

Principal examiner reports for teachers

Principal examiner reports for teachers summarise what candidates did well and what candidates needed to improve for this examination series only.

This report is to be used in conjunction with the question paper and mark scheme.

For guidance on teaching and learning we provide resources for many of our syllabuses.

Resource	Where to find it
Grade descriptions – Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Syllabus and specimen materials
Schemes of work – Schemes of work are designed to support you in your teaching and lesson planning.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Lesson planning – Guidance on how to plan a lesson.	Lesson planning
Resource plus – There may be additional resources such as teaching packs containing lesson plans, resources and worksheets and videos for aspects of your syllabus.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Teaching tools	Teaching Tools
Exemplar candidate responses	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Learner guide – A guide for students to help them understand what the course involves.	School support hub Select: Subject > Resource finder > Teaching and learning
Community forums – Do you have a question or something to share? Our online forums are great way to keep up to date with your subject and the global Cambridge community.	Community forum on the school support hub
Access to scripts for this series.	Access to scripts service
Results analysis is available for some syllabuses.	Results analysis
Test maker is available for some subjects.	Test maker

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SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12 Research Methods, Identity and Inequality

Key messages

What candidates did well

- Many candidates showed good interpretation and analysis skills in dealing with the source material in **Question 1**.
- Comprehensive answers met the requirements of each question by following the command words and any additional guidance given in bullet points.
- Where required, most candidates were able to draw on sociological evidence, including examples, concepts, studies, and theory.

What candidates needed to improve

- In **Questions 1 (d)** candidates need a clearer understanding of what researcher subjectivity (and correlate objectivity) means in terms of the researcher and how research is conducted. Some candidates simply described aspects of interpretivism and positivism rather than engaging with the core issue in a sustained way.
- In **Question 1 (e)** candidates should try to describe their chosen methods in some detail. This may mean, for example, specifying the type of questions to be used or exactly how an unstructured interview will be conducted. Candidates should use appropriate and contextual secondary data instead of formulaic 'official statistics', 'media' or 'past sociological studies'.
- In **Question 2 (c)** some candidates were unclear as to how values can directly affect a person's behaviour. Some conflated values with norms.
- In **Question 2 (f)** discussions of social class could have been more effectively linked to the question, which was about social identity rather than inequality.
- In **Question 3 (b)** candidates often did not include specific examples of equal opportunities laws. Localised examples are acceptable.
- In **Question 3 (e)** the question is about male advantage rather than female disadvantage, candidates needed to keep the focus on males rather than describing at length the inequalities experienced by women.

Comments on specific questions

Research Methods

Question 1

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Most candidates were able to identify the two years with the highest percentage of female MPs.

Limited responses

- A small number of responses only identified one year correctly.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses identified and briefly explained two reasons why the data is useful for researching gender inequality.
- Common correct answers focused on the fact that the data was quantitative and therefore useful for identifying patterns in gender inequality and that the data covers 1980 – 2020, allowing researchers to see the trends in the percentage of male and female MPs over a 40-year time span.

Limited responses

- Some candidates identified correct points, such as potentially useful aspects of the data, without clearly and correctly explaining why they were useful.
- A few candidates only gave one reason rather than two or simply stated two reasons with no subsequent development.

(iii) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses identified and explained three potential problems with the data for understanding gender inequality.
- Many responses focused on the fact that the information is about MPs in the British parliament, which does not allow researchers to understand the picture in other parliaments around the world. Similarly, it is a study of the percentage gender composition of MPs but gives no information about other employment sectors.
- Others noted that the data is outdated, ending in 2020, and has also been adapted. One of the most common responses was that being in quantitative form, the data lacks context and so researchers are unable to understand the reasons why there is this gender inequality in parliament.

Limited responses

- Some candidates correctly identified a point then gave explanations which were vague and/or too brief. For example, identifying a problem with the sample (it only refers to the British parliament) then stating that this made the data unrepresentative with no explanation.
- Some candidates made a point that was true of the source, although they did not include a direct source reference. For example, that the data in the source gave no qualitative data, hence no reasons why there is a historic difference between the number of male and female MPs and hence the data lacks full validity. Such responses would need to first identify an aspect of the source, in this case the fact that the data in the graph is quantitative.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- The most common correct answers gave structured interviews, surveys, and questionnaires as primary methods used to gather quantitative data.
- A few candidates gave semi-structured interviews which were acceptable.

