

# SOCIOLOGY

---

Paper 2251/12  
Paper 12

## Key Messages

- Candidates need to improve their ability to interpret data, charts and diagrams.
- Centres can improve candidates' performance by ensuring that responses present a balanced answer to **Questions 1(g), 2(e) and 3(e)**.
- Candidates should take note of the command words in the question and have a clear understanding of their meaning.
- Candidates need to understand the difference between reliable and valid and avoid using them interchangeably.

## General Comments

Candidates made relatively few rubric errors and on the whole coped well with the new format of the examination. There was good evidence of strong knowledge of key terms and of the strengths and limitations of the various sociological methods.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### *Section A*

#### **Question 1**

- (a) This question proved a challenge for many candidates who did not fully understand the term trend in the question. Candidates needed to identify the changes that had taken place between 1950 and 2010. Too often candidates selected a single item of data from a single year without giving any notion of a trend. Those who did answer well generally identified a falling birth rate and an aging population as two trends.
- (b) Many candidates identified census, survey, interview and questionnaires as appropriate methods for collecting population data, others made the error of stating official statistics as a method.
- (c) Many candidates struggled with the need to apply their knowledge to interpreting the data in this question. Candidates should have applied the command 'using source A...' in their answer.
- (d) On the whole candidates were able to identify two strengths of field experiments. A minority of the responses confused field and lab experiments, others seemed to believe a field experiment was some type of sampling method. Better responses pointed to the benefits of the natural setting and avoided the researcher effect.
- (e) Generally this was answered very well. Few candidates were unable to identify strengths and limitations of primary data. There was an assumption by many candidates that primary data was more up to date, whilst this is not necessarily the case many candidates developed this point well enough to gain credit. Where candidates were less successful was where they failed to develop their points about strengths and limitations.

- (f) Many candidates failed to address the question. Instead they listed the strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative methods; ignoring reliability.
- (g) This was answered well for the most part; most candidates had some notion of the debate between positivists and interpretivist. These names were frequently seen. Where candidates could improve is by not accepting that sociology can't be scientific and only addressing the interpretivist critique of the positivists in their response. Generally there was greater awareness of the interpretivist wish to establish meaning than the positivists wish to establish social facts.

### **Section B**

#### **Question 2**

- (a) The majority of candidates gave a clear definition of identity. Some confused identity with image in the sense of a fashion style, but this was a minority.
- (b) This was well answered; most candidates were able to offer at least one way in which gender identity was reinforced. The most common responses were with reference to canalisation and manipulation.
- (c) Candidates were able to identify the need for acceptance, fear of rejection or ostracism as well as a need to conform as important factors in the peer group's contribution to secondary socialisation. Most focused on peers in the youth stage of life. Few looked at peers in the older age groups like work mates.
- (d) Many candidates were aware of examples of inadequate socialisation but tended to focus on the impact on the individual rather than for society. Better responses did look at the likelihood of increased levels of crime and deviance. Some considered the impact on universal values and social cohesion. A minority looked at the New Right view that those with no father figure were inadequately socialised.
- (e) Candidates considered the nature vs nurture debate in response to this question. Where candidates did less well was where they decided to discount the nature argument and only discuss the nurture side of the argument. Many candidates were well versed in evidence to support the nurture debate pointing to evidence of feral children and the relative nature of norms and values as well as differences in gender identity.

#### **Question 3**

- (a) Most candidates were able to give at least a partial definition of this term some definitions lacked full development.
- (b) This was well answered. Candidates frequently named age or ethnicity, social class and caste as well as the occasional candidate writing about the feudal system. Most answers were developed although a minority of candidates answered with one word statements like 'class' without any development.
- (c) Most candidates were able to access this question at some level. The most common responses focused on the links between ascribe characteristics and wealth, and the impact of wealth on life chances. Few candidates considered other factors that might go with ascribed status such as authority.
- (d) Many candidates failed to make the link between power and discrimination. Arguments tended to be simplistic and focused on discrimination without discussing power. Better responses looked at a wide range of perspectives on power; particularly Marxist and feminist interpretations.
- (e) This was very well answered. Few candidates lacked at least some knowledge of patriarchy and most were able to give examples of gender inequality. Candidates could have improved by ensuring they focused on modern industrial society rather than on traditional societies.

# SOCIOLOGY

---

Paper 2251/13

Paper 13

## Key Messages

- Candidates need to improve their ability to interpret data, charts and diagrams.
- Centres can improve candidates' performance by ensuring that candidates understand that they must present a balanced response to questions such as **1(g)**, **2(e)** and **3(e)**.
- Candidates can improve by ensuring they look carefully at the command words in the question.
- Candidates need to have a clear understanding of the difference between reliable and valid; and avoid using them interchangeably.

