

GCSE Examiners' Report

Sociology

GCSE

Summer 2025

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Introduction

Our Principal Examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitted specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and component level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	<p>For unitted specifications click here:</p> <p>Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)</p>

¹ Please note that 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.

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Executive Summary

Component 1 showed stable performance with strong engagement, while Component 2 highlighted areas for improvement, particularly in research methods and exam stamina. Whilst performance was comparable with 2024 for Component 1, candidate performance was lower than last series in Component 2.

Component 1 was generally well-answered, with candidates demonstrating sound understanding of sociological themes and processes. The paper covered cultural transmission, socialisation, identity, family, education, and research methods. Candidates responded well across most questions; the family topic in particular was done well. In extended writing, stronger responses confidently applied sociological theories and concepts.

Some of the short answer questions were not always approached confidently. Questions 2a, 2d, and 3b revealed some reliance on commonsense rather than sociological terminology and this is supported by the item level data.

Research methods continue to be an area for development. Question 6 was less successfully answered, part (c) in particular, suggesting a lack of understanding of qualitative methods and difficulty with methodological concepts such as reliability and validity.

Component 2 is often found to be the more challenging paper for some, and candidates seemed to find aspects of the 2025 assessment to be more demanding. Some of the low tariff items were answered less well than in previous series, with candidates confusing key terminology and theorists. Question 4a demonstrated that many candidates were unable to distinguish between the meaning of sex and gender. A noticeable number of candidates did not attempt questions 5c, 7b, 7c and 7d. However, many candidates produced strong extended writing, demonstrating impressive subject knowledge. Similar to the trend seen in Component 1, applied research methods (especially Question 7) were a weaker area, with responses lacking clarity and depth.

AO3 skills of analysis and evaluation were often limited or lacking in extended responses in both assessments.

Key areas for development:

Research methods: a strong understanding of the specification content and key methodological concepts is essential. These questions are often weaker in both components. The next point is also relevant here.

Exam stamina and time management: in both components, candidate performance is often weaker in the last questions on the assessments (research methods) with candidates either running out of time before attempting all questions, or providing brief, rushed responses which clearly has an impact on candidate outcomes.

Analysis and evaluation: The 9-mark questions require candidates to address all three AOs which are equally weighted. AO3 skills are often lacking in many responses and where candidates struggle to maintain ongoing analysis throughout their responses, the inclusion of a conclusion can assist. These skills are also required and are more heavily weighted in the 15-mark questions.

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COMPONENT 1 - UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL PROCESSES

C200U10-1

Overview of the Component

This question paper tests all three assessment objectives, AO1, AO2 and AO3. AO1 is the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods. AO2 is the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods. AO3 is the ability to analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods to construct arguments, make judgments and draw conclusions. The proportion of the paper designed to assess each assessment objective is AO1 (40%), AO2 (40%) and AO3 (20%).

Component 1 covers the themes of socialisation, identity and culture. Candidates study the key processes of cultural transmission, including socialisation and the acquisition of identity in questions 1, 2 and 3. Questions 4 and 5 cover the topics of family and education respectively. Research methods are covered in question 6. Candidates are encouraged to consider theories and research methods as appropriate throughout the exam.

Component 1 was an accessible and successful paper where candidates were able to answer most aspects well. There were shorter questions such as 2a, 2d and 3b where some candidates found it difficult to apply sociological knowledge and terms instead relying on commonsense. Stronger responses applied key concepts with confidence.

The extended writing questions gave candidates an opportunity to show their extensive knowledge of sociological theories, concepts and studies. Stronger responses applied knowledge clearly. Responses to this component appear to have attracted similar quality responses comparable to previous years. The attempt rate for all the 8- and 15-markers was over 95% and higher than in 2024.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1

Most candidates seized on these marks. Some candidates provided an incorrect response to part c as they saw the word boys and linked to Willis rather than Becky Francis.

