

Families

General, Catholic Christianity,
Christianity & Judaism

Family Life in the UK has Changed

1.8 children is
the average...



- 1) For a long time, the nuclear family was seen in Britain as the ideal family model. Traditionally, a nuclear family was a married man and woman and their children. Religious families are more likely than the UK average to follow this model.
- 2) Today, the term may include same-sex parents, unmarried couples, and reconstituted (or blended) families (where divorcees with children find new partners). Single-parent families are more common too.
- 3) Some people worry about children with same-sex parents, as they'll only have role models from one gender. But many believe same-sex couples can provide a stable, loving home, which is what's important.
- 4) An extended family includes grandparents etc. They might live together, which is more common as people live longer, house prices rise and parents work. For example, parents, children and grandparents might share a home to save money. The grandparents can be looked after but also help care for the children.

Christians Try to Welcome and Support Different Families

- 1) Some Christians' views on divorce and homosexuality make it difficult for them to accept certain types of family. The Catholic Church is more strongly against same-sex parenting than many other denominations. But whatever their opinions, many Christians focus on making sure blended families and single or same-sex parents feel welcome in church. They consider it important that the family remains connected to the church, particularly so that any children will still be brought up in a Christian way.
- 2) Churches try to support families in the local parish (area) in many ways, such as by providing counselling and offering classes to parents to help them raise their child in the Christian faith. Churches also provide support at important times in family life through rites of passage such as baptisms, weddings and funerals.
- 3) Jesus showed people the importance of children: "Let the little children come to me... for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14 NIV). Churches hold family worship, e.g. where children might take part in a service and the music is enjoyable for children.
- 4) Catholic churches support families in various ways:

- Pope John Paul II said that Catholics should take "solicitous care to make sure that [divorcees] do not consider themselves as separated from the Church" (Familiaris Consortio 84). However, divorced Catholics aren't allowed to take communion (see p.8), which could mean they feel unwelcome in church.
- Participating in church worship and the sacraments brings families together. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2226) says that "The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families".
- The Family Group Movement is a Catholic organisation that brings people of all ages and situations together, united by their beliefs. Members meet up regularly to do activities together and support one another.
- SVP (St Vincent de Paul Society) is a charity which offers support to whoever needs it, including families.

Jewish Views Tend to Vary, but Families are Supported

- 1) Single parents aren't considered the ideal but many Jews try to make them feel welcome in the community. It can be harder for single parents to have time and money to take a full part in synagogue and Jewish life.
- 2) It's sometimes more difficult for divorced parents in Orthodox, and especially ultra-Orthodox, communities. Family is so important that divorcees can be seen as going against the faith. Women without a get (see p.41) who have a new relationship might be seen as adulterers, and their children seen as illegitimate.
- 3) Progressive and Conservative Jews tend to be more accepting of divorcees, blended families and same-sex parents. They focus on each individual being happy.
- 4) The Jewish community believes it's important to support families:

- Some synagogues hold services with games and songs which allow children to participate. Synagogues might also hold gatherings for families to spend time together, or classes for parents.
- The Jewish community supports families during key moments in life, through rites of passage such as bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings and funerals. Organisations and rabbis offer counselling for, e.g. bereavement.

Muslim Views are Changing About Families

- 1) Some Muslims are accepting of divorced people and blended families, while others are less so.
- 2) Many Muslims would frown upon same-sex parents because they see homosexuality as wrong. Other Muslims believe that, whatever their personal opinion, they should be accepting of same-sex parents because no one is without sin, so they shouldn't judge. Others are in favour of same-sex parents.
- 3) The extended family is important in Islam, particularly for offering love and support.
- 4) The ummah can help to support families. The Qur'an teaches that the ummah should be united together in their faith: "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided" (Qur'an 3:103). It supports families at important times through rites of passage, such as funerals, and offers counselling.
- 5) Men and women worship separately. Women may pray at the mosque less often than men, so boys will often go with their fathers. During Id ul-Adha and Id ul-Fitr (p.24), often the entire family worships at the mosque. Some mosques have groups for parents and children, which exposes the children to the faith.

