
A-LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

7192/2 Topics in Sociology
Report on the Examination

7192
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General

Most students answered their chosen questions in the order in which they appeared on the question paper. They therefore answered the 20 mark essay question in Section Blast, and for many this was a relatively brief and often unfinished answer. This suggests that time management was a problem.

10 mark questions

A number of students wrote introductory paragraphs and/or conclusions. These are not necessary, and are unlikely to gain additional marks.

A number of students made only one point in their answer, or three or more, rather than the two asked for. In these cases, the two best answers were rewarded and will be in future series. It is helpful for students to clearly indicate their two answers, with wording such as “*One way is...*” or by starting a new paragraph for their second point.

Schools and colleges should note that there is no reference in the mark scheme for 10 mark ‘outline and explain’ questions to evaluation, and that evaluation is not a requirement for answers to these questions. The assessment objective allocations are different in the two types of 10 mark questions, and students should be made aware of this.

There was a wide range of responses to these questions. A minority of students wrote very brief answers. For these 10 mark items, a simple statement of two ways, reasons or factors, without development, is not sufficient to access more than the lower marks in the mark range. The best answers were focused, clearly stating a point and then developing it, with use of sociological concepts, evidence and theory where appropriate, in ways that demonstrated the skills expected from the targeted assessment objectives. There was a tendency, however, for many answers to focus on the first aspect of the question at the expense of the second. For example, in question 4, many answers gave detailed responses on changing gender roles but said little on how these had affected the experience of childhood. Students need guidance on how to approach these questions and how to best demonstrate their sociological understanding. The nature of these questions means that students cannot rely on reciting knowledge. They require students to bring together two aspects of their sociological knowledge in a way that they are unlikely to have done before. Answers will sometimes require claims that students may be unsure of because they do not know of specific evidence (for example, in question 5, whether migrants from Eastern Europe who are single workers tend to live alone or in shared households). However, answers that are sociologically plausible will be accepted.

20 mark questions

Many scripts had one substantial, well developed answer to a 20 mark question and one significantly briefer one, again suggesting problems with time management. It is often the case that a wide range of material can be relevant to these questions, and students will need to be selective. For example, it may be more effective to cover a limited number of views or theories in some depth, rather than to include every possible theory. There was a tendency for answers to progressively lose sight of the question and to become a list of different views. The best answers will address all aspects of the question and will draw on theories, concepts and empirical examples or evidence. Evaluation which meets the demands of the questions is better than points of criticism which have been learned and included, regardless of the specific question that has been set.

Students should also be aware that evaluation includes awareness of the strengths, as well as the weaknesses, of an argument or theory.

Section A

Culture and Identity

Question 01

Many answered this by describing features, such as style of dress or preferred music, of particular subcultures with less success in developing general points about the relationship between subcultures and the consumption of goods and services.

Question 02

Most answers were able to develop ideas from the item references to new technologies, the changing nature of workplaces and new types of job. These were not always successfully related to gender identities.

Question 03

Some answers showed an impressive understanding of interactionism, often through the ideas of Mead, Cooley and Goffman, and were able to compare the approach with structural and other perspectives. A minority of students showed very limited knowledge or relied on what they knew of interactionism from studying other topics.

Families and Households

Question 04

Most were able to identify two ways and clearly addressed changing gender roles, but often there was little development on the experience of childhood beyond stating that it had become more positive or negative. Popular answers included parents in symmetrical families as good role models, material conditions (such as dual-earners) and changes in socialisation. Some made the error of writing about traditional gender roles rather than how they have changed.

Question 05

Most answers were able to use the item to develop points about extended families (India), matrifocal families (Jamaica) and single person or shared occupancy households (Eastern Europe). A few were uncertain as to the difference between households and families, and a few mistakenly focused on the nature of households in countries of origin, for example grandparents looking after children because the parents had emigrated for work. There was also misuse of the term 'beanpole family'.

Question 06

Many students were knowledgeable on functions of the family as discussed by Murdock and Parsons, and some were able to go beyond this by discussing, for example, functional fit and structural differentiation. Most approached the question by using Marxism and different types of feminism to make critical points. Weaker answers tended to lack concepts and to spend too long

describing a limited number of functions or the suitability of nuclear families for geographical mobility.

Health

Question 07

The most common answers here discussed stress or other factors in women's lives and the role of doctors in diagnosis.

