

SOCIOLOGY

<p>Paper 0495/11</p> <p>Research Methods, Identity and Inequality</p>

Key messages

- In **Question 1 (a)(ii)** and **(a)(iii)** the same technique should be used for answering both questions. Firstly, identify an element from *within the source itself* and, secondly, *clearly* explain why it is useful **1(a)(ii)** or problematic **1(a)(iii)** for studying or understanding *the topic in the question*. When using words like validity, representativeness or reliability ensure these are explained fully by reference to the source material.
- In **Question 1(e)** the justifications for methods, samples and evidence was often done better than the description of them. 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 observation will be conducted.
- In **Question 1(b)** and option **Question (b)**, where candidates are asked to identify/state something or to give examples, an extended response is not required. A word/phrase or sentence will suffice.
- In extended **Question 1(d)** and option **Questions 2/3 (e)** and **(f)** it is helpful if arguments are written in paragraph form. Within each paragraph the point should be developed by reference to explanation and evidence. The latter includes examples, sociological studies, sociological theory or empirical evidence such as statistics.
- **Question 1(c)**, **1(d)**, and **1(e)** all require knowledge of the strengths and limitations of particular research methods and approaches. Avoid making generic points such as ‘people may lie’ which could apply to almost any research method. Ordinarily such points are not creditworthy unless properly contextualised by reference to the method or aspect of methodology being discussed. For example ‘people may lie’ would achieve no credit. What would gain credit would be to say *if a respondent is interviewed on the subject of racial prejudice by someone of from an ethnic minority, they may give a socially desirable answer, i.e., lie in order to maintain a good relationship in the interview situation*. Similarly, answers that assert that a research method is *cheap* or *expensive* or *time-consuming* are often best avoided as they can be hard to contextualise.
- In option **Questions 2/3 (e)** candidates are instructed to include three developed points. All points should be ‘for’ the view; no credit will be given for evaluation.

General comments

This was the first assessment opportunity for the revised 2025 syllabus. Candidate responses showed that they were prepared for the demands of the both the content of the new syllabus and the new assessment structure. Candidates appeared to benefit from the new guidance given in the bulleted instructions in **Question 1(d)**, **1(e)** and option **Questions (e)** and **(f)**. All candidates completed the compulsory **Question 1** on Research Methods. Candidates then answered one of the optional questions, with **Question 2** on Identity: Self and Society being more popular than **Question 3** on Social Stratification and Inequality. Candidates were able to utilise different skills, such as analysing and evaluating source material, defining sociological concepts, designing and justifying a research design and explaining and evaluating sociological views or arguments. Overall, some good quality responses were in evidence across all sections of the paper, demonstrating a positive engagement with the questions and the three assessment objectives. There were relatively few non-responses or timing issues and almost no rubric errors.

Question 1 ‘Research Methods’ proved to be a good test of candidates’ knowledge of key research concepts and methods. There was a good level of engagement and understanding of the source material on Ehrenreich’s research on low wage workers and the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used in gathering the data. Responses showed a basic and sometimes good understanding of semi-structured interviews and the macro approach to research. Analysis and interpretation of the source material was generally good. Many candidate responses made clear and confident use of methodological terms.

In both option questions most candidates showed sound and, in some cases, good knowledge and understanding of the key theories, concepts and arguments within the topics. New aspects of the syllabus were generally understood, including hybrid identities, pull factors in migration, the negative effects of social media and the shortcomings of non-Governmental Organisations. A good range of marks was seen by examiners though relatively few high scoring scripts were seen. Some responses showed real insight and sophistication in their grasp of the question and handling of sociological evidence. Many candidates achieved good marks in **Question (c)** and **(d)** by explaining three elements, for example three pull factors that may cause people to migrate to another country. In terms of quality, some candidates were well organised and marshalled evidence very effectively in option **Question (e)**, though some mistakenly engaged in evaluation for which there is no credit. In **Question (f)**, some responses lacked range and/or were not sufficiently sociologically developed. A number of the extended responses to **(e)** and **(f)** were also not organised into paragraphs and tended towards the narrative and description, thereby only achieving limited marks. There were few list-like and/or one-sided answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Research methods