For all religions,
read the rest of
this page.

Men and Women Often Have Different Roles in the Family

- 1) Taking care of the family and home has often been seen as the 'woman's role', with the man's role being to earn money to support the family. Having different roles doesn't necessarily mean men and women are unequal, but these fixed ideas make it hard for either gender to do the opposite role. These traditional roles were, and often still are, supported by Christianity, Islam and Judaism (p.45).
- 2) These fixed roles mean many men don't get the chance to look after and spend time with their children. When a baby is born, the standard paternity leave for men is 2 weeks — many see this as too little. Shared parental leave (SPL) was introduced in the UK in 2015, giving parents the option to share the time allocated to the mother for maternity leave. But very few men have taken SPL so far.
- 3) Many women find it difficult to return to work after having children — many find their male colleagues have been promoted in the meantime, or they struggle to afford childcare so they can return to work.

Discrimination Based on Gender is Widespread

Religious views on gender roles have
shifted over time as well — see p.45.

- 1) Gender discrimination is a problem in British society, although the situation's gradually improving. Fixed ideas about men's and women's roles are slowly giving way to an acceptance that you shouldn't define people by gender, and that the idea of certain roles is unnecessary and bad for both genders.
- 2) Gender stereotypes — e.g. women being more emotional or men being more confident — are now seen by many people as false and damaging to both genders. For example, many people think it's bad that men might feel less able to show or express their emotions because it's thought not to be 'manly' to do so.
- 3) Some people argue there is still a long way to go before women are treated equally to men, e.g. as well below half of MPs are women. Others think the genders are now treated equally. A minority of people argue that it's now men who have it worse, e.g. because women are now more likely to go to university.

There are Problems with Equality in the Workplace

- 1) Women have always worked, but in the past they were prevented from doing many jobs, by law or by other people. Some had to stop work when they married.
- 2) Women were often paid less than men for the same job, or only offered jobs with less responsibility and lower pay. This is still the case, but it's less common now because it's been made illegal through various laws, which were brought together in the Equality Act 2010.
- 3) Despite these laws, there are professions in which one gender is underrepresented. Nursing or midwifery are seen as women's jobs, while building or firefighting are seen as men's. Women are also underrepresented in positions of authority, e.g. as politicians or company directors.
- 4) Many women still face discrimination at work, such as not being considered for promotion or being sexually harassed, although it's illegal. It can be hard to prove it happened because of their gender — or even to find out it's happening. E.g. it's hard to tell if you're being paid less than someone else in the same job.

Gender Equality

All religions



The Bible is a bit *Unclear* on the Status of Women

- 1) The Bible gives different messages on the subject of gender discrimination. Some of Jesus's followers were women, e.g. Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), and he treated them equally.
- 2) Galatians 3:28 says "There is neither ... male [nor] female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NIV). But 1 Timothy 2:12 says: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet" (NIV), which suggests that men and women aren't equal.

For most of Christian history, women weren't allowed to be priests. This is no longer the case — women can now be ministers in most Protestant denominations, and Anglican priests and bishops. But they can't be Roman Catholic or Orthodox priests.

- 3) The Bible also says wives should do as their husbands tell them. But many Christians say this reflects the ideas of society at the time, and doesn't correspond with Jesus's attitude towards women.

"Wives, submit ... to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church..." Ephesians 5:22-23 NIV
- 4) Many Christians now believe men and women should be equal. The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1938 mentions "sinful inequalities" and says Catholics fight against this.
- 5) Pope John Paul II said "society should create and develop conditions favouring work in the home" for women (Familiaris Consortio 23). Other denominations are less focused on traditional gender roles.