## General Comments

Candidates often showed a very good grasp of key terms and strengths and limitations of various aspects of sociological research. There was good knowledge shown; nevertheless candidates need to develop the application of their knowledge. Where a question asks candidates to use the data or materials provided they should be encouraged to do so.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### *Section A*

#### **Question 1**

- (a) Generally candidates answered this well. Few found any difficulty in selecting the appropriate data from source A.
- (b) The most commonly identified methods being interview, survey or questionnaire. A common misconception was that official statistics is a method rather than a type of evidence.
- (c) Many candidates were able to suggest reasons why quantitative data may not be valid. Few made any use of the data provided. There was a clear tendency to ignore the question instruction 'using information from source A...' Candidates must be encouraged to use the data they are provided with to support their answers.
- (d) A minority of candidates confused pilot study with sampling. The most common advantage given was to improve the research by identify potential errors prior to conducting the full scale research.
- (e) Candidates were clearly well prepared for this style of question. The most successful answers clearly separated out the strengths and limitations in their responses.
- (f) Whilst candidates generally showed an awareness of the methods favoured by interpretivist in their response to this question and understood what qualitative data is, many struggled to explain the theoretical perspectives behind the interpretivist's preferences.
- (g) Generally candidates answered this question well, many choosing to draw on their knowledge of official crime statistics and the 'dark figure' of crime to answer this question. Whilst this was a valid point to make those who focused solely on crime statistics, ignoring other types of official statistics and other issues like political interference and bias did less well than they might. Candidates need

to look at the benefits of official statistics; ignoring benefits like the scale of the data collection and extensive research funding by the government. Some candidates made good use of Durkheim's study of suicide to support their answers.

### **Section B**

#### **Question 2**

- (a) Most candidates had a sound understanding of this term.
- (b) For the most part candidates answered this question well. Most candidates focused on socialisation but others recognised that culture could be passed on through tradition and cultural artefacts.
- (c) Many candidates had a clear understanding of the key terms. Better answers identified the contention between the two.
- (d) Many candidates had a good understanding of how sub-cultures could arise. References being made most frequently to acts of rebellion and status frustration.
- (e) There was a recognition that sub-cultures could fit within the norms and values of society and were therefore not necessarily non-conformist, whilst others pointed to evidence of criminal sub-cultures and cultures of poverty as evidence of non-conformity. Relatively few candidates presented both sides of the argument.

#### **Question 3**

- (a) This term was well understood; the majority of candidates giving a full definition.
- (b) Candidates generally identified the gender pay gap as a type of discrimination and the failure to secure promotion was another commonly identified discriminator.
- (c) Many candidates did not fully understand this term; weaker responses stated that the reserve army of labour was in some way linked to the military. Better responses stated that this was a pool of labour that could be called on in an emergency, many referring to the 'call up' of women in times of conflict. Few addressed the full issue of the benefit of the reserve army of labour for modern industrial societies. Some stronger responses drew on their understanding of the Marxist and feminist perspectives to explain that the reserve army of labour may not benefit the whole of society but only certain elements of it, and that it was in fact evidence of exploitation.
- (d) In response to this question many candidates highlighted that the law may be ignored if it is not supported by the norms and values of the society. Frequently candidates identified how employers may overcome equality legislation by failing to shortlist applicants for jobs with social characteristics they wished to avoid, or that potential employees were not 'what the employer was looking for' and that this type of discrimination was difficult to prove. Many answers focused solely on gender equality and it would have been better had candidates taken a wider view of the question. Some candidates did refer to institutional racism but very few considered ageism and individuals being forced into retirement or redundancy because of their age.
- (e) Candidates were generally able to point to a variety of factors which restricted female opportunities. Many were also able to explain areas where opportunities had improved. A common error was not to focus on modern industrial societies.

# SOCIOLOGY

---

Paper 2251/22

Paper 22

## Key Messages

Centres are to be congratulated on the quality of work produced by candidates in the new assessment for iGCSE/O Level Sociology. A lot of excellent responses were seen demonstrating a real engagement with the issues and a clear consideration of the effects of changes on society. Topical and local examples were very well used to substantiate points made and these complimented more traditional sociological studies, theories and concepts well.