Limited responses

- A few responses gave multiple-choice questions as one primary method. Some candidates cited interviews with no indication of type or gave sources of secondary evidence such as official statistics.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses gave brief but clear explanations of one strength and one limitation of using primary data in sociological research. The most popular correct strength was that it is first-hand data, and the researcher knows how valid or reliable the findings are as they chose the methodology and carried it out. Others pointed to the relevance of data to the researcher's purpose unlike using secondary data which may be of only partial relevance.
- The other main strength was that data will be up to date, again unlike secondary data which may be years out of date.
- Common limitations included the practical issues of time and cost and the danger of researcher bias or researcher imposition creeping into the research process.

Limited responses

- Some responses only stated points with insufficient explanation. One limitation identified was the limitation that primary data can be time-consuming. This was seldom explained properly via examples from the research process; for instance, that conducting interviews, transcribing and interpreting the data takes up researcher time in comparison to drawing upon pre-existing secondary data.

(d) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses developed at least two arguments for and against the view that researchers are always subjective when doing their research. Answers also came to a

conclusion at the end. These responses were conceptual throughout, and many framed their discussion in terms of the debate between positivism and interpretivism.

- Common arguments for subjectivity included the general idea that values are always in operation in research from the beginning via choice of topic and theoretical perspective (positivist for example).
- Another popular point centred on the interpretivist preference for primary methods that require researcher presence which is always liable to researcher imposition. This was frequently discussed in terms of various interviewer effects and the Hawthorne effect when overtly observing group behaviour.
- Others pointed to the likelihood of emotional involvement during more ethnographic studies.
- In evaluation, many argued that researcher subjectivity is not inevitable and in support rehearsed aspects of positivism, for example, putting the values of detachment and neutrality front and centre or choosing methods that do not require the physical presence of a researcher, delimiting the chances of any researcher effect on ensuing data.

Limited responses

- Some responses showed confusion between subjectivity and objectivity throughout.
- Many answers were only partially developed across four points, instead simply describing an aspect of positivism or interpretivism in purely narrative terms with only a vague reference to the question. For example, arguing that interpretivists are subjective because they wish to achieve qualitative data and a deep response, thus ensuring validity. Such approaches often only touched upon the question set tangentially.

(e) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses described two primary methods, with sampling for each method, and one source of secondary evidence. Each element was discussed in terms of their strengths relative to the context of an investigation into the fear of crime amongst old people.
- Most candidates chose to triangulate a quantitative method such as a structured interview or survey with a more qualitative method such as an in-depth interview or even observation in some cases. Detailed description frequently included what each method entailed, sometimes including example questions. Sampling was given for both primary methods and discussed in terms of detail. For example, how a sample could be accessed, the sampling technique to be employed and the sample composition.
- Answers were conceptual throughout, including reference to evaluative concepts such as validity, reliability, representativeness, and generalisability. Secondary data seen included drawing on official statistics or diaries, previous sociological studies etc.

Limited responses

- Limited responses often covered the basic requirements of the question, although engaged with question requirements superficially and with little real detail or justification.
- A few responses were generic and made no mention of the context of the investigation. Other candidates misinterpreted the context and understood the investigation to be more about older people committing crime.
- Some candidates showed a limited understanding of key evaluative terms and simply used the catch-all 'valid and reliable' with no indication of real understanding.

Identity: self and society

Question 2

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive answers gave a clear definition of the term 'pick and mix' society by reference to two elements.
- This frequently included the ideas of people now having many options in terms of how to construct their identity, with many linking this to consumer society and/or media-saturated society.
- Some candidates included the fact that the idea comes from a postmodernist perspective.

Limited responses

- Limited answers often repeated the idea of 'mixing' elements or gave a vague or incorrect definition.