Jewish Men and Women are Often Seen as '*Separate but Equal*'

- 1) Genesis 1:27 ("male and female he created them" NIV) is often used to state that men and women are seen as equals before God, although different, and with different responsibilities.
- 2) Judaism doesn't suggest that women should not be able to follow their chosen career. However, there is still a belief that motherhood is a privilege, and women should devote some of their life to it.
- 3) Orthodox Jews aim to uphold Jewish tradition, so are more likely to suggest women stay at home as wives and mothers. Women play an important role in celebrating Shabbat and teaching children about the faith. Many ultra-Orthodox women work at least part-time though, so their husbands can study the Torah.
- 4) Reform and Liberal Judaism are committed to full gender equality, e.g. they have female rabbis (p.26).

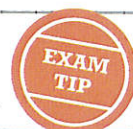
In Islam, Men and Women are Equal but have *Different Roles*

- 1) Men and women have an equal obligation to Allah in terms of prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and charity.

"Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women ... the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women... and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so — for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward." Qur'an 33:35
- 2) The Prophet Muhammad had several wives. He treated them equally, and told others to treat their wives well, but all his wives were expected to act modestly. His first wife worked before they were married.
- 3) Some teachings might suggest men are superior, e.g. "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth" (Qur'an 4:34). But they're usually taken to mean that men and women have different roles in the community — men are responsible for providing for the family, and women for the home.
- 4) Many Muslims believe it's OK for women to work. But some believe women should only work if essential or in traditionally female roles, e.g. midwifery. Some see it as a distraction from looking after the family.
- 5) Wearing modest clothing, often including a head covering, is an important part of Islam for many Muslim women. Many others don't consider it part of their faith. Some people see it as a way of oppressing women and believe Muslim women are forced to wear it. Many Muslim women argue it's their choice, and that any ban on head coverings would be just as oppressive, as it takes away that choice.

Hmmm... it's a tricky issue.

Learn specific examples to give in your answer, such as jobs where women or men are underrepresented.



Revision Summary

You might think you're done with this section... but I'm afraid there are a few questions for you to do first, just to see how much went in. These questions are similar to the questions you'll have in the exam, so you can get used to what you're meant to do and how much you should write.

If you're not sure about any of the answers, have another read of the section and then try again.

For some courses, you need to learn about the views of different religions on these topics. But for other courses, you need to know about them in the context of just one religion — if that's the case for your course, answer each of these questions in the context of the religion you've studied.

Let's start you off gently with 1 mark multiple choice questions.

- 1) Which of the following describes when an unmarried couple live together?
 a) Sex outside of marriage b) Cohabitation c) Heterosexuality d) Promiscuity
- 2) Which of the following means preventing pregnancy?
 a) Conception b) Celibacy c) Contraception d) Conscience

Some 2 mark questions now. All you need are two short points.

- 3) Give two religious beliefs about sexual relationships.
- 4) Give two religious beliefs about the significance of procreation.

These questions are worth 3 marks, so you need to write down three brief points.

- 5) Outline three ways in which the religious community supports families.
- 6) Outline three types of family.
- 7) Outline three religious beliefs about marriage.

If you want top marks in these 4 mark questions, you'll need to make sure your answers are well-developed.

- 8) Explain two contrasting religious beliefs in British society today about promiscuity.
- 9) Explain two ways that children can be introduced to their faith.
- 10) Explain two religious beliefs about non-traditional families.

And add 1 more — these are worth 5 marks. Your answer should refer to religious teachings or sacred texts.

- 11) Explain two ways in which religious believers respond to divorce.
- 12) Explain two religious beliefs about homosexuality.
- 13) Explain two religious beliefs about gender equality.

For the long answer questions, be sure to write a concise, well-organised answer — make your points clear to the examiner.

And the big one — this is a 12 mark question. There'll be additional marks for SPaG in some essay questions like this. Use the bullet point list below to help you plan your answer — the list gives you the things you need to include. Remember, you'll need to make sure you've covered arguments for and against the statement.

- 14) 'Marriage is a lifelong union between one man and one woman.'

Evaluate this statement.

Your answer should include the following:

- religious arguments that support the statement
- religious arguments that disagree with the statement
- a conclusion

You can also include non-religious points of view in your answer.

Take a look at the 'Do Well in Your Exam' section — it gives advice on writing essays.