Specific messages that should help Centres to effectively prepare their candidates for the examination:

- Prepare the candidates for the exam by practising lots of exam style questions and emphasise how to make the point and develop it without going into too much detail. Where relevant refer to sociological terminology and concepts (using the specific vocabulary) as this will raise the overall quality of the answer.
- Only use sociological sources / references when candidates are certain of the material they are citing and where it is relevant to the question.
- Do not repeat questions in the answer or define terms in the question – get to the point and focus on making material relevant to the set question.
- On part (e) questions, ensure that candidates have a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. This needs to include a range of points for each side (look for a minimum of 3 for and 3 against) that are well developed and evidence based.

## General Comments

In general there appeared to be the full range of quality of answers on the paper. Very few rubric errors were seen. The most popular questions answered by candidates appeared to be on the family, crime and education topics with a lesser number answering on the media.

It was pleasing how many candidates were well prepared for the new 15 mark questions. There were many essays of appropriate length covering a range of points and with a good understanding of different sides of the issue in question. Candidates needed to develop points, to have a balanced answer covering both 'for' and 'against' arguments in the question. A considered conclusion should also be included by candidates in the 15 mark question.

Some candidates wrote long and unnecessary introductions which did not get marks; for example, on 1(e) there were sometimes lengthy accounts of how society used to be before answering the question by discussing changes.

Candidates should be encouraged to organise their longer answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea. They should also be discouraged from trying to apply named sociologists, theories or concepts when these are not relevant to the question.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) Many candidates did not produce a clear definition but gained some credit by referring to growth of cities or to migration from rural areas. Some answers failed to gain credit because they used the term 'urban' without further explanation.
- (b) There was uncertainty with some candidates as to what constituted a demographic trend, and some made wrong choices in referring to, for example, divorce, independence of women, modernisation and industrialisation. Answers needed to focus on population trends to be credited i.e. the falling death rate.
- (c) There were many good answers here that focused on geographical and social mobility, breakdown of communities and extended families and the development of dual worker families with shared roles.
- (d) This was a well answered question with good understanding of factors that have led to rising life expectancy and thus to an ageing population; some of the best answers also recognised the importance of declining birth rates and reasons for this. A minority did not understand the question and just discussed elderly people in society.
- (e) Generally well answered with candidates able to take a balanced view of changes to the instrumental and expressive roles, with some of the best answers also looking at the roles of grandparents and children and the way these roles have also changed. Lots of good references to new men, symmetrical families and joint conjugal roles were seen. Some candidates tended to focus on functions of families rather than roles within families. There was a tendency to include too much background information on how things used to be which was not the focus of the question. A number of candidates used discussion about patriarchy, triple shift, domestic violence, Feminism etc. to counter balance the argument with the best candidates recognising that any changes are culture/context specific.

#### **Question 2**

- (a) Answered well on the whole although some candidates simply copied the term 'single sex school' from the question and thus were not credited.
- (b) Some answers were general and could be applied to either sex – candidates need to focus on the specific demands of the question. However, over all this was a very well answered question with a lot of relevant strategies being discussed such as increasing male role models in Schools, segregated gender teaching, use of competition and sports to motivate boys and harsher sanctions and discipline for male candidates.
- (c) Most candidates wrote reasonable answers but few were able to unpack in detail what the terms specifically meant. There was some confusion as to whether informal education happened in Schools, and some thought the hidden curriculum was part of formal education. On the whole, though, candidates were aware of the differences between these two types of education and used good examples to substantiate the points made i.e. location, assessment, content etc. More range of ideas here would have been beneficial for candidates.
- (d) This was a generally well answered question that allowed candidates to use a range of different ideas and examples. Good answers often referred to gender socialisation or stereotyping, teacher/parent expectations and peer pressure as reasons for differential subject choice. Some answers diverted into discussions about the motivation or behaviour of boys meaning the answer started to lose focus.

- (e) There were some misunderstandings about types of Schools e.g. grammar Schools as fee paying but overall candidates used a wide range of different types of Schools to illustrate their answers. The best answers referred to specific types of Schools and their effects on life chances rather than just talking generically. Better answers were supported with theory and empirical evidence on both sides of the debate i.e. social class and Marxism. There was little reflecting contemporary issues such as academies and cultural and gender issues. Some candidates found it difficult to distinguish between Schools and social classes meaning answers were sometimes a little muddled. The best answers referred to the difference in private and state/public Schools and the difference of opportunities available. Meritocratic Schooling and individual ability was offered as evaluation. A number of candidates again did not offer any evaluation and capped the number of marks that they could be awarded. Some candidates referred to long descriptions of different types of School but did not clearly develop this to explain why this affects life chances and instead became descriptive.