- For example, a few answers defined the term solely as diversity in terms of culture and beliefs; others confused the idea of pick and mix with achieved status.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive definitions of the term multiculturalism referred to multiple cultures existing in a society. Mention was often made of such cultures existing alongside each other rather than mixing or assimilating.

Limited responses

- Limited responses were unclear and/or only made reference to one element. For example, defining multiculturalism as a society having different norms and beliefs.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive answers identified examples of formal agencies such as police or government, or formal control methods such as laws, arrest, putting people in prison etc.

Limited responses

- Some candidates were able to provide only one correct example of formal social control or offered incorrect responses such as norms or the family.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses identified and briefly, yet clearly, described three examples of how values can affect people's behaviour.
- Some answers identified a particular value and then described how it manifested in a person's life. For example, being taught to value honesty in primary socialisation means that a person would not tell lies or valuing manners means that people will say please and thank you appropriately.
- Others used examples of collective values such as religious or family values and described how a person translates these into behaviours.

Limited responses

- Limited responses often identified a general context for values, without developing how that impacts behaviour.
- Others made vague statements which were tangential to the question. For example, simply stating that values define a person's identity.

(d) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses identified and briefly described three different ways females are socialised into femininity.
- Common responses focused on the processes of canalisation, manipulation and verbal appellation and exemplified them in the primary socialisation of girls.
- Other answers referred to parental role modelling, for example, girls being taught to cook by mothers in preparation for their later roles as housewives and mothers.
- A few answers went beyond the confines of the family to discuss the hidden curriculum and peer pressure.

Limited responses

- Limited responses often made fewer than three points and/or did not develop points with regard to femininity. For example, simply stating that girls are encouraged to wear pink or play with a doll.
- A few answers were tangential, for example, discussing gender inequality in the home or the workplace, ignoring socialisation.

(e) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive answers showed a clear understanding of the meaning of social cohesion.
- Three conceptual developed points were needed. Common answers focused on the use of socialisation into common norms and values or value consensus as a basis for a sense of belonging in and to the social body. Others explored both informal and, more commonly, formal social control mechanisms and how they reinforce social expectations, cementing a common understanding of core values.

Limited responses

- Limited answers often made three points without sufficient detail. For example, describing primary socialisation without attempting to make a link to social cohesion. Others described the organic analogy without drawing out its implications for social cohesion.

(f) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses engaged in a balanced, two-sided debate regarding the view that age has the most influence on social identity. The aim was for candidates to construct three developed arguments for and against and come to a conclusion based on the weight of the evidence presented. Theory and concepts were used regularly and appropriately.
- Common arguments included the idea that age influences how people are seen in terms of their rights and responsibilities, with good examples of legal entitlements at age 16 or 18.
- Other arguments centred on the image of certain age groups in society such as the stereotyping and labelling of children, youth and the elderly and the impact this can have on how individuals come to perceive themselves.
- Others pointed to the increased importance of generation gaps and generational identity such as Gen Z and Gen Alpha.
- In evaluation, many argued that age is no longer influential as a source of identity due to the emergence of a pick and mix society where individuals choose their identity via lifestyle and consumer choices.
- The other approach was to argue that other factors such as a person's social class, gender or ethnicity play a more influential role in the construction of social identity. Here candidates were able to bring good quality evidence to their arguments including theoretical reference to feminism, Marxism, and postmodernism.

Limited responses

- Limited responses had a narrow range of points with less detail. For example, a key feature of limited responses was not enough evidence (concepts, studies, concrete examples) on the 'for' side of the argument.
- Some limited responses simply described different age groups.

Social stratification and inequality

Question 3

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses gave a clear definition of pollution that included two appropriate elements.
- The core of clear definitions included the idea of damage done to the environment. Frequent examples included plastics in the sea, oil spills, etc.

Limited responses

- Limited responses frequently gave one element that fell short of a clear definition, simply giving an example.
- Other answers were unclear, for example, defining pollution as an economic challenge caused by transnational companies.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses showed a clear understanding of the term power that included two appropriate definitional elements.
- Correct answers included the idea that power is about having control or authority over other people and/or their behaviour.

