

SOCIOLOGY

<p>Paper 2251/12 Paper 12</p>

Key messages

- On the data response **Question (1c)** encourage candidates to firstly identify an issue in the source and then to unpack/develop their point in a second sentence. Candidates should also look for common 'issues' such as if the source is outdated, adapted or is derived from official statistics.
- On **Questions (1d)** and **(1e)** a good technique is for candidates to first identify a feature of the method in question and then describe the strengths and/or limitations. For example in **(1d)** identifying that closed questions are often used in a telephone questionnaire and then describing the problem that this may not allow respondents to give depth and detail in their answers which will inhibit validity.
- On **Question (1f)** candidates should avoid evaluation as this is not required by the question which asks candidates to explain.
- Candidates should be encouraged to write extended responses (**1f, 1g** and optional **Questions 2/3 c, d** and **e**) in paragraph form to prevent distinct points overlapping or coalescing into each other.
- Encourage candidates not to waste time and effort writing extraneous detail in questions that do not require it e.g. where candidates are asked to 'identify' (**1a, 1b**) where a word or phrase will suffice.

General comments

Candidates showed a good level of engagement with the question paper and the assessment objectives. Time management appears to have been good, with only a few candidates not finishing the paper.

Many candidates showed a good knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and theory. Many applied this knowledge well to the demands of the actual questions. In essay responses the evaluation skills evidenced by some candidates were impressive, going beyond juxtaposition by using other perspectives to interrogate the view in the question.

The research methods unit was done well though the technique for answering the data response **Question (1c)** and the methods evaluation **Questions (1d)** and **(1e)** could be improved. In the optional questions **Question two** (Culture, socialisation and identity) was far more popular than **Question three** (Social inequality) and tended to be done better overall. There were very few rubric errors and non-responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Theory and Methods

Question 1

- (a) A particularly good response here with most candidates achieving full marks by correctly identifying the two years in which the highest number of people reported their health as 'very good.'
- (b) This question was done well by most candidates who identified two research methods which are useful for studying people's health, apart from questionnaires. The most common responses were interviews and surveys though any primary quantitative research method scored a mark. Candidates who did not achieve both marks did not use primary research methods but instead used sampling types, secondary data or health statistics. A few candidates erred by using questionnaires despite the question specifying this should not be given as a response.
- (c) The data analysis question drew a mixed response. Most candidates identified something creditable for this question, most commonly identifying that the sample sizes were decreasing, the

self-reported nature of the data and that the survey was only conducted on those aged 16 and over. However, some candidates did not develop their points sufficiently to gain full marks. A few candidates misunderstood the source, e.g., wrongly suggesting the research was only conducted on 16-year-olds. Some candidates put forward purely speculative points, e.g. asserted that the data lacked validity and/or reliability with no links to the data in the table.

- (d) This question asked candidates to describe two limitations of using telephone questionnaires in research. Some candidates chose to define the method in their first sentence and then go on to select appropriate aspects of the method and their limitations. Popular correct answers included the inability of the researcher to read body language, the lack of rapport and qualitative data achievable from a questionnaire format, the idea that many people may not have access to a phone or that the research may suffer if there are internet connection issues. Some candidates developed such points sociologically, but others did not explain the negative impact of their point. Time-consuming was referenced but not always unpacked. Some candidates made no link to any aspect of a telephone questionnaire and simply speculated about a lack of validity or reliability. A few candidates talked about the respondent 'filling in' the questionnaire which showed a misunderstanding of the method.
- (e) This question on the strengths and limitations of stratified sampling proved particularly challenging for many candidates. Some responses started with a definition of stratified sampling but did not then fully describe its strengths and limitations. Many candidates did not appear to fully understand stratified sampling or its possible strengths and limitations. As a result very few scored full marks. For strengths a common answer was that stratified samples are more likely to be representative and generalisable. A few candidates also alighted on the fact that stratifying a sample then enables comparisons to be made between different social groups. For limitations some candidates pointed out that a sampling frame is needed to stratify and such frames are not always available e.g. criminal gangs. Others pointed out that the process of stratifying a sample can be complex and time consuming particularly if many distinct groups are targeted. Some candidates treated stratified sampling as a research method and described the type of data that would be gained, suggesting some confusion about the distinction between sampling and research methods.
- (f) This question required candidates to explain why some sociologists prefer large-scale research. It is an extended response question and requires at least three well-developed points to score in band three. Most candidates score in bands one and two due to a lack of development. Many candidates correctly identified the preference for large scale research with structuralists and/or positivist/macro approaches. They often proceeded to link this preference to a scientific approach, quantitative data, objectivity etc. Durkheim's study on suicide featured frequently. However, such points often tended to be descriptive and did not explain the actual benefits of this approach. Better responses linked large sample sizes to representativeness and generalisability and the ability to generate substantial amounts of quantitative data to the ability to establish patterns, trends and correlations between variables. Some candidates provided vague points relating to studying lots of people and often relied upon the catch all phrase 'valid and reliable.' Candidates who scored less well made fewer than three points and these were often undeveloped or only partially developed.
- (g) The essay question focused on evaluating the extent to which ethical issues are the most important factor when planning sociological research. On the whole many candidates formulated a balanced debate with quality of development often the main differentiator. Many responses demonstrated a sound knowledge of ethical issues linked to informed consent, deception, privacy and harm. Some used famous studies such as Milgram, Ventakesh, Humphreys and Rosenthal and Jacobson to illustrate ethical issues to exceptionally beneficial effect. However, many responses listed or described ethical issues rather than stating why they are important in planning research aside from asserting that they should not be done. Several weaker candidates confused ethical issues with ethnicity and wrote about the importance of being aware of ethnicity and race in research. In evaluation, most discussed the importance of pilot studies and choice of research method, practical issues such as time and cost and theoretical issues such as the need for validity, reliability and generalisability of data and findings as potentially more important to some sociologists. Where candidates did include conclusions, often they were summative and few made judgements based on evidence presented.