### Question 3

- (a) Candidates had to understand the term 'deterrent', and explain it as a form of punishment. Many simply used the term deterrent in the answer e.g. prison is a form of deterrent for crime, thereby not scoring highly. It is crucial that all terms in the specification are learnt to ensure candidates can fully access these part (a) questions.
- (b) Generally well done, with most answers referring to fines and community service, though some included less obvious methods such as ostracism or amputation of hands. A good range of relevant knowledge was displayed here.
- (c) The term victim survey was generally understood but some candidates found the 'how used' aspect of the question challenging and may not have included material that could have gained credit (e.g. some of the methodological advantages or disadvantages). Examples of victim surveys i.e. national (BCS) and local would also be useful to aid candidates in their discussion. Some confused the method with self report studies and thus did not score highly.
- (d) This was well done on the whole, although some candidates clearly did not understand the term 'dark figure of crime', referring to crimes committed at night time or by people in the shadows etc. Those that knew the term typically discussed reasons for the non-reporting of certain types of crimes and the effects of this on the statistics. The better candidates also discussed the role of the police in the non-recording of some crimes as well. Some good references to state interference, police targeting and white collar crime, with theoretical linkage to Marxism.
- (e) There was good understanding of some of the advantages and disadvantages of prison seen in candidate's answers here; the best answers also included informed discussion of alternatives to prison in their evaluation. A few candidates failed to look at the problems with prisons as a formal agent of social control, giving a one sided response that was capped at 8 marks. Lots of thoughtful responses to the question were seen that made good use of sociological concepts and evidence.

### Question 4

- (a) Candidates who did not get both marks had often explained 'secondary' without also explaining 'socialisation' in terms of, for example, learning norms and values or vice versa.
- (b) Most answers were able to gain marks by discussing stereotypes such as the muscular hero or hen-pecked husband. These were typically well substantiated with examples.
- (c) Some candidates confused working class and middle class but the majority had a clear understanding of the media's representation of the working classes. Interestingly, both positive (community spirited, hardworking) and negative (criminals, scroungers) were referred to – both were credited.
- (d) There were some good answers, often drawing on effects models, but disappointingly little on social media and the decline of other agencies of secondary socialisation. When referred to, discussion of the increasingly prolific role of the new media in society was excellent. Agenda setting, moral panics and gender stereotyping were also all used well by a number of candidates to add range and depth to their answers.

Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level  
2251 Sociology June 2015  
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

There were some answers that focused on age restrictions e.g. for watching films, censorship etc. Most listed age groups and types of media content that appealed to them, producing answers that gained some credit but were limited sociologically. Better answers compared age to factors such as gender, ethnicity, social class, individual choice and access. The best answers used the new media (issues surrounding interactivity and convergence) and the digital divide to really engage with sociological concepts within their answers. A few one sided answers were again seen here and were capped at 8 marks.



# SOCIOLOGY

---

Paper 2251/23

Paper 23

## Key Messages

Centres are to be congratulated on the quality of work produced by candidates in the new assessment for iGCSE/O Level Sociology. A lot of excellent responses were seen demonstrating a real engagement with the issues and a clear consideration of the effects of changes on society. Topical and local examples were very well used to substantiate points made and these complimented more traditional sociological studies, theories and concepts well.

Below are some specific messages that should help Centres to effectively prepare their candidates for the examination:

- Prepare the candidates for the exam by practising lots of exam style questions and emphasise how to make the point and develop it without going into too much detail. Where relevant refer to sociological terminology and concepts (using the specific vocabulary) as this will raise the overall quality of the answer.
- Only use sociological sources / references when candidates are certain of the material they are citing and where it is relevant to the question.
- Do not repeat the question in the answer. Ensure the response is to the point and focuses on making material relevant to the set question.
- Ensure candidates substantiate their work with evidence.
- On part (e) questions, ensure that candidates have a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. This needs to include a range of points for each side (look for a minimum of 3 for and 3 against) that are well developed and evidence based.

## General Comments

In general there appeared to be the full range of quality of answers on the paper. Very few rubric errors were seen. The most popular questions answered by candidates appeared to be on the family, crime and education topics with a lesser number answering on the media.

It was pleasing how many candidates were well prepared for the new 15 mark questions. There were many essays of appropriate length covering a range of points and with a good understanding of different sides of the issue in question. Guidance could be given to encourage candidates to develop points to have balanced answers covering both 'for' and 'against' arguments. A considered conclusion should also be included by candidates in the 15 mark question.

Some candidates wrote long and unnecessary introductions which did not get marks; for example, on **1(e)** there were sometimes lengthy accounts of how society used to be before answering the question by discussing changes.

