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# A-LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

7192/2 Topics in Sociology  
Report on the Examination

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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 B last. Some student responses to this question were relatively brief and seemingly unfinished. This suggests that timing was a problem for some students.

## 10 mark questions

Some students wrote introductory paragraphs and/or conclusions. These are not necessary, and are unlikely to gain additional marks, and they also take up time.

Some students made only one point in their answers, or three or more, rather than the two asked for in the question. Sometimes it was unclear how many points were being made. 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.

Evaluation is not a requirement for answers to 10 mark “outline and explain” questions. The marks awarded for the assessment objectives being targeted are different in the two types of ten mark questions, and students should be made aware of this.

The best answers to 10 mark questions were focused, clearly stating a point and then developing it, using sociological concepts, evidence and theory where appropriate. In some questions students tended to focus on the first aspect of the question at the expense of the second. For example, in question 5, some answers gave detailed responses on demographic changes but said little on how these had affected the nature of childhood in the United Kingdom today. 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. These questions will ask them to bring together aspects of their sociological knowledge in a way that they are unlikely to have done before.

## 20 mark questions

Many scripts had one substantial well developed answer to a 20 mark question and one significantly briefer one, suggesting problems with timing. It is often the case that a wide range of material can be relevant to these questions, and students need to carefully choose the content they wish to use by planning their answers. 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 question. Students should also be aware that evaluation includes awareness of the strengths as well as the weaknesses of an argument, theory or piece of evidence.

## **Section A**

### **Culture and identity**

#### **Question 1**

Most students were able to apply their sociological knowledge and to explain two reasons why leisure choices vary across different age groups. Popular answers included constraints of income, age-related legislation and physical limitations. Only a few answers recognised that there might be other age groups than 'young people' and 'the elderly'.

#### **Question 02**

Most students were able to give two ways in which an individual's sense of self may be affected by their sexuality. Most focused on homosexuality with only a minority considering, for example, the connection between heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinities. There was some overlap between the 'ways' suggested by the item. For example, labelling and stigmatised identity, although different (and so two different 'ways'), can be part of a reflexive process. Evaluation using these ideas featured in some of the best answers.

#### **Question 03**

This question produced some good answers. Some approached the question by discussing agencies of socialisation one by one, others by discussing different theories, starting with Marxism and moving on, usually, to functionalism and feminism. Both approaches could be successful, but students should be encouraged to make evaluative points throughout rather than leaving these for a conclusion.

### **Families and households**

#### **Question 04**

There was a tendency to go into detail about the chosen policies rather than to discuss effects on family structures. Some answers assumed an effect and did not take the opportunity to use their sociological understanding to explore the ideas in greater depth. For example, some answers said that changes to divorce laws (often described in detail) increased the number of lone parent families, but few discussed increases in reconstituted families or bi-nuclear families. Similarly the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act of 2013 was recognised as increasing the number of same sex married couples but also led to same sex divorces, changes in adoption, surrogacy and so on.

#### **Question 05**

Many answers went into reasons for the demographic changes referred to in the item rather than focus on effects on childhood. Others discussed childhood a hundred years ago or earlier. However, many did develop points about child centeredness by looking at its positive consequences for childhood and then developing this to link it to over protectiveness, age patriarchy, pester power, toxic childhood and so on. Similarly, the presence of grandparents was in better answers not merely described but analysed as to how it could be both positive and negative in contributing to socialisation and childcare and in adding to the burden of care for the family with some children becoming young carers. Better answers were distinguished by, as the mark scheme says, 'developed applications', going beyond the immediately apparent.

**Question 06**

Many answers discussed changes in family life such as divorce, cohabitation, same sex marriage and gender roles in terms of greater choice but few explored whether these developments made family life more important or less important. More developed analysis showed how diversity did not always lead to less importance being given to family life, importance of a changed form of family life.

Functionalism and the New Right were often included but, sometimes with Marxism, described rather than being applied to the question. There was a shortage of postmodernist views in addition to choice and diversity. Better answers referred to pure relationships, confluent love, negotiated families and alternative life courses.

**Health****Question 07**

Most students were able to explain two ways in which health professionals affect inequalities in health care. Inequalities addressed included those based on age, social class, ethnicity and region, with popular answers including the distribution of resources and the ways in which different quality services might be provided to different groups.

**Question 08**

This question produced some very different responses, with some students writing at length about physical barriers, such as lack of wheelchair ramps or street furniture, rather than building on the points in the item. Answers tended to be more confident and sociological when writing about social reactions to people with disabilities than when considering economic barriers.

**Question 09**

Most students were able to use a range of sociological knowledge and understanding to answer this question. There was however some uncertainty as to what was meant by 'cultural factors', with some students taking this to include, for example, not being able to afford to eat healthily or exercise. Other answers strayed from social class differences to differences between ethnic groups (without making clear how these might be related to social class). Better answers built on points in the item, including values and attitudes to risk, to effectively compare cultural factors with, for example, material and structural factors.

**Work, poverty and welfare****Question 10**

Most students were aware of ways in which globalization may have increased levels of poverty in the United Kingdom. A small number misinterpreted the question by including material on poverty in countries other than the United Kingdom. Popular 'ways' in answer to this question included outsourcing and migration.