Section B: Culture, identity and socialisation

Question 2

- (a) This question asked candidates to define the term 'globalisation'. Most candidates scored at least one mark. Those that achieved two marks linked the ideas of interconnectedness across the world with countries being influenced in different ways by each other. Many candidates confused globalisation with global culture or westernisation and hence were confined to one mark for giving an example.
- (b) This question required candidates to describe two agents of formal social control. The expected answers identified the government, police, prison service and armed forces and described how they control social behaviour by enacting law, sometimes by using coercion. Many candidates did not seem to understand the distinction between formal and informal control and used institutions like media and family as examples which were not creditworthy. Education, religion and the workplace do sometimes use formal control, however, in such cases credit was given for the description only if candidates linked the control to rules or laws.
- (c) Candidates found this question demanding. It asked candidates to explain the impact of canalisation on gender identity. Many candidates knew what canalisation involves – channelling children's behaviours through toys and activities – and linked the process to primary socialisation via the Ann Oakley study and went on to describe examples such as girls being given dolls and boys action figures/soldiers to play with. Weaker responses lacked discussion of the impact of this on the gender identity of girls and boys. The best answers talked about how dolls and kitchen sets prepare girls for future nurturing roles as housewives and mothers or how being encouraged to play contact sports like rugby or football encourage aggression and toughness as part of masculine identity. A few candidates wove verbal appellation and manipulation into their answers, conflating these processes with canalisation.
- (d) The eight-mark question asked candidates to explain why schools are an important agent of socialisation. Candidates seemed more confident with this question. Most referred to the hidden curriculum and sanctions/rewards, often with pertinent examples. There were sound references to functionalist and Marxist ideas. Popular points included the teaching of key social norms and values via the hidden curriculum, the regulation of behaviour and teaching of discipline via sanctions and the reinforcement of traditional gender identities. However, whilst knowledge was generally good relatively few candidates gave three or more developed points and hence few achieved top band. A few responses confused socialisation with socialising.
- (e) The essay question focused on the extent to which multiculturalism is a strength of modern industrial societies. There was a mixed response reflecting the fact that some candidates are not entirely secure in their knowledge of the concept of multiculturalism. Many responses were vague and common sense based. However, responses that scored well used some interesting, localised examples. Some also successfully applied a theoretical analysis, referring to functionalists as critics of multiculturalism. In their arguments 'for' candidates explored increased social tolerance and the many benefits of diversity in terms of cuisine, clothing, the enjoyment of festivals and learning about other ways of seeing the world. The 'against' side of the argument tended to be stronger and points raised included the inevitability of assimilation, homogenisation and loss of minority cultures, cultural conflict (with some excellent examples), the expense of supporting multifarious cultures as well as the loss of an overarching host culture to provide foundational norms and values for all. Some candidates were confused in terms of seeing assimilation and global culture as aspects of multiculturalism. A good range of well-developed points supported with evidence allowed some candidates to achieve at least level three if not level four.