Candidates should be encouraged to organise their longer answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea. They should also be discouraged from trying to apply named sociologists, theories or concepts when these are not relevant to the question.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to give a clear and accurate definition of the 'same sex family' and many used recent examples and legislation well in their definition.
- (b) There was a wide variety of responses seen here with some candidates not clear on what was meant by an alternative to the family. The best answers referred to friends, shared households and communes as examples.
- (c) There were many good responses here that focused on specific functions of the family and linked well with Functionalist theory and sociological concepts. Well chosen examples helped to substantiate the points made.
- (d) This was a well answered question with good understanding shown of factors that have led to a decline in the popularity of marriage. Most often seen were secularisation, high divorce rates and the changing roles of women. Some candidates evaluated the question and talked about how marriage was still popular – this was not credited. It is crucial that candidates remain focused on the specific question being answered.
- (e) This produced very mixed responses. The best answers focused on specific examples and elaborated with examples and evidence. Most frequently discussed were Asian extended families and Afro-Caribbean matrifocal families. Issues surrounding patriarchy were also used well by many candidates.

#### Question 2

- (a) Answered well on the whole although some candidates simply copied the term 'anti school' from the question and thus were not credited.
- (b) This question was typically really well answered with some clear and distinct examples given such as dress code, attitude to authority and value placed on education.
- (c) Most candidates explained the concept well with some useful examples. Peer pressure, negative sanctions, resistance to femininity and lack of male teacher role models were all used well.
- (d) This was a generally well answered question that allowed candidates to use a range of different ideas and examples. Most chose to focus on issues of class, ethnicity and wealth in their responses and used both positive and negative examples. Some good use was made of local examples resulting in a set of varied and relevant answers. The best answers combined examples with sociological theory, concepts and evidence i.e. material/cultural deprivation, gang culture, value placed on education.
- (e) Some candidates produced a one sided answer here that did not consider how ethnic minorities were not disadvantaged in education-this was capped at 8 marks. Many candidates referred to ideas such as lack of ethnic minority teachers, labelling theory, institutional racism and the ethnocentric curriculum to evidence their answers. In evaluation, anti-discrimination legislation, government initiatives were discussed alongside factors such as social class and gender. It was typically a well answered question – candidates would be advised, however, to ensure that points made are fully developed and a clear conclusion is drawn.

#### Question 3

- (a) Many candidates had no clear understanding of the term 'moral panic', or were unable to explain it other than as people panicking. The better responses considered the role of the media in terms of exaggeration and the public's reaction to this. It is crucial that all terms in the syllabus are learnt to ensure candidates can fully access these part (a) questions.
- (b) Generally very well done with most candidates clearly understanding the types of crimes associated with young people. Wholly generic answers such as murder, however, were not credited. Candidates should ensure that they are clearly focused on the specific issues in the question in their responses.

- (c) There were some excellent answers seen to this question whereby candidates engaged sociologically and conceptually to produce some first rate answers. Topical examples were really well used and candidates should be encouraged to utilise contemporary and local issues in evidencing their ideas.
- (d) Most candidates were able to access this question; the distinguisher was in the level of sociology used in the responses. Some merely answered it in terms of young people commit most crime so they get caught more whereas those at the top end were able to integrate ideas about stereotyping, labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy etc. A minority of candidates also made excellent use of Marxist theory and power/scapegoating. The level of sociological engagement here was first rate.
- (e) Some candidates wrote a largely descriptive response here that looked at what types of crimes were committed by what age group. Others used sociological theory such as status frustration, labelling and postmodernism to produce an excellent response. In evaluation, candidates typically discussed issues of class, ethnicity and gender as alternatives to age. This was largely done very well.

#### Question 4

- (a) The best responses recognised the two way communication process and used examples such as Facebook and twitter.
- (b) Most responses were able to gain marks by discussing old and new media. The digital divide was discussed by the better candidates.
- (c) Most candidates were able to access this question but a number produced descriptive and simplistic responses that did not engage sociologically or conceptually. The better responses made use of effects theories and referred to specific examples of the media having negative effects on the audience e.g. body image, violence etc.
- (d) This was not well answered on the whole with too many candidates adopting a common sense approach. The better responses looked at interactivity, citizen journalism, the Internet, globalisation and convergence.
- (e) This question differentiated really well between candidates, allowing most to access the question well. Disappointingly, some did not appear to know the difference between traditional media and new technologies and such answers were very vague and confused. Stronger responses looked at the changing role of the media in terms of audience power but also considered in evaluation how the media still has control and power. Marxist theory was used particularly well by some candidates here. A few one sided answers were again seen here and were capped at 8 marks.