



# GCSE Examiners' Report

Sociology  
GCSE  
Summer 2024

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.	<a href="https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/">https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/</a>
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.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> 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 unitised 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 unitised specifications click here:</p> <p><a href="#">Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)</a></p>

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	<a href="https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/">https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/</a>
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	<a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	<a href="#">Become an Examiner   Eduqas</a>

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## Executive Summary

The demands of both components were in line with 2023, questions were generally accessible to candidates and provided opportunity for a range of responses. Performance was comparable to 2023 but more candidates achieved marks at the higher end in Component 1. All three Assessment Objectives are assessed in both components.

Component 1 covers the themes of socialisation, identity and culture. Candidates study the key processes of cultural transmission and the topics of family and education, in addition to research methods. Component 2 covers the themes of social differentiation, power and stratification. This includes the themes of power, issues of social order and control, studied through crime and deviance. The study applied methods of sociological enquiry is also included. Candidates are encouraged to consider theories and research methods as appropriate throughout both examinations.

In Component 1 the examining team saw strong responses from candidates across all questions. Clear and detailed knowledge of sociological theory was often demonstrated in responses to questions 4b and 4d and to some extent in question 5d. Some candidates found the question on the hidden curriculum challenging and, even where they demonstrated sound knowledge of the concept, many were unable to successfully apply their knowledge to the success/failure of students in school. Application of knowledge to the specific demands of the question is a skill that requires development in both components.

In Component 2 the examining team again saw evidence of accurate and detailed sociological knowledge and understanding across a range of questions and theories. The 9-mark questions, assess all three assessment objectives which are equally weighted. These questions all required candidates to analyse and evaluate (AO3) and whilst the strongest candidates were able to sustain these skills throughout their responses, the ability to evaluate and reach valid and appropriate conclusions remains a key area for development.

Questions on research methods in both components were often answered well, but also highlighted an issue with the understanding and use of key methodological terminology. Question 7c in Component 2 raised another area for development, the ability to apply the knowledge of methods to the specific context of the question. Many candidates approached this question in a generic way, restricting the marks awarded.

Common sense responses that lacked appropriate and relevant use of sociological language and concepts were evident in both components. The effective use of relevant sociological terminology across the specification is another area for development. This will assist candidates in providing more developed answers to the lower tariff questions.

Areas for Improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Use of relevant, appropriate sociological language and concepts, developing answers to short questions	<a href="#">GCSE Sociology Debates</a>	A range of resources on each topic, including a list of terminology
Application of knowledge of research methods to the specific demands and context of the question (comp 2)	<a href="#">GCSE Sociology Research Skills</a>	A wide range of resources including Applied research practice questions.
Sustained and explicit evaluation and conclusions in higher tariff questions	<a href="#">Evaluate Concept Map</a>	Part of the GCSE Thinking Tools resource including this template to structure to evaluate concepts/ theories.

# SOCIOLOGY

## GCSE

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### Component 1 – Understanding Social Processes

#### Overview of the Component

This question paper assesses all three assessment objectives, AO1 (40%), AO2 (40%) and AO3 (20%). This component covers the themes of socialisation, identity and culture and the topics of family and education, in addition to research methods.

The demands of the 2024 question paper were comparable with 2023 and it was accessible to candidates, providing opportunity for a range of responses.

The examining team saw strong responses across all questions. Clear and detailed knowledge of sociological theory was evident in many responses although some candidates found the question on the hidden curriculum (5c) to be challenging.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

##### Question 2d

Stronger answers for this 4-mark question were able to accurately identify agents of socialisation and explain **how** they influenced gender roles. Effective answers focussed on schools using aspects of the hidden curriculum including gendered subject guidance or the lack of female role models in senior/headteacher positions. Other agents most frequently referenced were peers, work and media. Again, candidates providing stronger answers clearly explained how using terminology. For example, peers may sanction boys who do not act in traditional masculine ways by ignoring them or making sarcastic comments. Some candidates who were less successful need to be more specific when giving examples, rather than making general comments about peers discouraging boys from acting in certain ways.

##### Question 3b

Candidates who gained the full 4 marks applied sociological terminology accurately, such as role models and sanctions, fully explaining these terms and often included an example. Other candidates could improve by clearly explaining the way they identified or by not relying just on having identified a useful term. Development of the explanation is needed.

##### Question 3c

The highest scoring candidates were able to use their knowledge of society to identify ways that families socialise children into ethnic identities. The most effective answers gave clear examples to support and illustrate points made which included things like speaking Urdu or Spanish as well as English, going to church or mosque as a place of worship, or eating traditional dishes such as curry and sushi. Where some candidates need to improve is by building upon basic ideas such as food, religion or language to show their full knowledge.

