Your notes

GCSE Sociology: revision notes

The research process, sampling and ethics

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Planning research

- Research starts with an aim or a hypothesis. A **pilot study** (a small trial run) checks the method works.
- The target population is the group being studied; a **sampling frame** is a list of the members of the population.

Sampling methods

- Random sampling: everyone has an equal chance of being chosen.
- Systematic sampling: choosing every nth person from the **sampling frame**.
- **Stratified sampling**: dividing the population into groups (such as by age or gender) and sampling from each in proportion.
- Quota sampling: choosing a set number of people from each group, without a **sampling frame**.
- **Snowball sampling**: participants suggest others, useful for hard-to-reach groups.
- A **representative sample** allows findings to be generalised to the whole population.

Reliability, validity and ethics

- **Reliability**: whether the research would get the same results if repeated.
- **Validity**: whether the research gives a true picture of what it studies.
- Ethics: informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, avoiding harm, avoiding deception where possible, and the right to withdraw.

Key terms

Pilot study	A small trial run of research.

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Sampling frame	A list of the members of the target population.
Stratified sampling	Sampling from groups in proportion to the population.
Snowball sampling	Participants suggesting other participants.
Representative sample	A sample that reflects the population.
Generalisation	Applying findings to the wider population.
Reliability	Whether research would get the same results if repeated.
Validity	Whether research gives a true picture.

Your notes

Quick questions

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

1. What is a pilot study?
2. What is a sampling frame?
3. What is snowball sampling?
4. What is stratified sampling?
5. What is systematic sampling?
6. What is reliability?
7. What is validity?
8. Why is a representative sample important?

Answers

1. A small trial run of research
2. A list of the members of the target population
3. Participants suggesting other participants
4. Sampling from groups in proportion to the population
5. Choosing every nth person from a sampling frame
6. Whether research would get the same results if repeated
7. Whether research gives a true picture of what it studies
8. Findings can be generalised to the population

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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