- (a) (i)** An excellent response here with almost all candidates identifying two conclusions of Ehrenreich's research.
- (ii)** This question required candidates to use information in Source A to explain two reasons why the research is useful for studying the experiences of low-wage workers. It drew a mixed response. The majority of responses demonstrated some engagement with the source and presented at least one identified and/or developed point to show why the data is useful. Creditable responses frequently included the fact that the research used a *first-hand participant observation* thus giving an insider's view of life in low-wage work, or that the observation was done *covertly* and in a naturalistic setting, enhancing validity and avoiding the Hawthorne Effect. Others noted that the observation was of *several months' duration*, allowing more than a snapshot of life in low wage work or that *the research took place in four different cities*, thereby giving a more representative picture than research based only in one place. Some of the responses only referred to information from the source without developing the points, thus being limited to one mark per point. Others offered vague explanations that could not be credited, e.g. simply asserting *that it would bring to light problems experienced by the working class* or *that it is useful because it might bring social change* etc. with no direct reference to the source or study.
- (iii)** The overall response to this question was stronger than **1(a)(ii)** showing that candidates found it easier to critique the source than to recognise its utility in terms of understanding the experiences of low-wage workers. Popular points often focused on Ehrenreich herself and the fact that she was *middle-class* which may have impeded her ability to understand the experiences of working-class people. Moreover, the research only *lasted four months* which may not be sufficient for her to get an insiders experience of the impact of long term low-wage work. As with **1(a)(ii)** any of these points by themselves would be awarded one mark. To achieve the second mark the candidate needed to unpack or develop the explanation in terms of why this aspect is not useful for the topic. Answers could be fairly concise. So, to say that *she only tried four jobs which is too few/too small a sample to be representative of low-wage work* was sufficient for both marks. Similarly *the data was written down at the end of the day, so Ehrenreich may have forgotten details or been too tired to give a full account in her notes, negatively affecting validity* is enough for both marks. Weaker answers lacked specificity, simply asserting that Ehrenreich was biased, or gave points that merely restated the source. A few answers cited elements that were in the source but were not creditworthy as potential problems, such as writing out the aims of Ehrenreich's research.
- (b)** This question required candidates to state two aspects of a positivist approach to sociological research. It was apparent that candidates either knew what positivism is, in which case they usually collected both marks, or they did not, and thereby did not score any marks. Common correct answers included the fact that a positivist approach is a scientific or macro approach/uses large sample, it collects quantitative data, produces reliable data and strives for objectivity. There were several non-responses.
- (c)** In this question candidates were asked to explain one strength and one limitation of semi-structured interviews. The question drew a mixed response. In terms of the strengths of the

method, some candidates correctly identified that in semi-structured interviews researchers can ask additional questions and probe for information, adding depth and increasing validity. Other popular responses focused on the idea that some standardised questions may be asked, allowing for quantitative data and comparability as well as some degree of reliability for findings. Limitations seen included the fact that semi-structured interviews are more time-consuming than structured interviews because of the inclusion of additional questions, which means that they cannot be completed on large samples, negatively affecting representativeness and generalisability. Another popular point reversed the reliability issue, arguing that the nature of any unscheduled additional questions will differ between interviewees, thus making replication difficult. Others cited the inevitable interviewer effect that may impact the validity of data gained. Answers scoring two marks often identified an appropriate strength or limitation but then did not develop the point at all or with sufficient clarity. A small number of answers tried to apply their answers to the source and discussed people being interviewed about low-wage work which was not creditworthy.