#### **Question 4 Families**

On 4b candidates clearly had knowledge of Functionalist theories and concepts. The strongest answers fully developed their explanations to highlight the important functions undertaken by the family. The names of Murdock and Parsons were prominent in answers. Where there is room for improvement is for candidates to develop their answers to demonstrate full understanding rather than providing list-like responses which cannot be credited as highly.

The question on singlehood received strong responses from many candidates who discussed the independence of women, secularisation and changes in norms and values, applying knowledge accurately. Some candidates could improve by making sure that they remained focused on singlehood, rather than being drawn into discussing other issues such as why people are not getting married or why they are cohabiting. Others need to ensure that they are using sociological terminology and knowledge rather than commonsense ideas.

The 15-mark question on family received many strong responses. Again, candidates knew the main theories and were able to show relevant knowledge of these. Feminist studies, concepts and theories were linked well to the question, but it was mainly stronger candidates who were able to successfully apply Functionalist and Marxist ideas to the question. Marxism was often explained but not applied successfully to convey the idea that it is the ruling class who benefit rather than men in general. However, most candidates were able to access this essay question with some success.

#### **Question 5 Education**

The question on the hidden curriculum and how this may affect children's achievement in schools was challenging for some candidates. The strongest answers applied their knowledge of the hidden curriculum clearly to the success/failure of students. For instance, some applied the idea that hidden messages about gender in school, such as the hierarchy being male dominated, textbooks, and gendered subjects as having an adverse effect on the motivation of females. Answers using the idea of an ethnocentric curriculum were also successful. Some successfully argued that the hidden curriculum helped students' achievement by encouraging them to be on time, work hard, do as they are told and therefore be successful. Others successfully linked hidden messages about the ideal student held by teachers leading to labelling/ stereotypes and so were very sociological. Some candidates who knew and understood the concept of the hidden curriculum were unable to successfully apply their knowledge to the achievement of children in schools. There were a minority who did not tackle this question.

Candidates were on much more comfortable ground with the 15-mark question about ability and hard work. Functionalism was used particularly well in this question to create the argument that schools, like society, are meritocratic. Stronger candidates then used Marxism, feminism, and concepts such as institutional racism and labelling, to counter this argument. Stronger candidates included a clear conclusion at the end of the essay.

#### **Question 6c - Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of questionnaires in research.**

Most candidates were able to provide comments on the strengths and weaknesses of questionnaires and stronger candidates were able to link these to concepts of validity, reliability and representativeness. Less successful answers were more commonsense in style and lacked the accurate use of terminology. Candidates could improve their understanding of these terms and practice applying them to questionnaires or other methods.

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### **Component 2 – Understanding Social Structures**

#### **Overview of the Component**

This question paper also assesses all three assessment objectives AO1 (40%), AO2 (40%) and AO3 (20%). This component covers the themes of social differentiation, power and stratification. This includes the themes of power, issues of social order and control, studied through crime and deviance. Learners also study applied methods of sociological enquiry.

Like component 1, the demands of the 2024 question paper were comparable with 2023 and it was accessible to candidates, providing opportunity for a range of responses.

The examining team again saw evidence of accurate and detailed sociological knowledge and understanding across a range of questions and theories. The three 9-mark questions and the 15-mark question assess all three assessment objectives and so all required candidates to analyse and evaluate (AO3). The strongest candidates were able to sustain these skills throughout their responses and were also able to reach valid and appropriate conclusions, but this was lacking in many responses.

#### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

##### **Question 2**

Parts a and b were identified accurately by almost all candidates and caused very few problems.

For 2c, the most successful candidates identified two patterns easily and backed this up using percentages from the table. Some candidates could improve by stating clearly that the statistics relate to UK attitudes towards the monarchy based on age as they just wrote about the numbers in a generic way.

##### **Question 3b**

Answers to this 4-mark question defined wealth in a wide sense rather than the very specific definition asked for in previous questions focused on wealth as a definition. This was credited and led to most candidates applying ideas such as the ability to pay for private health or private education. Stronger candidates built on this by adding the story of better life chances. For example, private education will result in better qualifications and therefore better jobs, the old boys' network, a higher income and the ability to buy an expensive house, car or other possessions. Therefore, some candidates would benefit from applying their ideas and making sure that they have followed this through in a logical way.