Question 2a

Surprisingly, many candidates found this problematic. The mean mark was 1.1 which was the lowest of all the 2-mark questions apart from 6a. Candidates often relied heavily on the passage or described media as only inclusive of social media. Stronger answers identified the nature of media as a means of mass communication sometimes distinguishing between traditional and digital media.

Question 2d

Candidates that answered this well read the question carefully and offered just one agent of socialisation and related this to two ways using sociological concepts. For instance, family may influence ethnic identities through language when parents speak a different language in the home or by following different traditions at home, such as festivals like Eid or Christmas. Unfortunately, some candidates wrote about two different agencies and limited their marks. The mean score was only 2.1 which is low compared to other 4-markers.

Question 3b

Most candidates had common sense ideas for this response. Less were able to match these to appropriate sociological knowledge and concepts. Those that did, successfully applied the need to have shared norms, values and law or the danger of anomie without these. Others applied concepts such as social solidarity and social cohesion to explain their reasons. Marxist ideas were also used successfully with explanations of how the bourgeoisie need social control to maintain their interests and protect capitalism. Some candidates found it difficult to separate two reasons.

Question 4 Family

Candidates generally wrote fluently on these questions. Candidates that performed better tended to provide the details accurately, such as matching the correct sociologist with the correct concept. Some knew terms, such as dual burden, but confused the names of sociologists.

The 15-mark question, which encouraged discussion of the nuclear family, was attempted by almost all candidates who all had something to write about this. Sometimes, it seemed as though candidates realised that the answer would benefit from the different theories, but they were not always able to apply these to the question or evaluate in depth.

Question 5 Education

The question on labelling was generally tackled well and the concept explained clearly using terminology. The mean score was 1.6 which is higher than other 2-mark questions. Some candidates did not explicitly link to achievement. Stronger answers for 5b explained meritocracy by referring to meritocracy and the school as society in miniature. Weaker responses gave common sense descriptions without referencing sociological terms.

There was a similar picture for 5c. Stronger answers used terms such as the hidden curriculum or Becky Francis' ideas about boys dominating space in the playground. A few became confused and tried to argue that schools are not patriarchal as girls are outperforming boys. Unfortunately, this wasn't the requirement of the task.

As was the case for the 15-mark question on the family, candidates knew the content well for the debate about factors inside school as the most important influence on children's achievement. Stronger answers related this clearly to the discussion and compared inside school factors to outside school and cultural factors. Many knew material factors well but did not always explain how this affected achievement. Stronger answers maintained a clear line of reasoning and returned to a consideration of how the factors affect achievement.

The mean marks for 5c and 5d were, respectively, 0.8 and 1.2 lower than the corresponding 8- and 15-mark questions on Q4. All these questions had healthy attempt rates of over 95%, suggesting that most candidates found them to be accessible.

Question 6a

This was found difficult by many candidates. They often knew what random meant but struggled to explain what it meant in relation to sampling.

Question 6c

This question was found to be challenging and had the lowest attempt rate at 91%. Some candidates did not understand the term qualitative and wrote about quantitative methods, which was limiting. Others had some success by working through different qualitative methods rather than discussing qualitative methods generally. They had at least some success with this approach but were, on occasion, sidetracked by ethical issues or particular studies. The strongest answers referred to the depth and detail of qualitative data using terms like validity accurately and possibly comparing to quantitative, numerical measurable data.

Candidates could improve by having a stronger understanding of key methodological terms.

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COMPONENT 2 - UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL STRUCTURES

C200U20-1

Overview of the Component

This question paper tests all three assessment objectives AO1, AO2 and AO3. AO1 is the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods. AO2 is the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods. AO3 is the ability to analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods to construct arguments, make judgments and draw conclusions. The proportion of the paper designed to assess each assessment objective is AO1 (40%), AO2 (40%) and AO3 (20%).