Limited responses

- Limited answers often just gave an example such as the bourgeoisie exploiting the proletariat.
- A few responses attempted to define power in terms of energy such as electricity.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Candidates correctly stated two examples of equal opportunities laws such as the Equality Act in the UK. Localised examples were also used.

- Some candidates referenced various rights which have a basis in law such as the right to vote.

Limited responses

- Some answers were vague, for example, providing statements that described women getting the same opportunities as men with no reference to laws.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive answers clearly and briefly described three ways life chances may be affected by being working class.
- Commonly accepted points included how working-class people have less chances to achieve good outcomes in education, the workplace, in health and housing.

Limited responses

- Some responses identified points without developing them further. For example, offering negative aspects of working-class experience, such as social exclusion.

(d) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive answers identified and briefly explained three ways cultural diversity affects societies.
- Candidates frequently referred to negative effects such as increased tension and conflict due to different norms and values, an increase in racism and a pressure on social resources due to increased immigration.
- Positive effects included the economic benefits of having migrant labour and individuals with different talents, more awareness of difference leading to greater understanding and tolerance in society.

Limited responses

- Some candidates demonstrated some understanding of cultural diversity, with responses often limited to one or two points and little explanation of their effects on society. Some candidates drifted into discussion of cultural homogeneity.

(e) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses constructed three detailed, evidenced points in support of the view that a reserve army of labour exists. Conceptuality and references to sociological theory were used consistently.
- Many answers featured women being recruited as factory and agricultural labour in World War Two before being encouraged to return to their roles as homemakers when the war ended.
- Others explored the Marxist idea of the proletariat being used as a reserve army who can be hired when the economy is booming and fired easily when in times of recession.
- Another common point focused on the use of migrant workers in some countries as an available source of cheap labour particularly when they are used illegally or have few employment rights.

Limited responses

- Limited responses were often brief, partially developed points with only some evidence. For example, describing the economic exploitation of the working class without reference to the idea of periodic unemployment.
- A few responses showed no understanding of the reserve army of labour, instead discussing armies or military forces.

(f) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive answers followed the instructions in the question and provided three substantial arguments for and against the view, coming to a conclusion at the end.
- Arguments for the view often illustrated good range when they revolved around different foci, such as gender inequality in the home, in education and in the workplace.
- Theory, concepts, examples, and studies appeared throughout candidates' arguments ranging from the warm bath theory in the home, the gendered curriculum at school, to the horizontal and vertical segregation in employment.
- In evaluation, candidates put forward arguments for age, social class, and ethnicity as competing alternatives for having the most impact on social inequality. For example, many wrote at length about Marxist arguments for importance of social class divisions.

- A few candidates pointed to the functionalist idea that society is now a meritocracy, and laws exist to prohibit gender-based violence and discrimination so gender inequality does not have the main impact on social inequality.
- A few candidates referenced the need for intersectionality when discussing issues of inequality.

Limited responses

- Limited responses were often insufficiently detailed in their arguments. For example, in evaluation arguing that ageism is more impactful than gender without offering limited evidence.
- Very limited answers were often two-sided and list-like, or with a very narrow range.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/22 Family, Education and Crime
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Key messages

What candidates did well

- Comprehensive responses met the requirements of each question by following the question rubric, writing an appropriate amount, and using accurate sociological concepts, terminology, and theory.
- Answers were coherent and well-structured, broken down into clear paragraphs for the more extended responses.
- Candidates included appropriate examples and used relevant sociological evidence/studies, demonstrating their ability to apply sociological knowledge to specific questions and viewpoints.

