing	**B1**
develops first way, e.g. women may delay or limit childbirth to protect career progress	**B1**
identifies second way, e.g. returning to work increases the monetary cost and childcare needs	**B1**
develops second way, e.g. high childcare costs can make additional children economically unattractive or impractical	**B1**
links both ways to the decision to have fewer children	**B1**
adds brief illustrative example or consequence, e.g. part time work decisions reduce time for more children	**B1**

Answer: One way is career conflict: as more women participate in paid work they may delay or limit childbirth to protect career progress. Another way is that returning to work increases childcare needs and costs, so high childcare expenses make having additional children less affordable, leading couples to choose smaller families.

Question 2

Level 1 Simple assertions that economic reasons matter or do not matter with little development or reference to other explanations.	**1-2**
Level 2 Some developed points arguing economic reasons are important, with at least one alternative sociological explanation considered, but limited evaluation or balance.	**3-5**
Level 3 A balanced discussion weighing economic explanations against other sociological factors such as contraception, education, and cultural change, with a supported judgement about the relative importance of economic causes.	**6-8**

Indicative content:

- Economic reasons to include: rising cost of housing, childcare and general living costs making larger families unaffordable.
- Explain how economic pressures can lead to postponement of parenthood and a reduction in desired number of children.
- Alternative explanations: greater access to contraception and family planning allowing choice, more women staying in education and employment delaying childbirth, cultural shifts prioritising careers and personal choice.
- Consider how economic and cultural factors interact, for example economic constraints influencing attitudes and vice versa.
- Possible conclusion: economic reasons are influential but need to be seen alongside education, contraception and cultural change; on balance sociologists might argue a combination of factors best explains the decline.

Question 3

identifies wider access to contraception as reducing unplanned pregnancies	**B1**
explains that reducing unplanned pregnancies means couples can limit the number of children they have	**B1**
identifies availability of family planning services or contraceptive methods as part of the explanation	**B1**
develops this by noting access gives greater control over timing of births and effective spacing between children	**B1**

Answer: Wider access to contraception reduces unplanned pregnancies, so couples can limit the number of children they have; family planning services and more contraceptive methods give people control over the timing and spacing of births.

Question 4

gives a correct example, e.g. the high cost of housing or childcare	**B1**
explains how that cost affects decisions, e.g. expensive childcare makes having more children unaffordable for working parents	**B1**
brief development linking the example to choosing fewer children overall	**B1**

Answer: Example: the high cost of childcare and housing. Expensive childcare can make it hard for parents to work and pay for care, and high housing costs reduce disposable income, so couples may decide they cannot afford more than one or two children.

Question 5

identifies first reason, e.g. greater emphasis on personal choice and self-fulfilment	**B1**
develops first reason, e.g. people may prioritise careers, travel or leisure over having many children	**B1**
identifies second reason, e.g. changing attitudes to gender roles and parenting responsibilities	**B1**
develops second reason, e.g. with more equal expectations, couples negotiate smaller families so both partners can work and share childcare	**B1**
offers a linking point, e.g. these cultural shifts change social norms about how many children are desirable	**B1**
adds a brief example or consequence, e.g. later marriage or cohabitation as part of lifestyle choices leads to smaller families	**B1**

Answer: One reason is a greater emphasis on personal choice and self fulfilment, so people often prioritise careers, travel or leisure over having many children. Another reason is changing gender role attitudes and parenting expectations, meaning couples often choose smaller families so both partners can work and share childcare; together these shifts change social norms about how many children are desirable and are linked to later marriage or delayed parenthood.

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