Component 2 covers the themes of social differentiation, power and stratification. This includes the themes of power, and issues of social order and control, studied through crime and deviance. Learners also study applied methods of sociological enquiry. Candidates study the themes of social differentiation, power and stratification in questions 3, 4 and 5. Questions 4 and 5 cover the topic of crime and deviance. Applied methods of sociological enquiry are covered in questions 2 and 7. Candidates are encouraged to consider theories and research methods as appropriate throughout the exam.

Component 2 was found to be more challenging by candidates. There are more items to answer including three 9-mark questions which require more extended writing and 7 questions in total rather than 6 in Component 1.

Despite this there were many high-quality responses to the higher tariff, extended writing questions and candidates' knowledge and understanding was impressive. This Component appeared to have more candidates not attempting questions, particularly 5a, 5c, 6c and 6d. Q7 on applied research methods was also found to be challenging and the quality of responses for methods appears to be of a lower standard than for other aspects of the paper. This is true for question 6 on Component 1 as well. This may be a combination of the abstract concepts such as reliability and validity and the positioning at the end of both assessments.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1

Caused more candidates to lose marks than was expected. Some confused prejudice and discrimination and many could not identify Heidensohn as the feminist sociologist who wrote about female conformity. Mean marks for 1a and 1b were 0.7 and 0.6 for 1d. This compares to 1.0 for 1c.

Question 2c

Most candidates were able to identify trends/patterns, but some failed to identify statistics they could use to support these descriptions.

Question 4a

Many candidates were unclear about the distinction between biological sex and gender. Stronger responses linked gender to stereotyping of traditional roles of masculinity and femininity. The mean mark was 1.0, which is low.

Question 4b

Candidates typically explained that women work more and did less housework. Stronger answers referred to key terminology such as breadwinner, changing social norms, feminism and some explained that women now find themselves with the dual burden or the triple shift. Some focussed too much on men. However, the mean mark was 2.9 showing many candidates achieved well on this question.

Question 5a

This was a question which again caused more difficulties than expected. Some candidates found it difficult to describe social classes in sufficient detail. Stronger answers referred to economic position, occupation, lifestyle or attitudes. Some very successfully used Marxism and related ideas to describe Marx's view of two main social classes. Other sophisticated answers were familiar with Saunders' ideas of the underclass and used these effectively.

Question 5b

Basic answers focussed on practical advantages of private schools such as better equipment or smaller class sizes. Stronger answers developed how smaller class sizes could lead to higher achievement, tutoring or other benefits. The development of connections with the old boys' network, learning to speak elaborated code, or a curriculum designed to create leaders, made for developed answers.

9-mark questions

9-mark questions are unique to Component 2 and require the candidates to show that they have met all three assessment objectives. These are given equal weighting which is where they differ from the 15-mark questions. The AO3 element requires candidates to treat them as a mini essay. Questions 3c and 4d both asked candidates to discuss the topic area and 5c asked them to agree or disagree with a statement. Therefore, all three required candidates to develop a clear analysis and evaluation.

Mean marks for all three of these were similar at around 4.5 but attempt rates were lower for 4d and 5c at 91.8% and 89.1% respectively.

It is important to note that answers do not necessarily need to have a separate conclusion at the end to gain full marks for AO3. Given the time constraints many will not have time for this but can create analysis and evaluation in an ongoing way throughout the response. Some candidates may benefit from the advice to make sure they add a conclusion as they may not achieve ongoing evaluation.

Questions 3c and 4d were generally dealt with well by candidates. The debate about poverty in 3c enabled candidates to show their knowledge of Functionalist and Marxist views on poverty, comparing these. Others managed to relate New Right and Feminist ideas successfully. Overall, a well answered question. In response to 4d on feminist inequality, candidates were able to show their knowledge of different areas of life and feminist views. Most referred to work and education, but here were also useful answers that dealt with media or crime.

