

Sociology - Social Institutions - Key terms

absolute monarchies	governments wherein a monarch has absolute or unmitigated power
ambilineal	a type of unilateral descent that follows either the father's or the mother's side exclusively
anarchy	the absence of any organised government
animism	the religion that believes in the divinity of nonhuman beings, like animals, plants, and objects of the natural world
anxiety disorders	feelings of worry and fearfulness that last for months at a time
atheism	belief in no deities
authority	power that people accept because it comes from a source that is perceived as legitimate
automation	workers being replaced by technology
bartering	when people exchange one form of goods or services for another
bigamy	the act of entering into marriage while still married to another person
bilateral descent	the tracing of kinship through both parents' ancestral lines
capitalism	an economic system in which there is private ownership (as opposed to state ownership) and where there is an impetus to produce profit, and thereby wealth
career inheritance	when children tend to enter the same or similar occupation as their parents
charismatic authority	power legitimised on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities
cohabitation	when a couple shares a residence but is not married
commodification	the changing of something not generally thought of as a commodity into something that can be bought and sold in a marketplace
commodities	physical objects we find, grow, or make to meet our needs and those of others
constitutional monarchies	national governments that recognise monarchs but require these figures to abide by the laws of a greater constitution
contested illnesses	illnesses that are questioned or considered questionable by some medical professionals
convergence theory	a sociological theory to explain how and why societies move toward similarity over time as their economies develop
cults	religious groups that are small, secretive, and highly controlling of members and have a charismatic leader
demedicalisation	the social process that normalises "sick" behaviour
democracy	a form of government that provides all citizens with an equal voice or vote in determining state policy
denomination	a large, mainstream religion that is not sponsored by the state
depression	a sustained recession across several economic sectors
dictatorship	a form of government in which a single person (or a very small group) wields complete and absolute authority over a government or populace after the dictator rises to power, usually through economic or military might
disability	a reduction in one's ability to perform everyday tasks; the World Health Organization notes that this is a social limitation
ecclesia	a religion that is considered the state religion
economy	the social institution through which a society's resources (goods and services) are managed
established sects	sects that last but do not become denominations
extended family	a household that includes at least one parent and child as well as other relatives like grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins

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family	socially recognised groups of individuals who may be joined by blood, marriage, or adoption and who form an emotional connection and an economic unit of society
family life course	a sociological model of family that sees the progression of events as fluid rather than as occurring in strict stages
family life cycle	a set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time
family of orientation	the family into which one is born
family of procreation	a family that is formed through marriage
global assembly lines	where products are assembled over the course of several international transactions
global cities	cities that headquarter multinational corporations, exercise significant international political influence, host headquarters of international nongovernmental organizations, host influential media, and host advanced communication and transportation infrastructure
global commodity chains	where internationally integrated economic links connect workers and corporations for the purpose of manufacture and marketing
impairment	the physical limitations a less-able person faces
individual mandate	a government rule that requires everyone to have insurance coverage or pay a penalty
intimate partner violence (IPV)	violence that occurs between individuals who maintain a romantic or sexual relationship
kinship	a person's traceable ancestry (by blood, marriage, and/or adoption)
legitimation	when a physician certifies that an illness is genuine
liberation theology	the use of a church to promote social change via the political arena
market socialism	a subtype of socialism that adopts certain traits of capitalism, like allowing limited private ownership or consulting market demand
marriage	a legally recognised contract between two or more people in a sexual relationship who have an expectation of permanence about their relationship
matrilineal descent	a type of unilateral descent that follows the mother's side only
matrilocal residence	a system in which it is customary for a husband to live with the his wife's family
medical sociology	the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and health care for both the sick and the healthy
medicalization	the process by which aspects of life that were considered bad or deviant are redefined as sickness and needing medical attention to remedy
medicalization of deviance	the process that changes "bad" behaviour into "sick" behaviour
megachurch	a Christian church that has a very large congregation averaging more than 2,000 people who attend regular weekly services
mercantilism	an economic policy based on national policies of accumulating silver and gold by controlling markets with colonies and other countries through taxes and customs charges
monarchy	a form of government in which a single person (a monarch) rules until that individual dies or abdicates the throne
money	an object that a society agrees to assign a value to so it can be exchanged as payment
monogamy	when someone is married to only one person at a time
monotheism	a religion based on belief in a single deity
mood disorders	long-term, debilitating illnesses like depression and bipolar disorder
mutualism	a form of socialism under which individuals and cooperative groups exchange