- (d) This essay-style question asked candidates to evaluate the macro approach to sociological research by developing at least two arguments for and two against. Most candidates provided a two-sided answer with the required range of points and came to a conclusion. The quality of arguments, however, varied and many found the demands of the question challenging. Most candidates scored marks in level one (1–3 marks) or level two (4–7 marks). Most candidates mentioned the large scale nature of macro research enabling the study of social facts. Some arguments considered the idea that the ability of the researcher to probe respondents, where needed, allowed more qualitative and in-depth information to emerge, with a positive impact on validity. Others explained that the element of standardisation in a semi-structured format allowed for some questions to be repeated in other interviews enabling comparability. On the against side of the argument many responses turned to interpretivism, arguing that the study of the individual in qualitative terms and on a micro level leads to a more accurate picture of social reality. Practical issues such as the macro approach being less time consuming and/or expensive were often not well explained. A few answers showed no knowledge and understanding of the macro approach.
- (e) This question asked candidates to explain the research methods and evidence they would choose to investigate views on marriage. It basically requires candidates to create a research design for this topic. The question type is a new addition to the assessment structure and it clearly posed a challenge for candidates. There were several no responses. Most candidates scored between 1 and 7 marks with very few scoring 8 or 9 marks. No candidates scored in the 10–12 mark range. The first marking criteria given for this question was for **Knowledge and understanding** of methods and evidence. Here successful answers provided detailed and accurate *descriptions* of the research methods chosen, with relevant sampling, along with a *description* of a suitable piece of secondary evidence. For example, describing the types and examples of questions to be asked in an unstructured interview, the size of a sample and how access could be gained or exactly how a survey was going to be carried out. Such descriptions integrated sociological concepts such as open/closed questions, a standardised approach, rapport, qualitative/quantitative data, probing etc. Many answers gave only a brief description of how research choices were to be implemented which meant that they were likely to score only 1 or 2 marks for Knowledge and understanding. The second marking criteria was for **Reasons for choices**, in other words explaining why a particular method or sample was chosen, including the use of appropriate terms such as reliability, validity, representativeness and generalisability. This was often done better than the description of methods and evidence. However, many justifications tended to be rather generic – for example an unstructured interview was chosen to gain ‘valid data’, with little explanation as to how this was to be arrived at using this interview technique. The final marking criteria was for **Application to context** or how well the candidate was able to orient their research choices to the topic of views about marriage. Many responses simply repeated the phrase marriage with little or no real engagement. The best answers *integrated* contextual insights into their descriptions and rationale for methods, sampling and secondary evidence. A few candidates engaged in evaluation, describing the disadvantages of chosen methods, sampling or secondary evidence which was not creditworthy.