What candidates needed to improve

- Candidates need to carefully consider the amount of marks on offer for each question and the associated command words. They should write an appropriate amount for this.
- A recurring area for improvement was the development of points. Some candidates identified relevant knowledge, although did not explain its relevance to the question.
- The **part (a)** questions require candidates to demonstrate their sociological knowledge and understanding, therefore they need to be careful not to simply repeat terms in the question.
- Candidates should be able to give full definitions of terms listed in the syllabus and should remember the usefulness of well-chosen examples to help them do this successfully.
- In the **part (b)** questions candidates need to ensure they keep focused on the command word of state/give and not waste time offering a lengthy (and unrequired) paragraph.
- The **(c)** and **(d)** questions require the same skills and approach from candidates. Three points need to be made, either numbered or with clear discourse markers (firstly, secondly, etc.) for clarity. The development of these points does not need to be overly long, but every point should be explained/described to demonstrate understanding. These are not extended response questions.
- The **part (e)** questions do not require a debate to be made. Candidates simply need to offer three different and sociological points substantiated with evidence that support the view in the question. Good development here is key for success, as in the **part (f)** questions.
- The **part (f)** questions will always require candidates to put forward a debate following the bullet point instructions set out in the question. These arguments should be balanced and substantiated by sociological evidence and theory. Development is key in the **part (f)** questions so candidates should aim for each point to be a full paragraph with explicit focus on the question set.
- **Part (f)** questions are the only place in the examination where a conclusion is asked for. These should be well focused on the question and aim to make a judgement upon it rather than simply repeating the key points made in the essay.
- Candidates should take time to plan their answers before writing for the extended responses required in **part (e)** and **(f)** questions. Planning helps ensure that responses are focused on the specific demands of each question as well as fulfilling the demands of the different command words. This will result in better application of sociological knowledge to a specific question.
- Candidates need to ensure they look for the key prompt in the question and respond specifically to this to avoid generic/unfocused responses.

Comments on specific questions

Family

Question 1

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Responses showed a clear understanding of the term in the question and included the key features, for example, stating the legal union of two people and emphasising that this provided similar rights to marriage.

Limited responses

- Responses generally included only one of the two elements.
- Some candidates provided only vague descriptions rather than precise definitions, and a common misconception was that a civil partnership simply meant living together without being married.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Many responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept, correctly defining it as a family in which both partners are engaged in paid employment.

Limited responses

- Some responses displayed a limited understanding of the concept by confusing it with the dual burden, resulting in inaccurate definitions. Some also included reference to the domestic role/did not differentiate between home and outside work. Clarity is key for the definition style questions.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- A significant number of candidates correctly identified reasons why people get divorced.
- Common responses included the increased ease of obtaining a divorce, secularisation, the financial independence of women, falling out of love, ongoing arguments and conflict, domestic abuse, and infidelity, among others.

Limited responses

- Few candidates only identified one reason correctly. Some candidates wrote unnecessarily long paragraphs, explaining their points in detail instead of providing clear, concise, and focused responses as per the command word in the question.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Most candidates were able to identify and describe relevant reasons for arranged marriages.
- Responses frequently focused on the importance of cultural traditions, religious beliefs, maintaining family ties, and preserving social status within communities.
- Some also discussed the fact that arranged marriages typically last longer than love marriages.
- Responses provided clearer explanations of how arranged marriages contribute to both social cohesion and cultural continuity.

Limited responses

- Few candidates were unable to provide three reasons for arranged marriages.
- Some responses only made one or two points or repeated themselves and/or made incorrect reference to forced marriages.

(d) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses correctly identified and explained the ways in which the family has lost some of its traditional functions.
- The strongest responses explained how functions traditionally performed by the family, as identified by functionalist sociologists, have increasingly been taken over by other institutions. These included the educational function being assumed by schools, the care of children and older people being provided by childcare services and residential care homes, and aspects of social control and welfare being carried out by government agencies and other formal institutions.
- Some also made reference to the family changing from a unit of production to a unit of consumption.

Limited responses

- Some responses confused the functions of the family with the roles performed by family members, resulting in explanations that did not fully address the demands of the question.

- While many candidates discussed changes linked to industrialisation, secularisation, and shifting gender roles, they often did not connect these developments to the transfer of traditional family functions to other institutions.

