

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **SOCIOLOGY**

**H580**

For first teaching in 2015

**H580/02 Summer 2022 series**

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## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

### Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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## Paper 2 series overview

There was a wide range of responses which suggests that the paper was differentiated effectively. Most candidates attempted all questions within the paper. Time was managed effectively and there was a mix between those who answered Section A first, and those who answered Section B first. Those who chose Section B first, were more likely to miss out one of the short answer questions in Section A.

A number of candidates gave extended responses to Questions 1 and 2. These questions do not require extended responses and can take valuable time away from higher tariff questions.

### Question 1 and 2

Candidates could practise Questions 1 and 2 under timed conditions to gain experience of the requirements and structure of these responses. This will then help candidates to manage their time effectively and help them to attempt all questions.

Handwriting has been an issue. Practice under timed conditions can help with this.

A number of candidates did not use paragraphs, which impacted on the examiner's task of identifying if an idea is undeveloped, under developed or developed. When a candidate writes all their AO1 or AO3 points in one paragraph, the examiner then has to ascertain if this is one idea or a number of ideas. This is relevant for all questions.

### Assessment for learning



Candidates should practice using clear paragraphs and structure, for example: point, evidence, explanation, link to source / question.

Individual paragraphs under timed conditions could be used as plenaries to demonstrate learning at the end of lessons. This will also help candidates not only with structure but with effective time management during examinations.

Use connectives to clearly identify if it is an AO1 or AO3 point for example "however", "in support of", "in contrast", particularly when knowledge points could be used in alternate ways for example, "Marxist Feminists could be used to support or contrast Marxist viewpoints".

When using additional pages, it is important to number these accurately. Sometimes questions could potentially leak into others for example, the use of reserve army of labour in Questions 5 and 6. When additional sheets are used or candidates do not clearly label that they have returned to a previously answered question, it may lead to sections being marked against a question that the candidate may not have initially intended for it to be marked against.

### Question labelling

Clearly identify if a question is referred to later in the response, for example, 'continued on page 7'.

When using additional sheets or booklets, label them as page 1 or booklet 1.

For Questions 2-6, in order to achieve the highest mark band, candidates need to include sociological evidence and to discuss these with depth. Sociological evidence can include studies, theories, methodological perspectives, concepts, statistics and contemporary examples, although it should be noted that responses which rely on contemporary examples will not score highly as contemporary examples on their own are not good sociology.

When annotating responses, examiners, identify each idea, annotate evidence and then decide if it is undeveloped, under developed or developed. This then provides a guide for the mark given. For example, in Question 3, if a point states that quantitative methods are high in reliability only, this would be undeveloped. If a response has no sociological evidence, this would not be taken as a developed knowledge point.

### Range and depth

To get the highest mark in the essay questions, candidates should be aiming for the following range and depth:

Question 3: two fully developed points of knowledge (dependent on the question this could be two strengths, two weaknesses or one of each), reference to the source needs to be made for each knowledge point.

Question 4: four fully developed points of knowledge, of these two need to be strengths and two need to be weaknesses of the methodological approach. Again, each knowledge should be supported by use of the source.

Question 5: four fully developed points of knowledge, these should be clearly linked to the question, for example age and inequalities in work and employment.

Question 6: four fully developed points of knowledge and four fully developed points of evaluation.

Candidates tended to be stronger in either Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) or Evaluation and Analysis (AO3). Those who achieved Levels 3 and 4 were able to support discussions with an accurate range of sociological evidence, using both sociological studies and theory. For source based questions, some candidates struggled to move beyond lip service, lifting aspects of the source and not engaging with it to support their ideas. For example in Question 3, an example of lip service would be “the data was produced by UCAS”, an explicit application point would add to this by exploring how this would be a ‘trusted source’.

### Assessment for learning



When teaching sociological methods, use a range of quantitative and qualitative sources and ask candidates to use them to support a range of methodological strengths or weaknesses. This could be done as a collaborative learning activity where candidates are in groups and each given a strength or weakness, they then have two minutes to apply the source, this is then passed onto the next group who then have to apply a different aspect of the source to the strength or weakness.

#### Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:

- clearly structured responses for example; used connectives and paragraphs.
- consistently used accurate sociological evidence.
- in Section B, supported sociological evidence with contemporary examples such as being furloughed during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- in Section A, frequently interacted with the appropriate source.

#### Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:

- lacked structure
- over-relied on contemporary examples
- did not use sociological evidence, for example key concepts
- did not read questions carefully for example, in Question 3 including weaknesses rather than just strengths
- used the wrong source for example using Source A for Question 2.

## Section A overview

This section contains three compulsory source based questions. In Questions 3 and 4, to attain Levels 3 and 4, candidates are required to use methodological evidence and/or perspectives, for example validity and reliability. There is no requirement to refer to alternative methodologies or sociological studies.

### Misconception

Candidates do not need to use their time discussing alternative sociological studies, some tended to spend time writing extended overviews of research by Ventakesh and/or 7Up.

### Question 1

- 1 Summarise **two** conclusions which sociologists might reach about patterns and trends in women graduating in STEM subjects from the data shown in **Source A**. [4]

Most candidates were able to accurately draw two conclusions and support these with statistics directly from the source, for example, physical sciences had increased by 1% each year showing a 2% increase over the time period. It is important that candidates explicitly show how data has changed such as fewer / increase / decrease or alternatively, remained the same.

In order to achieve full marks, candidates need to draw two conclusions and support them both with statistics from the source material. The statistics are very clear and need little interpretation. Explicit figures are given and examiners will not accept vague references to the data.

Some candidates offered sociological evidence and/or reasons for these statistics, which is not required.

### Key point

This question should take approximately five minutes to answer and candidates can achieve full marks through using the source material only.

### Assessment for learning



Use a range of qualitative and quantitative data sources and ask candidates to draw one conclusion each from the source material. This could be a paired activity where candidates swap answers and then mark each other's answers. This could be used as starter tasks or even mini plenaries when looking at sociological research throughout the whole specification.

Exemplar 1

Q1.	<p>One conclusion that can be drawn from the graph is that there is a 2% increase of women in physical science from 2015-2016 at 40% to 42% in 2017-2018. Another conclusion that can be drawn is women in engineering and technology is drastically lower than those in mathematical science. Women in math is at 39% all three years while engineering is at 15%. This is a 24% difference throughout all three years.</p>
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In this response, we can see a full mark response. The candidate has used succinct language, clearly identified each conclusion and then used accurate statistics from the source to support their response. Excellent structure, Level 4 mark band, full marks.

## Question 2

- 2 With reference to **Source B**, explain **two** reasons sociologists need to consider representativeness in a large-scale study of unemployment in Britain. [6]

As with Question 1, candidates are required to engage with the source. There is no requirement to discuss alternative sociological research. It is important that candidates read the question carefully, in this case, 'need to consider'. In this question, candidates are given 2 marks for AO1, 1 mark for each reason why representativeness needs to be considered. More common responses focused on generalisability, representation of ethnic groups and to be able to exert influence on social policies.

Many candidates were able to identify two ways and achieve full marks on AO1. In a number of cases, candidates were only credited with 1 or 0 marks as they were focusing on issues around research methods such as the use of quantitative and qualitative data or validity and reliability rather than on the sampling process. There appeared to be a lack of understanding of this concept within a number of responses.

For AO2, a number of candidates did not achieve full marks as they did not use the source to support their responses. Candidates either copied parts of the question or the title of the source rather than engaging with the material. Responses which achieved high marks were able to lift specific aspects of the source to fully support their response, this could be as explicit as the size of the sample, how it reflected ten ethnic groups or the size of the sample within each ethnic group, which reflected the demographics of the target population. In relation to this, a number of candidates believed that in order to be representative, an equal number from each ethnic group should have been used, this would, however, have been an inaccurate picture of society, as the percentage of ethnic groups is not equal.

### Assessment for learning



When teaching sampling techniques, representativeness and generalisability, refer to sociological research discussed in other areas of the specification. Candidates can then use these to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the technique used and how it may be representative or not. This will illustrate their knowledge of this area and also revisit previous areas of learning.



## Exemplar 2

		in studies to make sure findings can be
		generalised to a larger setting (increasing
		ecological validity). In Source B, people
		were classified into one of ten ethnic
		categories rather than just white and other
		to allow data to be more representative to
		specific ethnicities. For example, there were
		41,656 white British people in the sample
		but also 1,149 white Irish and 2,382 white
		other. This has been considered as it allows

In this response, there is one reason, which was given full marks 1+2. The candidate has correctly identified generalisability for AO1 and then supported this by identifying the ethnic group sizes used within the source.

