



A-LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

7192/2: Topics in Sociology
Report on the Examination

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General comments

There were relatively few rubric infringements this year; almost all students answered questions on one Section A topic and one Section B topic. The most popular topics continue to be 'Families and Households' in Section A and 'Beliefs in Society' in Section B.

There were more instances this year of illegible handwriting. Centres should bear in mind that credit cannot be given for work which cannot be read.

Most students answered their chosen questions in the order in which they appeared on the question paper. They therefore answered the section B 20 mark essay question last, and for many this was, as last year, a relatively brief and often apparently unfinished answer. This suggests that time management continues to be a problem for many students on this paper.

10 mark questions

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

Some students made only one point in their answers, or three or more, rather than the two asked for. The word 'two' is put in bold in the question to try and draw students' attention to this. Sometimes it was not clear 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. Notably, some students wrote far more than was needed for a 10-mark response.

The two types of 10-mark question, "outline and explain" and "analysis" types, are marked differently as the assessment objectives have different weightings. It is important that students are aware of this. In particular they should note that evaluation is not a requirement for answers to 10 mark "outline and explain" questions.

For 10 mark "outline and explain" questions, students cannot rely on reciting knowledge; these questions will ask them to bring together aspects of their sociological knowledge of the topic in a way that they are unlikely to have done before.

For 10 mark "analyse" questions, the parts of the item being used should be clearly indicated, preferably by exact words being quoted. It is acceptable for two different points to be drawn from one part of the item, but answers which do not use the item cannot access the application marks.

The best answers to 10-mark questions were focused, clearly stating a point and then developing it, and used sociological concepts, studies, evidence and theory as appropriate.

20 mark questions

As last year, many scripts had one substantial answer to the Section A 20-mark question and one significantly briefer one for Section B, suggesting problems with timing.

There was often little evidence of planning. A wide range of material can be relevant to these questions, and students are not expected to include everything. They need to carefully choose the content and to plan their answers.

The best answers will be both empirical and theoretical, for example showing knowledge of research findings and examples, and knowledge of theoretical perspectives. Some answers amounted to lists of theoretical perspectives, with learned points of criticism, and lost focus on the question itself.

While the items are intended as a helpful starting point for answers, they should not be taken by students as a full list of what is relevant; better answers will draw in other relevant knowledge and ideas.

Section A

Culture and Identity

Question 01

Most students were able to explain two ways in which individuals can be socialised into national identities. Popular answers included within the home (e.g. celebrating a national festival or event), at school, and through the media. A small number did not understand what was meant by national identity.

Question 02

Most students were able to give two ways in which agencies of socialisation have contributed to growing uncertainty about identities. To be successful, answers needed to discuss the role played in this by the agencies named in the item: the media, and the workplace. A small number of answers focused instead on other agencies, and could not get application marks. Popular responses included 'pick and mix' or 'hybrid identities' and 'masculinity' in workplaces.

Question 03

Most answers showed a good understanding of mass culture, with examples, and many were able to compare mass culture with other types of culture (popular, high, folk etc) with varying degrees of success. Better answers were able to develop and discuss sociologically ideas from the item such as the view that consumers are passive and that cultural industries exist primarily to make a profit.

Families and Households

Question 04

Some students found this question challenging, being unsure of how to relate the ageing population to policies affecting families. However, there were some very good answers. Detailed knowledge of policies was not required and better answers focused on how families had been affected by policies. Many answers considered retirement ages and, for example, how this might affect grandparents as carers of grandchildren, or the policy of making social care an individual and family responsibility and the effect of this on women in the pivot or sandwich generation. There were also some good answers referring to policies in other countries, such as Singapore's "have three or more". Some answers struggled with the connection between the 'ageing population' and 'policies', sometimes suggesting policies that were in place well before there was an ageing population.

Question 05

Those answers that simply went into reasons for the changing patterns of marriage and divorce could not be credited. Popular answers used the reference in the item to 'lone parent' in both the New Right's views of inadequate socialisation, and in contrasting views of how lone parent families might be a positive experience for many children. The reference in the item to 'serial monogamy' and 'remarrying' was used by many as a basis for discussion of those children within reconstituted families and the possible difficulties of adapting to a divorce - extended family with step relatives. Less successful answers were often focused on changes in marriage and divorce rather than how these have affected the experience of childhood.

Question 06

Many more successful answers showed good knowledge of a range of issues related to gender and the family, often using the item as their starting point, and demonstrating awareness of several strands of feminism. Less successful answers provided lists of theories together with learned criticisms; such answers tended to lose sight of the question, and some also lacked any empirical evidence by for example referring to research findings and studies.