(e) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses were well-developed and demonstrated a clear sociological understanding of the issue.
- Comprehensive answers effectively applied relevant sociological concepts and theories, with many drawing on feminist critiques of the view that the family has become symmetrical.
- Common points included critiquing the functionalist perspective such as Murray, research by Oakley and Sharpe: dual burden and triple shift: paid work/domestic work/childcare and emotional support. Talcott Parsons' 'warm bath' theory was also well-known. Domestic violence, and inequalities in household decision-making, often using the research by Dobash and Dobash were also well applied.
- These responses were analytical, well supported, and demonstrated effective sociological engagement with the question.

Limited responses

- Few candidates did not answer the question, and a few described symmetrical families or included points about symmetrical families and why family members now shared the roles.
- Some candidates provided simple, common-sense descriptions rather than sociological explanations for a lack of symmetry within families. These responses showed limited depth, analysis, and theoretical engagement.

(f) Comprehensive responses

- Most responses effectively answered this question, with many producing strong, well-structured answers. Most candidates met the brief of three points for and three points against, supported by sociological language and evidence of research and a conclusion/judgement.
- Common arguments in support of lone-parent families included escaping patriarchy, increased independence, making decisions without conflict, and feminist views of gender roles. For the opposing arguments, many candidates successfully applied Functionalist and New Right perspectives, as well as discussing the financial pressures associated with lone-parent families.
- The more comprehensive answers made use of sociological theories/theorists, most frequently feminism/Ann Oakley, New Right/Charles Murray, and functionalism/Parsons/Murdock. These responses engaged with sociological perspectives and research evidence, considering both the strengths and limitations of lone-parent families. These candidates evaluated factors such as financial pressures, child outcomes, social support networks, parental involvement, and social stigma, while also challenging assumptions that any single type of family can be regarded as universally superior.

Limited responses

- Some responses were overly based on common-sense reasoning rather than sociological explanation. For example, candidates would simply state that lone parents make all the decisions or experience less domestic abuse without developing these ideas using relevant sociological theory or concepts. These responses tended to rely on personal opinions and anecdotal examples, with limited reference to sociological concepts, theories, or evidence.
- Development of points was typically too short and did not include sociological evidence.
- Most conclusions just summarised what they had already said in the answer.

Education

Question 2

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses answered this question well and were able to accurately define socialisation. The most commonly seen elements referred to the learning/teaching of norms and values of a society.

Limited responses

- Few answers showed no understanding of the term. Some answers confused socialisation with socialising. It is essential that candidates can apply sociological knowledge and understanding rather than common-sense to their responses.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses defined the term meritocracy extremely well. This is a key sociological concept within education, and most candidates had a secure understanding of the term.
- Most candidates gave accurate textbook-style definitions, explaining that individuals achieve their positions based on their own merit, ability, or educational achievement and not due to ascribed social factors such as social class.

Limited responses

- Very few responses demonstrated no understanding of the term. Some candidates gave rather general definitions demonstrating partial understanding. For example, linking meritocracy to fairness.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- The most common comprehensive responses referred to differences in class sizes, levels of poverty, access to the internet and educational resources, access to education for girls, and differences in the curriculum across countries. A very good understanding of global differences in education was seen.

Limited responses

- Some responses were not well focused on global differences in education, giving simple statements such as 'private schools' without explaining how schooling differs globally. Some candidates included general schooling issues that were not linked to global differences, for example, uniforms.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive answers were able to provide relevant reasons as to why candidates align themselves with pro-school values and behaviours in schools. Common responses focused on achieving academic success, gaining approval from teachers and parents, securing future employment opportunities, and developing positive peer relationships.

Limited responses

- Limited responses tended to be repetitive and therefore did not make the requisite three points. Alternatively, points were accurately identified, although they were not well developed.
- A few candidates referred to anti-school subcultures instead. Others discussed subcultures more generally, for example, Goths, punks, with no focus on the key elements of the question.

(d) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses demonstrated very good understanding of the Marxist view of education through explaining three views, most commonly the ideology of the ruling class, meritocracy being a myth, the hidden curriculum, private education as elitist and unfair, correspondence principle, reproduction of class inequalities etc. These were accurate and well developed.