## Questions 4b and c

Both these questions focused on the presentation of people based upon age. Stronger candidates applied or explained a basic idea of the presentation of young people or stereotype of older people, and then developed this with the use of sociological terminology such as stereotyping, moral panics, folk devils or social exclusion. Others developed successfully through thinking through the consequences of the presentation/stereotype.

## Question 5b

Candidates who knew Weber's classification system for three types of authority were able to answer this comfortably with a reason to spare. Others referred to authority given at work through status, class, gender, age or to wealth, with varying degrees of success. The level of success depended upon the detail in the answer.

## 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.

Question 3c was well answered in general and allowed candidates to show their knowledge of theories, including the idea that we live in a meritocracy and therefore life chances are equal. Others referred to class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and/or disability to show how different factors affect life chances. The use of Functionalism/New Right in the answer provided the benefit of an obvious disagreement with Marxists and Feminists about whether life chances are equal or not.

Candidates found question 4d to be more challenging. Stronger candidates included the themes of media representation, harmful stereotypes, moral panics, lack of opportunities for youth, or discrimination at work. Knowledge of legal changes and the positive schemes for older workers at B&Q and Barclays Silver Eagles also showed greater understanding. However, some candidates relied too much on commonsense to answer this question.

Question 5c saw some excellent links with different sociological ideas. These included theories such as Marxism, Functionalism and Feminism. Others referred to class, gender or ethnicity. Stronger candidates were able to identify that Functionalists accept that there are power differences in society, but that these are inevitable and necessary. Some candidates could improve their understanding of this subtlety. Many used the idea that Feminists and Marxists would see the differences in power between men and women and the different classes as part of patriarchy and capitalism respectively. So stronger answers were applying concepts such as the gender pay gap, glass ceiling, exploitation, institutionalised racism and other concepts to create their answer.

A common theme on these 9-mark questions is the need to evaluate and analyse. Stronger candidates provide a sustained line of reasoning and draw a logically structured judgement and conclusion. Some candidates do maintain an evaluative edge to their essay but still would benefit from reaching a firm conclusion at the end. However, time may be a factor in this, and they may benefit from at least making evaluative comments at the end of each section or paragraph.

## Question 6 Crime

Question 6b saw some strong answers where candidates outlined the process of a moral panic from the media sensationalising and exaggerating an event through the stereotyping and scapegoating of folk devils and deviancy amplification. Some even used the Marxist idea that at times the ruling class draw attention away from the real problems of society towards working class or youth crime. Stuart Hall and Stanley Cohen appeared in stronger answers. There were many valid examples of moral panics, and full marks required at least two examples. Some strong answers missed top marks for this reason.

Question 6c invited many different responses and candidates tackled it in various ways. Stronger answers considered patterns relating to gender, ethnicity, age and class. Some then offered explanations for crime or victim rates for different groups. This included theories of working-class crime, male crime or reasons why patterns may be misleading, such as chivalry thesis, institutionalised racism or differential law enforcement. There was no single correct way to respond to this question, so credit was given for answers that dealt with it in a logical and sociological way.

Question 6d was answered successfully by many. The strongest candidates considered why official statistics may be useful, demonstrated knowledge of how they are collected and then criticised this using the ideas of non-reported and non-recorded crime. Others then built on this with other concepts including invisible crime, white collar and corporate crime, institutionalised racism, chivalry theory or relevant studies. There is clearly a wealth of ideas that can be linked to this discussion and some candidates could have broadened the range of ideas they considered.

As with the 9-mark questions there is a need to analyse and evaluate as much as possible. Stronger candidates analysed in an ongoing way, but also included a clear conclusion at the end. This is even more important as 8 marks are awarded for AO3 on this question.

## Q7 Applied methods of sociological enquiry

These three questions all linked together to some extent, but 7a was directly linked to 7c. Stronger candidates chose well on 7a and were very specific about the method such as unstructured interviews or participant observation. This helped them to explain and evaluate with confidence.

The assessment objectives for this question are AO2 and AO3. Therefore, the strongest candidates applied the method they had chosen accurately to the study of homelessness. For instance, homelessness is a sensitive topic, and unstructured interviews would allow a rapport to be built up and questions formulated and revised so as not to cause any psychological harm or anxiety. Other issues related directly to homelessness were the difficulty in gaining a sample and therefore, representativeness. Candidates that just dealt with the evaluation of their method in a generic way were less successful. This application of method to the specific problem is an area for improvement.

## 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 2240 4280

Email: [GCSEsociology@edugas.co.uk](mailto:GCSEsociology@edugas.co.uk)

Qualification webpage: [GCSE Sociology | Edugas](#)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | Edugas](#)

### CPD Training / Professional Learning

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