Health**Question 07**

Most students were able to successfully explain two ways, using ideas such as labelling, the medicalisation of childbirth and the sick role.

Question 08

This question was on the whole well answered, with students able to identify and develop the references in the item to "wider range of services and products" (usually seen as positive, with a postmodernist emphasis on choice) and to 'profits can conflict with people's health needs' (usually seen as negative).

Question 09

Most students were able to use a range of sociological knowledge and understanding to answer this question and to address both "health chances" and "health care" in their responses.

Wealth, Welfare and Poverty**Question 10**

A number of students were unsure of the meaning of "structural inequalities", and some discussed cultural reasons for worklessness, such as welfare dependency or a culture of poverty. There was a tendency also to interpret 'worklessness' as only unemployment.

Question 11

Some students were unsure of the term 'social democratic approach' to welfare provision but were often still able to develop answers from the item. The reference to 'the welfare state is too generous' was used to develop points from the New Right about cultures of dependency and the reference to 'all citizens' to discuss how this might reduce the stigma of receiving welfare.

Question 12

This question was answered well by most students, with accounts of Taylorism and Fordism often providing starting points for discussion of deskilling, proletarianisation, the routinisation of white-collar work, and so on.

Section B**Beliefs****Question 13**

The phrase “conservative force” was misinterpreted by a minority as referring to change. A few answers also had two ways which were almost indistinguishable, such as churches creating a sense of belonging and social solidarity. Other answers gave two examples of only one ‘way’. Most students however were able to answer the question well, by applying a range of sociological ideas from different theoretical perspectives.

Question 14

This question was generally answered well though not all used the references in the item effectively. Some students with good knowledge neglected, in their haste, to show how their answer drew from the item and so could not reach the level of credit for which their knowledge gave them the potential. For example, many students used the reference to ‘a worldview based on science and rationality’ to argue that secularisation was spreading, while the reference to ‘revitalising religious traditions’ led to discussions of fundamentalism.

Question 15

The main problem here for many was a lack of time, with some answers showing some good knowledge and understanding but being too brief and under developed to acquire many marks. Many answers were strong on examples of religious beliefs and practices related to gender, focusing on women; others outlined feminist views and compared these with those from other perspectives. The best responses however combined these two approaches and also discussed the relationship between men and religion, considering for example why men participate in religion less than women.

Global Development**Question 16**

There were some very good answers to this question, with many choosing to discuss one way in which inequalities might be being reduced and another in which they might be increasing, applying relevant theories and examples.

Question 17

This question was also answered well, on the whole, with students able to use the item to identify and discuss two ways war and conflict might affect development. Students needed to use their sociological understanding to see how the diversion of resources towards war might affect development. Too few answers used examples of recent or current wars, which might have helped them explain the points they had made.

Question 18

Many answers were in effect a comparison of modernisation and development theories with only some brief references to transnational corporations, often without adding named examples. Stronger answers went beyond the content of the item to draw in other theories and to discuss, for example, environmental impacts, gender issues, employment practices and movement of profits.

Media**Question 19**

While many students showed good knowledge of stereotypical media portrayals of women and of how they could be challenged, they were less clear on how the new media enabled challenges. Some presented two examples of new media platforms as different 'ways', and these could only be credited as one way.

Question 20

This was a well answered question, with imitation or desensitisation and catharsis or sensitisation being popular answers drawn from the item and analysed effectively, often through use of media effects models and research findings.

Question 21

Answers to this question varied in quality; the best were able to apply a range of theories, including Marxism, neo-Marxism and pluralism, to discriminate within these between selection and presentation of the news and to include relevant examples. Examples tended not to be recent (for example, the Glasgow Media Group on strikes) and relatively few answers brought in contemporary material on, for example, news on social media and globalisation.

Stratification and Differentiation**Question 22**

Some students found it difficult to identify "changes in the class structure" and therefore to explain ways in which these might affect social mobility. Answers included the growth of an underclass, which people found it hard to move out of, and the growth of middle-class occupations, creating opportunities for upward mobility into them.

Question 23

This was reasonably well answered question for which a variety of responses were made. Most students were able to identify and use the reference included in the item and to go on to analyse two problems, for example those arising from 'dual occupation households' and people 'moving between occupations' or having 'more than one occupation'.

Question 24

This question was mostly well understood, with some good answers showing evaluating skills through considering the effects of gender, ethnicity and other factors determining people's life chances, compared to social class.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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