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	products with one another on the basis of mutually satisfactory contracts
nuclear family	two parents (traditionally a married husband and wife) and children living in the same household
oligarchy	a form of government in which power is held by a small, elite group
one person, one vote	a concept holding that each person's vote should be counted equally
outsourcing	when jobs are contracted to an outside source, often in another country
patrilineal descent	a type of unilateral descent that follows the father's line only
patrilocal residence	a system in which it is customary for the a wife to live with (or near) the her husband's family
patrimonialism	a type of authority wherein military and administrative factions enforce the power of the master
personality disorders	disorders that cause people to behave in ways that are seen as abnormal to society but seem normal to them
polarization	when the differences between low-end and high-end jobs becomes greater and the number of people in the middle levels decreases
politics	a means of studying a nation's or group's underlying social norms as values as evidenced through its political structure and practices
polyandry	a form of marriage in which one woman is married to more than one man at one time
polygamy	the state of being committed or married to more than one person at a time
polygyny	a form of marriage in which one man is married to more than one woman at one time
polytheism	a religion based on belief in multiple deities
power	the ability to exercise one's will over others
private health care	health insurance that a person buys from a private company; private health care can either be employer-sponsored or direct-purchase
public health care	health insurance that is funded or provided by the government
rational-legal authority	power that is legitimised by rules, regulations, and laws
recession	when there are two or more consecutive quarters of economic decline
religion	a system of beliefs, values, and practices concerning what a person holds to be sacred or spiritually significant
religious beliefs	specific ideas that members of a particular faith hold to be true
religious experience	the conviction or sensation that one is connected to "the divine"
religious rituals	behaviours or practices that are either required for or expected of the members of a particular group
representative democracy	a government wherein citizens elect officials to represent their interests
sect	a small, new offshoot of a denomination
services	activities that benefit people, such as health care, education, and entertainment
shaken-baby syndrome	a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal haemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or impacting an infant's head
sick role	the pattern of expectations that define appropriate behaviour for the sick and for those who take care of them
social epidemiology	the study of the causes and distribution of diseases
socialised medicine	when the government owns and runs the entire health care system
socialism	an economic system in which there is government ownership (often referred to as "state run") of goods and their production, with an impetus to share work and wealth

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	equally among the members of a society
stereotype interchangeability	when stereotypes don't change, they get recycled for application to a new subordinate group
stigmatization	when someone's identity is spoiled; they are labelled as different, discriminated against, and sometimes even shunned due to an illness or disability
stigmatization of illness	are those that are discriminated against and whose sufferers are looked down upon or even shunned by society
structural unemployment	when there is a societal level of disjuncture between people seeking jobs and the jobs that are available
subsistence farming	when farmers grow only enough to feed themselves and their families
totalitarian dictatorship	an extremely oppressive form of dictatorship in which most aspects of citizens' lives are controlled by the leader
totemism	belief in a divine connection between humans and other natural beings
traditional authority	power legitimised on the basis of long-standing customs
underemployment	a state in which a person accepts a lower paying, lower status job than his or her education and experience qualifies him or her to perform
underinsured	those who spend at least 10 percent of their income on health care costs that are not covered by insurance
unilateral descent	the tracing of kinship through one parent only.
universal health care	a system that guarantees health care coverage for everyone
xenophobia	an illogical fear and even hatred of foreigners and foreign goods