Section C: Social Inequality

Question 3

- (a) This question on 'vertical segregation' was not answered well. Candidates who achieved both marks defined vertical segregation in terms of unequal positioning of a group within an organisational hierarchy. Most understood and explained the concept in terms of gender discrimination in the workplace. Answers which only scored one mark lacked one of the two definitional elements or simply gave an example with no definition.

- (b) There was generally a good response to this question which asked candidates to describe two ways in which the welfare state helps individuals. Common correct answers included helping the unemployed through benefits, helping the elderly with pensions and helping those in poverty in terms of the provision of free education and healthcare. Candidates who scored full marks unpacked each point with a little further information – for example that free education allowed those living in poverty the chance to achieve qualifications and gain social mobility. Those who did not achieve full marks either identified one feature or identified two but left one or both undeveloped.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain how some ethnic minority groups are scapegoated in society. It was challenging for many candidates. The best answers tended to focus on immigrants being blamed for taking jobs from the host community, minorities being blamed for crime – Hall’s study of mugging featured in some answers as well as contemporary examples of African Americans or Muslims being blamed for crimes and being targeted by police as a result. Some successfully developed Marxist points about scapegoating creating false consciousness and division amongst the working class. Others linked labelling of groups in the media as integral to the scapegoating process. Some knew what scapegoating was and provided a definition in terms of ethnic minorities being blamed for things that are not their fault. But many did not offer any examples of such blaming and drifted into a generic discussion of racial inequalities which were frequently not creditworthy in terms of the question.
- (d) This question asked candidates to explain why ascribed status can affect a person’s life chances. There were some good responses that referenced how being born into a certain caste, social class, gender or ethnicity can affect chances for education, social mobility, life expectancy etc. Theories such as functionalism, Marxism and feminism were often successfully brought into answers. Some responses were narrow in range – for example focusing exclusively on social class – whilst others made points that were only partially developed. A few candidates confused ascribed with achieved status.
- (e) The essay question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which gender is the most influential factor in social inequality. It was accessible with most candidates giving a balanced argument with several points made on each side. Many responses focused on rehearsing feminist arguments about patriarchy, the dual and triple burden, domestic violence, the glass ceiling, vertical and horizontal segregation and inequalities in education. There was some excellent conceptual and theoretical knowledge on show. In terms of arguments against many candidates pointed out the legal gains made by women in many countries, more joint conjugal roles within families and improvements within education and the workplace. Others made arguments that social class, age and ethnicity were more important than gender in understanding social inequality today. Candidates who scored less well offered fewer points and often offered minimal evidence in development of those points. Whilst a few responses addressed the ‘to what extent’ and provided focused conclusions, these tended to be in the minority.

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<p>Paper 2251/22 Paper 22</p>

Key messages

Candidates' knowledge of definitions could have been better. A good understanding of key terms would enable candidates to not only obtain full marks in **part (a)** questions, but would also help them to understand key terminology in other questions.

Question (e) requires a debate – this means there needs to be developed points both for and against, with a conclusion. Some one-sided **(e)** answers were seen which consequently caps the marks awarded.

Candidates should be encouraged to show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This approach allowed a lot of candidates to achieve good marks in this examination series. However, some candidates could only score lower marks as their answers tended to be based on common sense rather than Sociology.

Candidates should spend time thinking about what the questions are asking and planning answers to those longer questions before they start to write – this is particularly important in the 15-mark **part (e)** essay questions to ensure that candidates remain focused on the specific demands of the question set.

Some candidates are not using paragraphs in the longer responses, making it difficult for Examiners to see where points begin and end. A 'point per paragraph' structure is therefore recommended. Candidates would benefit from essay writing skills and techniques for the **part (e)** questions as 'range' and 'development' are key factors.

Candidates should be encouraged to use the marks per question as guidance for how much should be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. At times, for example, candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question worth 6 marks as for a **part (e)** question worth 15. Time management skills and regular practice of timed examination questions in the classroom will really help with this.

Command words are crucial. In the **part (b)** questions, for example, some answers were insufficiently developed (the command word is to 'describe'). Similar issues were seen in **parts (c), (d)** and **(e)**. Some training in the classroom into the requirements of the various command words would prove beneficial.