## Question 3

- 3 With reference to **Source A**, explain **two** advantages of using quantitative data to study gender inequalities. [10]

Most candidates were able to achieve Level 2 or above for AO3 on this question. The most common responses focused on objectivity, positivism and identifying patterns and trends. Candidates were able to briefly explain what these concepts were, but were unable to fully develop them. In many instances, candidates simply repeated the question and the concept at the end of their paragraph rather than discuss how this would impact the research.

For AO2, a number of candidates did not refer to the source beyond rewording the title at the beginning of each advantage which is not creditable. There were a number of responses which referred to lip service only for example by simply stating that 'the source used bar charts' rather than using accurate statistics from the source to clearly illustrate the objectivity of the data.

For AO3, candidates need to develop sociological evidence. Many dropped in concepts such as reliability or patterns and trends but did not explain how this could be an advantage when using quantitative data.

In regard to structure, the majority of candidates used two clear paragraphs which identified two separate advantages.

**Misconception**



This question required candidates to explain two advantages, a number of candidates explained one advantage and one disadvantage. It is important to point out to candidates that the requirements of this question may change between advantages and disadvantages and not to presume what it may be.

In addition, some evaluated their chosen advantages. This was not a requirement of the question, it is important to read questions carefully, to make sure that time is spend focusing on the specifics of a question rather than on information that cannot be rewarded.

**Exemplar 3**

3	A	<p>One advantage of using quantitative data to study gender inequalities is it allows for patterns and trends to easily be identified. For example in physical sciences the number of female graduates has increased 1% each year from 40% in 2016 to 41% in 2017 and 42% in 2018. Similarly in computer science graduates that are female fell from 16% in 2016 to 15% in 2018. This shows the advantage of quantitative data to study gender inequality as patterns are easily identified. This would be preferred by positivists.</p>
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In this response, the candidate has identified patterns and trends and used statistics from the source to support their response. The knowledge point is underdeveloped as the candidate only repeats the knowledge point at the end and then drops in 'preferred by positivists'. To fully develop this, the candidate would need to say why it is preferred by positivists.

## Question 4\*

- 4\* Using **Source B** and your wider sociological knowledge, explain and evaluate the use of longitudinal research for researching ethnic inequalities in relation to earnings and unemployment. [25]

Most candidates were able to answer this question reasonably well. As the question focused on longitudinal research, either quantitative or qualitative approaches could be taken. As the question is a source based one, for qualitative examples to be fully developed they needed to explicitly refer to longitudinal, rather than generalised explanations of qualitative data.

Most candidates were able to use a range of methodological concepts and perspectives to support their responses such as interpretivism/positivism and reliability and rapport and sample attrition. A number of candidates confused positivism/interpretivism and validity/reliability.

The most successful responses included two fully developed strengths and two fully developed weaknesses of longitudinal methods; these achieved the Level 4 mark band for AO1 and AO3. While some responses offered a wider range of underdeveloped ideas, a Level 3 mark band response.

For AO2, the most successful responses referred to the source and clearly applied accurate information from this in order to support each of the knowledge points. For example, when explaining how longitudinal quantitative data can be easily repeated they referred to how the source supported the findings of studies of earlier recessions. Some candidates did not recognise that the research in the source was secondary research compiled from quantitative data and discussed how it supported advantages and disadvantages from a qualitative approach and thus incorrectly used the source, resulting in marks not being given.

In terms of structure, when candidates do not use clear paragraphs and identify advantages and disadvantages, it is left to an examiner to ascertain where one point ends and another begins which can impact on how a response is marked. Often, knowledge points and explanations can bleed into one another, in some cases this can lead to a wider range of underdeveloped ideas rather than awarding fully developed ones. Therefore, by clearly signposting when moving onto a new point, the examiner is directed to annotate and award on a new point.

Overall, for this question, candidates need to include two advantages and two disadvantages of the method/approach identified in the question. Each knowledge point needs to include a methodological concept/perspective, a full explanation to be given and supported by evidence from the source. To achieve the top of Level 4, candidates need to refer to positivism and/or interpretivism.