Question 08

Students found it difficult to make connections between their knowledge of the globalised health industry on the one hand and health care in the UK on the other, and some wrote about one with little, if any, reference to the other. Better answers often identified one positive effect, such as availability of medicines or procedures, and one negative effect, such as the pursuit of profit by transnational pharmaceuticals leading to less money being available for health care.

Question 09

Students were often well informed on different definitions of, and approaches to, health and illness, but were often less confident on the social constructionist approach than on others. Some gave a list of approaches with limited application to the question. The better answers were more integrated with analysis and evaluation focused on the question.

Wealth, Welfare and Poverty

Question 10

Students often showed an impressive knowledge of recent and current government policies, such as the bedroom tax and changes to benefits. A few chose zero hours contracts, which are not a government policy. However, it was possible to use this by arguing that government policy was to allow these.

Question 11

There was a tendency, despite the item, for worklessness to be seen as synonymous with unemployment. Some answers gave reasons for worklessness rather than analysing ways in which life chances were affected. Better answers moved beyond basic points about lack of income to using concepts such as anomie and marginalisation.

Question 12

There was a range in the quality of responses to this question. Better answers were able to apply different theories and concepts to gender differences in poverty, but others struggled to move beyond a descriptive account, often of discrimination at work, with little reference to poverty.

Section B

Beliefs in Society

Question 13

Better answers identified particular social groups and were able to use specific examples. Some found it difficult to explain why sects would recruit them specifically. A few conflated sects and other organisations, such as NAMs.

Question 14

There was a tendency with this question to use examples (such as the Protestant ethic and the Civil Rights Movement) without drawing out a general point in answer to the question. Some wrote about the New Christian Right in the USA but concluded that it had not brought about social change, and so was not a relevant answer.

Question 15

There were some very good answers, with appropriate theories and concepts addressing both science and religion, often focused on the secularisation debate. Some weaker students approached this question without applying sociological knowledge. Despite the word 'today' in the question, some older material, such as the work of Malinowski, sometimes appeared, often in a descriptive way. Students should be encouraged to apply more contemporary material where appropriate.

Global Development

Question 16

Most were able to identify two ways. Many chose one 'positive' way, such as the introduction of Western health care and medical technology, and one 'negative' way, such as the increase in diseases of affluence associated with a changing lifestyle. A few neglected the 'process' aspect of the question and gave accounts of health problems in LEDCs, such as high infant mortality rates.

Question 17

Answers included pollution, deforestation, depletion of resources, waste and loss of habitats and biodiversity, with explanations of how industrialisation could lead to these. Some also discussed positive aspects, such as industrialisation eventually making possible more sustainable production, distribution and consumption. A few students strayed on to consequences of industrialisation on people's health.

Question 18

There were some excellent answers here, blending empirical and theoretical knowledge to reach a balanced judgement on the role of NGOs, including different types of NGOs, often comparing them with other organisations that play a part in development. Some students, however, were unsure as to what NGOs are, despite the item, and there were relatively few examples used (rather than just named). Some answers lost the focus on NGOs and became discussions of aid in general.

The Media

Question 19

There were some very good answers to this question. Some students struggled with the 'new' media aspect and wrote about the media in general. Good points were made about, for example, global branding and advertising, the availability of social media and the dominance of American or Western cultural forms.

Question 20

There was a tendency to simply describe examples of minority ethnic groups being portrayed in a negative way. The question asked for reasons for such portrayals with references in the item to power and to different cultures, beliefs and practices to guide students towards appropriate points to analyse. Popular appropriate answers included analytical points about the under-representation of minority ethnic groups amongst decision makers in the media and the media reflecting stereotypical views held by the majority audience.

Question 21

Many answers showed a fairly limited knowledge of pluralism, and tended to answer the question through comparisons with other theories, such as Marxism and neo-Marxism, often with rather more detail on these rather than pluralism. Better answers avoided a listing of theories and constructed a more focused evaluative essay.

Stratification and Differentiation

Question 22

Good answers were able to identify two ways by selecting life chances, such as those in employment, health and education, but some had less success in developing these points. Better answers were able to explain the 'way' through appropriate use of sociological knowledge, for example, using theories, or concepts such as the underclass and the reserve army of labour.

Question 23

Most students were able to take from the item two points which could then be analysed as factors preventing women from being socially mobile. Popular and appropriate answers included the effects of maternity breaks on career progression and the continuing pressures of gender roles within the family.

Question 24

Answers tended to be stronger on Marxist views of class, status and power than on Weberian views. Good answers were often characterised by differentiating the key terms of class, status and power, and by the application of other views, such as those of feminists.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)