General comments

Many responses showed a generally good level of engagement with the question paper and the assessment objectives. Time management appears to have been good with very few candidates who did not manage to finish the paper. Some candidates were enumerating points which is helpful, though some candidates did not write in paragraphs in longer essay-style questions. The base understanding of the topics was good. There were very few very rubric errors or non-responses. Examiners felt that the examination paper was accessible to all and performed well.

Section A (Family) was the most popular option, followed by **Section B** (Education) and **Section C** (Crime). The least answered option was **Section D** (Media).

Many candidates successfully used relevant contemporary, global and localised examples alongside the more traditional 'textbook' evidence in order to justify and substantiate several of the points made. This demonstrated both sociological knowledge and the ability to apply sociological concepts and theory to the real world and so should be encouraged.

Very few rubric errors at all were seen this examination session, allowing most candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number or incorrectly numbered their answers, however, and centres would be advised to ensure candidates are aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

In the **part (a)** question, candidates should look to include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a really useful way of adding a second element to an answer and are thus to be encouraged.

Part (b) needs **two** distinctly different points with some development – candidates should separate these and label them clearly.

In **part (c)** questions candidates should make more than two evidenced and developed sociological points.

For **part (d)** candidates should adopt a similar approach as for **(c)** but need to develop ideas further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts, quality of response and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** question.

In terms of the 15-mark **part (e)** question, candidates should be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Candidates should aim for three developed points for and three developed points against the claim in the question. There also needs to be a well-focused conclusion that makes a supported judgement on the claim in the question. Each point made should be directly focused upon what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Family

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates achieved one rather than two marks with some confusion between the concepts of gender and biological sex.
- (b) The question was answered well by the vast majority of the candidates and many responses were credited with full marks. Practical support such as taking care of children while the parents are at work, emotional support such as giving advice and helping in the socialisation of their grandchildren, as well as financial support were cited most commonly. A few weaker answers lacked development and some misinterpretations of the question were seen.
- (c) There was a diversity of ideas seen here with some good responses that mainly referenced the decline of extended family, changes in gender roles and the formation of the privatised nuclear family. Some candidates conflated urbanisation with secularisation and were hence not fully focused on question. Some responses were narrow in range, for example giving only one reason (often well explained). A common error was to describe traditional societies without making it relevant to the question.
- (d) A wide range of responses were seen for this question. The best answers homed in on particular family functions, e.g. socialisation, reproduction, stabilisation of adult personalities and then focused on why these functions had been lost, i.e. the introduction of other agencies, cost of children etc. Good use was made of functionalism, feminism and The New Right in the strongest answers. Some answers were too vague, i.e. mentioning divorce, and did not focus sufficiently on the question which was about 'functions'.
- (e) Overall, this question was answered well with the majority of the candidates presenting balanced answers and offering a range of valid arguments for both sides of the debate. To argue 'for' the family being patriarchal, most responses discussed segregated conjugal roles linking this to men having more power as the breadwinners, the dual burden/triple shift women have, gender role socialisation, domestic violence and inequalities in male and female education among other factors. The best answers provided developed points with clear links to the question throughout. For evaluation, many candidates considered the changing norms and values in society, such as a

shift to symmetrical families, a higher level of financial independence of women and thus more decision-making power, as well as using examples of different ethnicities such as the matrifocal Afro-Caribbean family. There were some good theoretical references to feminism, Marxism and functionalism and studies such as Oakley and Dobash and Dobash.

Section B: Education

Question 2

- (a) This question was well answered with most candidates achieving two marks by linking to the idea of a group of students and the development of a set of norms and values that are in opposition to those of the school. Where candidates only scored one mark it was usually due to them repeating the term 'sub-culture' from the question without any additional knowledge.
- (b) While some candidates answered the question correctly by identifying and describing two features of comprehensive schools, such as schools that are not selective, schools that provide equality for all their students, schools that have a local catchment area and schools that are free. Other responses incorrectly described other types of schools and and/or provided vague and/or underdeveloped points about schools generally that could not score full marks e.g. 'don't have many resources'.
- (c) Lots of examples were given to show how what is being taught in schools is linked to socially acceptable behaviour. Weaker responses left those links implicit or made points that worked but did not develop them to show what was being taught or how it prepared candidates for social expectations. The better answers were more specific in terms of how social expectations are taught, considering factors such as norms and values imparted through the hidden curriculum, positive and negative sanctions, gender roles and teacher labelling. A common error here was to talk about the peer group or peer pressure rather than schools.
- (d) This theoretical question gained mixed responses that showed the full range of knowledge about Marxism and social control. Most candidates linked Marxism with the class divide and used terms such as 'capitalist', 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat' correctly. At the top end candidates gave sophisticated accounts of false consciousness and indoctrination via education as an example of Althusser's ISA's. A few candidates confused the working class and middle class and a minority were achieved only band one as answers were limited to social control without considering the Marxist perspective.
- (e) Overall, the majority of the candidates provided balanced and evaluative answers, offering a range of valid arguments for both sides of the debate. To argue 'for' the statement, candidates discussed factors such as racism and discrimination, teacher stereotypes and labelling and/or the ethnocentric curriculum. Many gave specific examples, referring to different ethnicities such as the Chinese, Pakistani and/or Afro-Caribbean which were often well substantiated with sociological studies e.g. Archer. The evaluation points on the 'against' side were most commonly related to other factors that may also influence educational achievement other than ethnicity, such as gender, social class and/or home factors. Some candidates demonstrated good sociological knowledge but could not be fully credited for it as they did not sufficiently focus on the 'educational achievement' part of the question.