Limited responses

- Some candidates did not provide three distinct aspects of the Marxist view of education. Others could make a relevant point, although these were undeveloped.
- A few candidates confused Marxism with other sociological theories such as feminism and/or functionalism.

(e) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive answers developed three evidenced and conceptual points as to why single-sex schooling is beneficial. Commonly seen points included increased confidence in girls, fewer distractions for candidates, reduced male dominance within the classroom, more egalitarian subject choices that are not hindered by gender stereotypes, for example, STEM,

protection from misogyny and greater equality of opportunity for girls, often applying feminist ideas to support their arguments.

- Comprehensive responses incorporated sociological concepts and evidence to explain how single-sex schooling may influence academic performance, gender identity, aspirations, and educational outcomes.

Limited responses

- Some candidates, while identifying ways in which single-sex schools benefited candidates, offered vague and/or underdeveloped explanations. Most candidates focused on girls' schools rather than boys'. A few answers also discussed how single-sex schools did not benefit candidates.
- Some responses were based on general experience rather than demonstrating engagement with relevant sociological concepts, relying on common sense reasoning rather than sociological explanation.

(f)

Comprehensive responses

- Some responses presented successful debates. Lots of knowledge was shown on both sides with accurate sociological material being used to support the particular points made.
- Arguments for the view that ethnicity is the most important factor in explaining differences in educational achievement frequently discussed (institutional) racism, the ethnocentric curriculum, linguistic factors, home and in-school factors and labelling theory, among others.
- On the against side, responses commonly talked about gender and social class. Specific ethnic groups like the Chinese, Indian, or African Caribbean candidates were mentioned on either side, depending on the context of the argument made. The higher-level responses made use of sociological theory such as Marxism and/or feminism as well as referring to particular theorists/studies such as Archer, Sewell, or Labov.
- Comprehensive responses recognised that ethnicity is only one of several factors affecting educational achievement and evaluated its significance in relation to social class, gender, material deprivation, cultural factors, school processes, and educational policies. These responses demonstrated a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the debate.

Limited responses

- Some responses relied on common-sense explanations rather than applying sociological concepts and theories. Limited responses did not bring the focus back to educational achievement or did not expand sufficiently on the effect of racism/language difficulties and teacher labelling on achievement levels.
- A few candidates provided only brief list-like answers, sometimes leaning heavily towards one side resulting in an unbalanced debate.
- A common feature of limited responses was the limited use of sociological evidence, theory, and research to support points being made. As a result, many responses contained valid arguments, although they did not contain the knowledge and understanding required for the highest levels of performance.
- A few candidates did not understand the term ethnicity at all.

Crime, deviance and social control

Question 3

(a) (i) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses understood 'relative deprivation' as the perception of being disadvantaged in comparison to others within society, rather than experiencing absolute poverty.

Limited responses

- Limited responses either showed no understanding of the term or were insufficiently clear. Some confused it with a lack of contact with relatives or family members. Few confused it with crime committed by your relatives. These responses highlighted a misunderstanding of the concept and showed that the term was not understood.

(ii) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses provided accurate definitions involving the use of physical punishment or pain on offenders, often supported with examples such as whipping or flogging. Examples were used well.

Limited responses

- Limited responses tended to misunderstand the word 'corporal', confusing it with 'corporate', and consequently wrote about punishments in the workplace or by employers. These responses demonstrated a misunderstanding of the term. Another common misconception was confusing corporal punishment with capital punishment.
- Some candidates only gave one element within their answer, typically an example, and so could only achieve partial understanding.

(b) Comprehensive responses

- Common responses seen for this question on green crime included pollution, illegal dumping of waste, deforestation, and wildlife crimes. It was clear that most candidates had a secure understanding of environmental crime and were able to provide relevant examples.

Limited responses

- Limited responses perhaps only made one point. Alternatively, the examples provided were not examples of green crimes.

(c) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses identified exaggeration, prediction, symbolisation, the creation of stereotypes and folk devils, deviancy amplification and the role of the media, developing these points well.
- Some candidates exemplified their ideas further with examples such as the mods and the rockers.