Question 5c was probably more of a challenge and there were a minority of candidates who did not attempt this question. Stronger answers outlined Functionalist and Marxist views relating this to whether social class was important. There were candidates displaying detailed knowledge of Weber, Devine or Goldthorpe and Lockwood which was encouraging to see. Some used an 'areas of life' approach, showing that class was important in terms of education, work or life chances, which was quite successful.

Question 6b

Stronger answers defined white collar crime clearly as something which takes place in businesses and is normally individuals trying to make financial gains. Further detail would explain that it is middle or higher social classes and that they are less likely to be suspected or convicted due to differential enforcement of the law. A reasonable number of candidates failed to distinguish white collar crime from corporate crime.

Question 6c

This was answered well in general with focus on institutional racism and canteen culture in the police. The role of the media including stereotyping, scapegoating and moral panics was also successfully used. One danger was that some candidates drifted into explaining why some groups offend more than others rather than being seen as typical offenders. Successful answers used either age, social class, gender or ethnicity as the focus of their answer. Therefore, young people, the working-class, males and minority ethnic groups were the main topics for answers. The work of William Chambliss (Saints and Roughnecks) was used successfully quite often. A minority of candidates didn't attempt this question.

Question 6d

This question elicited a range of different approaches and responses. Some answers focussed on sociological explanations of the causes of crime such as Robert K Merton, Walter Miller, Albert Cohen or labelling and tried to apply these to explain why there is more male crime. This application sometimes veered away from focussing on conviction rates for males. It was valid for candidates to write about these sociological ideas, and they were credited, but they may have found applying them to the question challenging.

A more straightforward application involved the use of Pollak and the chivalry thesis. This was generally applied well and allowed focus on the question. Heidensohn's work on female conformity and the different socialisation of men and women was also linked very well to the question. Many candidates knew Pat Carlen's work well but found this more difficult to apply.

This question had shorter responses than 15-mark questions on Component 1 this year and more candidates failed to attempt it. The mean mark at 6.9 was lower than comparable 15-mark questions on Component 1.

Question 7a

Many candidates were unable to identify a suitable quantitative research method. E.g. structured interviews or questionnaires which were the simplest applications. Candidates who wrote interviews but did not qualify the type of interviews were not awarded a mark. Overall, the mean mark was 0.6 which suggests that 40% were unsuccessful in identifying a suitable quantitative research method. It was decided that a mistake here should not affect the way subsequent elements of Q7 were marked. However, it could make it more difficult for them to achieve credit worthy answers, especially on 7d.

Question 7b

Many candidates were unfamiliar with the term pilot study. Only 89.9% attempted the question and the mean mark was 1.1. Basic answers identified it as a trial run and more developed answers related this to identifying problems with the wording of questions or saving money and time if methods didn't work successfully. They could answer this without reference to the item and gain both marks.

Question 7c

Candidates were not always clear about the distinction between a practical issue and issues related to the value of different methods. Access to the sample, gatekeepers, consent or permission letters, time and cost were all used well. Developed answers linked these to the item, such as the children being under 18 or needing the headteacher's permission.

Again almost 10% did not attempt this and the mean mark was low at 0.7 due to a lack of focus on practical issues. For instance, answers that wrote about reliability and validity were not credited as practical problems.

Question 7d

There was a particularly low attempt rate for this question at 86.6%. The mean mark was just under half at 2.7. It is not clear whether this is the nature of the question or a combination of that and Q7's position at the end of the assessment.

Furthermore, the method chosen for 7a may have influenced the success of answers to this. Answers that had wrongly chosen a qualitative method for 7a were dealt with at face value as methods. To gain full marks candidates were expected to make meaningful reference to the item and the method they chose to study labelling in schools specifically. Most candidates omitted to do this which meant marks awarded were more often, at best, in Bands 1 and 2 for both assessment objectives.

The question asked for strengths but some candidates balanced this against weaknesses or problems to create a real discussion. Many listed strengths and did not create meaningful discussion. Research methods is one of the most challenging aspects of both components.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: **029 22 404280**

Email: GCSEsociology@edugas.co.uk

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WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk