# AQA

# AS LEVEL

# SOCIOLOGY

7191/2 Research methods and topics in Sociology
Report on the Examination

7191/2
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**General Comments**

The majority of students wrote answers of an appropriate length and managed their time well. The exam paper was fair whilst offering an appropriate level of challenge.

There were still a significant number of rubric infringements, mostly comprising students answering more than one section B topic, either answering all the questions from all the topics in section B or a random selection of them.

Overall students coped with the examination well, though there are some generic areas that could be a focus for improvement:

1.  The 'outline **three**' 6 mark question (the third question in every topic area). Students could easily improve outcomes on this question by realising the need to briefly (eg a line or so) expand upon the criticism / feature etc being outlined.

2.  The 'outline and explain **two**' 10 mark question (the fourth question in every topic area). Here students would benefit more if an explicit identification of a way / reason / factor was made, then leading to an explanation of it, making the student's answer more cogent.

**Section A: Research Methods**

**Question 1**

Students generally understood the difference between primary and secondary data. Some were less adept at identifying the advantages of such data. Students who claimed that primary sources were more valid; reliable; representative were required to explain how this is the case to gain credit as such qualities could equally be a feature of secondary sources of data. More successful responses were able to use the fact that the researcher was in control over the entirety of the research process to formulate effective answers.

**Question 2**

This was a question that many students found straightforward to engage with. The most popular approach to this question was to begin with the more unique issues relevant to covert observation – which were the ethical problems relating to consent, the right to withdraw and so on. Some students ran out of steam at this point but better informed students were able to raise issues to do with reliability relating to repeating the observation, representativeness concerning small sample sizes and validity regarding ease of recording data. Some students were able to place the above in the positivist anti positivist perspectives debate and gained credit for this. One issue for students with good knowledge of the topic was the application challenge of not drifting into talking about advantages rather than disadvantages, which unless used evaluatively could not gain credit.

**Section B**

**Topic B1 Culture and identity**

This topic was answered by very few students.

**Question 3**

The majority of answers were able to manage the notion of a stereotype as applying to a group and being generalised. Labelling of a group was one common way this was done. If only the group or the generalised aspect was featured in the answer a partial mark was given.

**Question 4**

This question was answered in the main successfully and most answers went down the route of sexuality being liable to be subject to various forms of discrimination. One limitation to the effectiveness of student responses was to focus overly on gender and gender identity as opposed to sexuality.

**Question 5**

Many students struggled with this question, with the discriminating factor being whether the students had any knowledge of postmodernism or not. Those that did were able to use a wide variety of features such as pick and mix / increased choice / hybridity etc to gain credit – the mark scheme was quite generous here. It is worth noting that the students who did this and did not receive full marks mostly did not add a line or so to explain the meaning of the feature so leaving the point undeveloped. If this was the case they received a partial mark.

**Question 6**

Students found this question difficult. The challenge to identify a change in work / working arrangements and then make a suggestion as to how that change might have impacted on how a group / individual may see themselves or those around them proved a step too far for many. Answers tended to make an attempt at the first part but not the second. As a result, marks tended to reside at the lower half of the middle mark band.

**Question 7**

Many students found this question initially challenging however most were able to identify features of the globalising process such as the movement of peoples within processes of migration. From there they were able to make points about how such features might affect identity – such as generating a more homogenised identity or provoking a reaction to it. Within these answers the application to nationalism was implicit rather than explicit. Evaluation tended to feature when perspectives were brought to bear on the globalising process. *Postmodernism* featured mostly here.

**Topic B2 Families and Households**

This topic was answered by the vast majority of students.

**Question 8**

As with previous series, when we have asked questions requiring the *definition of a demographic rate* for a two mark question, this question proved to be a strong discriminator. Well prepared students managed both aspects of the definition needed for both marks, which was the number of live births per 1000 of the population / per year. Overall only a small number of students gained no marks for this question.

**Question 9**

Most students found this question straight forward and accessible and in general the question was answered well. The most popular responses referenced differences in levels of parental control, different experiences resulting from specific family forms such as extended or lone parent and differences in the length of childhood.

**Question 10**

Many students scored well in this question and were able to identify three features of the symmetrical family. Many answers offered up more than the three features required indicating that students have a good understanding of the symmetrical family. Answers that did not attract full marks tended to list features but not (briefly) expand upon them.

**Question 11**

The majority of students could identify two policies – though some answers were generic (eg policies/laws divorce laws etc) – and make a connection to gender roles in the family. The standard approach taken was to identify a policy, for example equal pay, and then apply its impact on the domestic division of labour – typically whether the policy strengthened or weakened traditional instrumental/expressive gender roles. Analysis was frequently generated by reviewing the response of various theories and perspectives to the impact or the change described. For answers which did not gain credit in this question, this was often the result of identifying policies but failing to connect them to *gender roles* inside the family.

**Question 12**

This was a question that most students found accessible and had good material with which to frame their answers. Students who were able to look at the various impacts of an ageing population and link these to sociological concepts and theory were well rewarded. There were two types of approach which emerged that did not manage the above and so limited the reward available. The first kind of response documented often in great detail the causes and reasons for the emergence of an ageing population rather than looking at the impact of the ageing population on the family and wider society. The second type of response focussed on the impact by listing illustrations of the changes and impact: eg the greater preponderance of grandparents helping out with childcare, without linking the illustration to sociological concepts or theories. For example, the emerging child care role of grandparents could be viewed as contributing to a new kind of modified extended family. Evaluation and analysis in this question often took the form of reviewing various

theories' stance towards the impact of an ageing population, the *New Right* view of beanpole families for example.

**Topic B3 Health**

This topic was answered by very few students and a minority of those came from students attempting every topic on the paper.

**Question 13**

Most students who answered this question gained full credit and could find a synonym for both the social and the construction part of the answer.

**Question 14**

This question was generally answered well. Popular routes were: discrimination within health, physical access to the place of health care and accessibility of the building once there. Partial marks generally arose from students identifying a difficulty but offering no explanation of it.

**Question 15**

Students found this question difficult. There were two main stumbling points. The first was answers that focussed on health care rather than health chances as demanded by the question. These answers could receive only minimum credit. The second was not identifying cultural factors – such as working class culture may encourage heavier drinking which presents a health risk – as opposed to other factors. The main diversion away from identifying cultural factors tended to be to identify material factors instead, such as a lack of money for food / heating. Again, answers following this path could gain only minimum credit.

**Question 16**

Most students were able to engage with this question. The question required students to link a number of elements together. Students could often give good reasons as to why women might seek out health care more than men and why men may do the opposite. This was the most successful part of student answers. Moving on to making a link between the higher/lower morbidity patterns that gender related access created was a less successful feature of student answers.

**Question 17**

The main discriminatory factor explaining student outcomes for this question was whether the students knew what "big pharma" was. For those who were knowledgeable the question was relatively straight forward, inviting a pros and cons approach to the activities and impacts of global pharmaceutical companies often accompanied by a perspectives based assessment of such activities (Marxism vs functionalism for example). For students who had no or very limited knowledge of "big pharma" answers tended to list material which was not applied effectively to the demands of the question and so could not score highly.

**Topic B4 Work, Poverty and Welfare**

This topic was answered by very few students.

**Question 18**

Students were familiar with the notion of poverty and what it is. The relative part of the question proved the main discriminator within the question. Most students gained a partial mark for identifying the "lack of" poverty aspect to the question whilst fewer were able to provide the "relative" full definition.

**Question 19**

Many students did not understand what "private" welfare was as opposed to other types such as public etc. As a result, identifying appropriate advantages proved difficult. The most common approach taken by students was therefore to reach for various advantages of different kinds of welfare provision, some of which were creditworthy and others not, so producing uneven responses.

**Question 20**

Students found this question straight forward. Where students lacked specific understanding regarding gender and poverty they were readily able to adapt general gender based material such as gender roles / childcare responsibilities etc and apply it to the question. Many students gained full marks for this question.

**Question 21**

Students generally had no difficulty in finding reasons why people with disabilities may not be able to access work opportunities: discrimination, transport to and from the work place; lack of access within the workplace all featured. The development of the given reasons was the limiting factor for some students who found it difficult to connect the reason to further exploration of it - such as its impact on the individual, its connection with broader sociological perspectives and so on.

**Question 22**

This was a question most students found themselves well prepared for and were able to offer responses which covered many of the debates around technology in a 'for and against' style of approach: upskilling vs deskilling / freeing the worker from tedium vs increasing alienation. Many students were able to use the item and its focus on surveillance to talk about time work discipline. Some higher level explanations made reference to surveillance making the workplace fairer by identifying those not carrying their weight for example. The most effective answers addressed the debate surrounding the role of technology by locating it within the theoretical framework of Marxism, feminisms and postmodernism.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.