### Misconception



A number of candidates were spending valuable time writing introductions which did not add to the value of their response. In addition, many were referring to and explaining in depth studies which they had learnt such as Venkatesh's study on gangs or the 7UP documentary which is not credited. It is important to note, that discussions on findings of research are not credited within the question.

### Key points

Candidates should focus on two advantages and two disadvantages. Clearly signpost a new knowledge point. Engage with the source, make sure it is relevant and supports the knowledge point being discussed.

## Section B overview

This section has two compulsory questions. Both require candidates to use a wide range of sociological evidence which needs to be fully developed in order to achieve Level 4. Candidates were able to access both of these questions and to include sociological evidence. Candidates also used a range of contemporary examples to support previous sociological research such as zero hour contracts and being furloughed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Question 5\*

**5\*** Outline ways that a person's age may affect their opportunities in work and employment. **[20]**

To achieve Level 4 in this question, candidates need to include four fully developed points, the most common ways of approaching this were to either look at different age groups or inequalities in work such as discrimination and pay.

Most candidates were able to access this question. In terms of AO1, the most successful responses used a wide range of sociological evidence and discussed this in depth. Examples of these responses explained disengagement theory, the reserve army of labour, dual labour market, issues with the minimum age and other examples of age discrimination. Many candidates were able to develop their responses with a study and then real-life example to illustrate their points, quite a few candidates applying evidence they would have learnt from Paper 3 for Globalisation using Berry's views on digital communication and older people.

When using sociological evidence, a minority of candidates simply identified the research or concept such as 'young people are a reserve army of labour as outline by Marxists' but did not explain how this impacts their opportunities and simply moved onto the next idea. Candidates need to explain the impact to fully develop their ideas.

Some candidates incorrectly used examples of child poverty. Although this is an issue for young people and may impact life chances it doesn't directly answer the question and apply to work. Others considered examples of inequalities which affected young people (such as in education) but were in fact discussing social class/gender/ethnic inequalities for example underachievement of poorer children in school.

Some candidates also added evaluation to their responses and tried to critique studies or provided evidence that age inequalities were disappearing or were unimportant. There are no marks for evaluation on this response so candidates could not be credited for this. A number also wrote conclusions where there is no need to for this question.

## Question 6\*

- 6\*** Assess the view that Marx's theory of social class is still relevant for understanding class inequalities in the UK today. **[40]**

In this question, candidates needed four fully developed points for each side of the debate. Most candidates were able to clearly set out at least some basic aspects Marx's theory of class explaining how he discusses two main classes where the bourgeoisie exploit the proletariat. Many were able to develop their ideas of Marxist views on class to suggest how it is still relevant looking at ideas on how the classes have become polarised; looking at Gramsci's ideas on hegemony; Althusser and RSAs/ISAs, considering Bourdieu's ideas on Cultural capital and some Neo Marxist ideas. Successful responses often went beyond Marx to consider contemporary relevance such as looking at Bowles and Gintis and the hidden curriculum/social class reproduction or Jock Young and bulimic society to consider how consumerism could be seen as a form of false consciousness.

In evaluation, many were able to draw on evidence from Functionalist ideas on meritocracy; inequalities being necessary; Davis and Moore's ideas on role allocation. Strong responses were able to evaluate the view in the question using evidence from Weber and his views on status and power; New Right ideas from Murray and Saunders on dependency culture and Postmodernists views on the fragmentation of class.

A number of candidates suggested that Weber was a Marxist or that Murray fully supported Marx's ideas. Some candidates critiqued the evaluation points for example critiquing Functionalist views with Tumin which was not credited. Some spent too much time talking about poverty and rising inequalities instead of focusing on the theory. Common inaccuracies were the assumption that Young was a Functionalist who approved of the idea of meritocracy, that Barron and Norris's dual labour markets equated with the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Braverman was also often misinterpreted as saying that middle class jobs were being eliminated by technology rather than being deskilled and proletarianised. Some candidates also attempted to apply feminist theories but often became confused as to whether they should be using them in support or against Marxism. A common tactic was to introduce postmodernism as a new idea in the conclusion suggesting that 'class is dead' without fully explaining or developing this.

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