Your notes

GCSE Sociology: revision notes

Crime, deviance and social control

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Crime and deviance

- **Crime** is behaviour that breaks the law. **Deviance** is behaviour that breaks social norms.
- Not all **deviance** is criminal (such as being rude), and not all **crime** is seen as deviant (such as speeding slightly).

Social construction

- **Crime** and **deviance** are socially constructed: what counts as **crime** or deviance depends on time, place and who decides.
- Over time: homosexuality was illegal in England and Wales until 1967; smoking in pubs was normal but was banned in 2007.
- By place: laws and norms differ between cultures and countries.
- By situation: killing is a **crime**, but can be seen differently in war.

Social control

- **Formal social control**: official agencies such as the police, courts and prisons, using written laws and formal sanctions.
- **Informal social control**: family, friends, peers and neighbours, using approval, disapproval, gossip and exclusion.
- Sanctions can be positive (rewards) or negative (punishments).

Key terms

Crime	Behaviour that breaks the law.
Deviance	Behaviour that breaks social norms.
Social construction	The idea that meanings are created by society and change over time and place.
Formal social control	Control by official agencies using written rules.

Informal social control	Control by family, friends and peers.
Negative sanction	A punishment for breaking norms or laws.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is crime?
2. What is deviance?
3. Which is deviant but not criminal?
4. What does social construction mean for crime?
5. Which is an example of formal social control?
6. Which is an example of informal social control?
7. When did smoking in pubs become banned in England?
8. What is a negative sanction?

Answers

1. Behaviour that breaks the law
2. Behaviour that breaks social norms
3. Being very rude in public
4. What counts as crime changes over time and place
5. The courts
6. Disapproval from friends
7. 2007
8. A punishment

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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