**Question 11**

Most students knew the challenges of measuring relative poverty and were able, for example, to give some good cross cultural analyses, comparing something that might be on a list in one part of the world but not in another part of the world (such as wi fi). Other answers focused on inherent bias by the researcher or differences based on social class or ethnicity.

**Question 12**

Answers here tended to describe welfare provision by the private and state sectors, making some comparisons and evaluative points. Students tended to have less to say on the informal and voluntary sectors. Most understood the idea of a mixed economy and so answers were generally focussed on the question, though tended towards the list-like.

**Section B****Beliefs in society****Question 13**

There were some good answers with most students able to explain two ways in which globalisation may have affected religious beliefs and practices. There was a range of ideas with popular answers including pluralism and greater choice, deterritorialisation (although usually without using this concept) and the growth of fundamentalism. Some weaker answers described recent changes in beliefs or practices without making the role of globalisation clear.

**Question 14**

This question was generally answered well. Popular answers included cultural defence and cultural transition (although the difference between these two concepts was not always clear), and the idea that migrants are simply more likely to be religious when placed in a secular society. Like question 10, this question referred specifically to the United Kingdom and so answers about other countries could not be credited.

**Question 15**

Answers here showed a good range of knowledge. Most students took cues from the item and discussed a range of developments, such as variations of secularisation, growth of science and rationality and the growth of New Age activities. There was pleasing evidence of knowledge of contemporary postmodern approaches but only the best answers explicitly addressed spirituality or considered that there might be a difference between the spiritual and the religious.

**Global development****Question 16**

This question tested the ability of students to bring together their knowledge and understanding of aid and of gender inequalities. Many were able to suggest ways in which aid might have increased or reduced gender inequalities, with answers focusing on, for example, aid aimed at education or health issues. There was recognition that aid might help girls achieve an education and improve their life chances, and that in a patriarchal society educational aid might benefit males more than

females. There was some misunderstanding of aid with some answers focusing on transnational corporations rather than aid agencies and IGOs.

### **Question 17**

There were some very good answers to this question, drawing on concepts such as hybridity and cultural imperialism. The main challenge for many was to move beyond describing material changes such as availability of products to their cultural consequences.

### **Question 18**

Most students showed good knowledge of theories of development and underdevelopment. Some concentrated on modernisation theory and others were unable, for dependency theory, to go beyond a brief outline of Frank's ideas with some supporting empirical evidence. In explaining theories, students should be able to use the key terms used within that theory (in the case of dependency theory these would include satellite and metropolis, colonialism, neo-colonialism and chains of dependency) and be able to relate the theory to empirical evidence (in this case, this could include the effects of aid and trade). Better answers showed awareness of the historical context of the theories, their relevance today and differences within theories.

### **Media**

#### **Question 19**

Many answers chose to discuss moral panics, often drawing heavily on a description of Cohen's mods and rockers, or other examples. Some, however, did not go beyond this to consider, for example, why young people in particular should tend to be cast as folk devils. Some good answers considered, for example, negative news values, the age of those controlling the media and the age of audiences, a reflection of reality linked to pluralism and functionalism's need for boundary maintenance.

#### **Question 20**

There were some good answers that analysed online campaigns, more people having a voice revitalising democracy and citizen journalism, although links to the political process were often left implicit. Examples often showed good ability to apply sociological ideas to current issues. There were examples of fake news, of trolling and more specific examples, such as the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica data scandal. Some answers discussed Berlusconi and Murdoch, conflating old and new media. The questions and the items need to be carefully considered along with the item rather than rushing in.

#### **Question 21**

Better answers recognised that 'direct' and 'immediate' were separate issues, for example the cultural effects model is direct but not immediate. Many answers summarised several models of media effects, with evaluation often limited to points of comparison rather than addressing the demands of the question. Many answers used examples, usually in support of direct and immediate effects, but these were often dated, for example the James Bulger case and the Columbine shooting. Few students brought in current or recent examples, such as those related to social media memes. Some answers also addressed only the issue of whether the media do or do not cause violent behaviour, ignoring other possible effects.

## **Stratification and development**

### **Question 22**

This question produced an imaginative range of suggestions as to how age may affect life chances, not all informed by sociological knowledge and understanding. Most answers chose to focus on discrimination in employment and in access to services, with some displaying the students' frustrations with the limits placed on young people, especially around the minimum wage. Studies, concepts and theories were rarely used in answers to this question.

### **Question 23**

Most responses went for migration causing an underclass and consumer goods either increasing or decreasing the gap between rich and poor. Overall there was limited evidence that 'class structure' was well understood. Migrants were variously seen as skilled or, more frequently, unskilled who thus added to the working or middle class. Some better answers discussed the formation of a transnational ruling class.

### **Question 24**

In many answers, the evidence on ethnicity was limited to studies showing discrimination against job applicants with different names, and the item's reference to institutional racism. Otherwise ethnicity's role in inequality was mainly asserted. Answers often then juxtaposed social class and gender (mostly) inequality, citing some evidence for the latter and less for class. Weaker responses then tended to drift into feminist evidence and leave the question behind. Only a few better answers addressed the relative importance of dimensions of inequality and fewer still looked at the interactions between dimensions.



### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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