Limited responses

- Many candidates demonstrated only a partial understanding of a moral panic, frequently reducing it to the idea of exaggeration by the media or society. While this is an important feature, many responses did not identify and describe other key characteristics, such as heightened public concern, hostility towards a perceived threat, the identification of folk devils, and disproportionate societal reactions. As a result, a significant number of candidates did not develop three distinct features fully enough.

(d) Comprehensive responses

- Comprehensive responses demonstrated a good understanding of factors associated with lower rates of offending among older people, including increased social responsibility, physical impairment, stronger informal social controls, reduced opportunities for crime, greater financial security through pensions or savings and lower levels of risk-taking behaviour.
- Responses were often well explained. Candidates applied their sociological knowledge and understanding well.

Limited responses

- Some candidates did not explain their points in full or mistakenly said that old people were often victims of crime. While some responses reflected common sense knowledge, they were aligned with the question's criteria and therefore relevant.

(e) Comprehensive responses

- The most common responses focused on formal agencies of social control such as the police, courts, and prisons. Candidates used sociological concepts including rehabilitation, punishment, and deterrence, alongside relevant examples such as stop and search, CCTV, laws, and legislation.
- Most candidates answered the question well and explained a variety of ways that formal agencies prevent crime such as prisons incapacitating people, the government making laws and the police deterring criminals. Most common answers included police surveillance, community patrols, stop and search/targeting, the penal system, incarcerated/rehabilitation/courts sentencing following government laws, media publishing consequences of crime/deterrents, zero tolerance in New York/broken windows theory etc.

- Responses supported their discussion with sociological evidence and demonstrated a clearer understanding of the role and effectiveness of formal agencies within society.

Limited responses

- Limited responses tended to be short and make only one or two points which did not include any or sufficient development or made three distinct points, although they could not offer a full discussion of these sociologically. Some candidates incorrectly discussed informal agencies of social control, such as the family, meaning they were not answering the question.
- Many answers relied on generic statements about punishment and deterrence without exploring broader sociological explanations relating to social control, surveillance, rehabilitation, deterrence, or social order. As a result, responses often did not include the depth and analysis required.
- A few candidates evaluated the question. Three distinct and developed points in support of the view in the question are all that are required.

(f)

Comprehensive responses

- The most comprehensive responses linked subculturalism to young people, collective deviance, gang crime and referred to theorists such as Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin or Willis.
- Responses referred to concepts such as status frustration, youth crime, gangs, and deviant subcultures, applying these effectively to the question.
- The most common counter-arguments focused on alternative explanations of crime, including Marxist, feminist, and labelling theories. The idea of status frustration was used on both sides of the debate.
- In their counterarguments, candidates most commonly discussed explanations of crime in terms of gender, social class, the labelling theory and postmodernism, typically presenting here more coherent and developed arguments. Candidates needed to organise their answers into paragraphs and develop each idea fully. They should aim for three points for and three against the claim in the question. There also needed to be a well-focused conclusion that made a supported judgement.
- Candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of key subcultural theories and concepts before critically assessing their strengths and limitations in comparison with alternative explanations of crime. These responses provided a more balanced evaluation.

Limited responses

- Many candidates produced lengthy responses, although they did not demonstrate a clear understanding of subcultural theories of crime, resulting in answers that were unfocused.
- Many candidates demonstrated only a limited understanding of subcultural theories of crime and deviance, with some appearing unfamiliar with key concepts associated with subculturalism. As a result, explanations of how subcultures may encourage criminal or deviant behaviour were often underdeveloped and did not contain appropriate sociological detail.
- Many responses focused heavily on evaluating subcultural explanations through alternative theories, such as Marxism, interactionism, right realism, or left realism, without first establishing a sufficiently detailed explanation of the subcultural perspective itself. This created an imbalance between analysis and evaluation. Consequently, responses were often one-sided, with stronger evaluation than knowledge and understanding.
- Many answers offered general and less sociologically engaged responses to the question. There were a number of brief or incomplete responses, suggesting that the candidates may have been rushing and were running out of time.