Section C: Crime, deviance and social control

Question 3

- (a) Some clear responses were seen with good specific examples of crime prevention e.g. surveillance – others provided partial responses such as 'stop crime'. A number of responses referenced deterrence measures which were duly credited.
- (b) This was a very well answered question, with candidates demonstrating their knowledge of cybercrime. Generally most answers scored highly with hacking, cyber bullying, cyber terrorism and identity theft used frequently.
- (c) Typically, candidates referred to the young and the elderly within their responses. Many candidates discussed the ageing population in Japan with the increase in crime committed by the elderly and how young people are most likely to commit crime for various reasons, e.g. status frustration,

thrills, relative deprivation. It was a well answered question that allowed candidates to engage sociologically.

- (d) This question provoked a range of interesting and pertinent answers from candidates. Social class, ethnicity and age were discussed in the majority of responses. A few answers considered different types of masculinity to good effect also. While the better answers referred to some theory, most often Marxism, the weaker responses offered general points and/or did not link points to males specifically and/or referred to female crime as well.
- (e) The core elements of labelling theory as an explanation for crime and deviance were generally well understood by most candidates. Some candidates made effective links to Cohen's moral panic theory and Lea and Young's deviancy amplification theory. Concepts such as targeting, master status and the self-fulfilling prophecy were well integrated. However, a common issue was that candidates often simply described the various facets of the theory (master status, self-fulfilling prophecy, deviant career etc.) without explaining why it is a good explanation for crime. Many candidates took a deterministic view suggesting that once an individual is labelled then the future is inevitable. Common arguments against the claim in the question included Merton's strain theory, Cohen's status frustration, material deprivation and Marxism – although sometimes candidates coalesced elements of these theories into labelling theory itself. Some candidates referred to the self-negating prophecy whilst others used gender, social class and ethnicity as foci for counterpoints against labelling theory. A few candidates took a largely descriptive tour of multiple theories and consequently achieved limited success.

Section D: Media

Question 4

- (a) A number of candidates who opted to answer this question identified the term 'agenda setting' correctly, linking it to the media making some topics more important than others. The weaker answers presented vague definitions that scored one mark.
- (b) This question required candidates to provide examples of media gatekeeping. It drew some interesting answers including censorship, paywalls, the watershed, news editors/agenda setting.
- (c) This question was well done in the main; ideas such as political bias, government policies and censorship were frequently used alongside the use of allegedly 'fake' materials to persuade British politicians and the public to support the invasion of Iraq. Examples like Fox News and Nazi Germany often substantiated the points made as well as reference to censorship of the news in more controlled societies such as North Korea and China. The least successful answers lacked examples and sometimes confused propaganda with persuasive advertising techniques, e.g. for beauty products.
- (d) A few candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the question and while most answers correctly stated why advertising was used, many lacked clear links to media content. Better responses discussed new media and pop ups through the use of cookies, product placement, sponsorship of TV programmes and films and the use of stereotypes, e.g. in adverts targeted at children. Candidates who scored less well tended to lack full development of their points.
- (e) Relatively few candidates showed a good understanding of the uses and gratifications model. Some candidates linked it with the pluralist perspective and identified uses such as entertainment, personal relationships, information/news etc. However, most did not unpack these ideas in sufficient detail to score highly. The most frequent evaluation points used were other models of media effects such as the hypodermic syringe model, active audience or the cultural effects theory.