Question 2 Identity: self and society

- (a) (i) The definitional question on agencies of socialisation drew a mixed response. The majority of the responses demonstrated some understanding of the term and a good number achieved full marks. The best answers made reference to a group that teach or transmit the norms and values of society. Many answers offered examples such as the family, education or the peer group. A small number of responses confused socialisation with socialising or mixing with others showing a very basic lack of understanding. Other answers were too vague to credit, for example discussing 'factors that nurture children'.
- (ii) The question was not answered well on the whole, with a large number of responses showing limited understanding of the term hybrid identities. The term is a new addition to the syllabus for topic two and denotes identities that are a combining of aspects of different cultural identities to create a new identity. Some candidates scored one mark by referring to the idea of a mixing of elements (such as norms and values) as a result of multiculturalism. The best answers made a solid link to identities as the ways in which we see and present ourselves.
- (b) This question asked candidates to give two examples of coercion. It was not answered well. Popular correct answers included threats, violence or the use of force. Relatively few specific examples were seen such as arrest. A large number of responses showed no understanding of the term. Some answers went on to describe the examples which was unnecessary.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain three ways young people can be negatively affected by social media. Many candidates handled the question with confidence and scored five or six marks. Common answers included being influenced by bad but 'cool' role models on social media and imitating poor or deviant lifestyles seen on social media such as a drug-taking. Others pointed to fake news and the stereotyping of groups such as immigrants on social media sites which can lead to young people absorbing such negative views and becoming prejudiced. Many referred to the intimidation and bullying of vulnerable individuals on social media such as teenagers and minority groups, leading to mental health issues and social isolation. Candidates scoring at the lower end invariably made fewer points or did not develop them sufficiently to achieve the second mark per point.
- (d) This question asked candidates to explain three ways identity can be negatively impacted by global culture. The marks for responses to this question were lower than in **2(c)** which shows it to be more challenging. In the best answers candidates identified an area of global culture and then explained how this could be problematic for identity. Higher scoring answers often featured the idea of a process of globalisation becoming westernised or Americanised by spreading the same cultural products such as food, clothing, norms and values throughout the world resulting in homogenisation of identities and the loss of diverse cultural identities. Each of these examples could be cited as a different way instead of being coalesced into one. Lower scoring answers made fewer discrete points and/or did not explain them well.
- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss how courts are an effective agency of formal social control. In their answer candidates were asked to include at least three developed points with evidence. Most candidates formulated some points though the quality of development was variable resulting in a spread of marks. Very few answers were able to reach level 3 (7–8). This is not a question where candidates are expected to engage in evaluation, unlike **Question 1 (d)** and option **Question (f)** where there is a specific instruction to create arguments for and against. In option **Question (e)** candidates only need to develop three points or arguments about the view. Any points arguing against the view, therefore, for example points arguing for courts being ineffective, were not creditworthy. The most successful answers focused on the idea of courts as the dispensers of various punishments for crime and linking that point back to social control. So, for example, some argued that courts send offenders to prison which keeps society safe and/or allows offenders to reform so that they don't commit crimes again upon release back into society. A few answers discussed the idea that courts allow for a fair trial wherein justice is showcased to the public or that the shame of going to court in itself may be enough to deter some away from deviance and crime. Stronger responses had three clearly different and fully developed points whereas weaker responses were either narrower or less well developed.
- (f) This proved to be a somewhat challenging question for the majority. In their answers candidates were asked to evaluate the functionalist view of socialisation, including at least three arguments for and three arguments against, with a conclusion. Most answers scored in level two (4–8 marks) or

occasionally level three (9–12 marks). Stronger answers frequently referred to the idea that socialisation is necessary for transmitting the norms and values of society from one generation to another. Most explored how this is done by via primary socialisation in the family but discussions of the hidden curriculum in schools, peer pressure and the media as an agency of socialisation also featured strongly. Others discussed the necessity for informal social control as administered through positive and negative sanctions. Some answers linked socialisation to the need for value consensus and social cohesion. In evaluation Marxist and feminist views were put forward and these were fairly well unpacked. Some rehearsed the Marxist idea of socialisation of working class children as preparation for exploitation; others drew upon Oakley's research on the use of canalisation and manipulation to argue that socialisation forces children into harmful stereotypical gender roles which feed the injustices of a patriarchal society. Most answers drew a conclusion which was most often a concise summary rather than a reasoned judgement based on the actual arguments presented.

Question 3 Social stratification and inequality

- (a) (i) Only a few candidates attempted option **Question 3**, but of those who did most achieved at least one mark on the definitional question on the welfare state. Partial definitions often made reference to getting money from the government whilst more developed answers also featured the idea of benefits or other services such as health and education to reduce social inequality.
- (ii) Intersectionality is a new concept in the syllabus. The term refers to the way in which different forms of inequality interact with each other, for example an older woman who is Black experiences a unique form of inequality to a working-class white male. It is a complex idea but some responses scored one mark by giving an example such as the impact of age and gender. An answer that scored full marks made reference to different social characteristics crossing over and interacting with each other. A few answers showed no understanding of the term.
- (b) This question required candidates to give two features of the poverty trap. Common answers seen included a dependency culture, a cycle of poverty, the inability to escape poverty and a lack of access to education. Expected features such as having to shop in expensive convenience stores, a lack of access to banking facilities or relying on credit or loans for basic necessities were seldom seen but were creditworthy. A few answers gave extra and unnecessary explanation for their points.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain three pull factors that may cause people to migrate to another country. It was answered well in general and many candidates scored full marks. Common pull factors identified included better healthcare, educational provision and life chances, in other countries, as well as more human rights for people in persecuted groups. These just needed to be unpacked a little to achieve the second mark per point. Some answers were confused, identifying push factors instead such as natural disasters and lack of job opportunities.
- (d) The question asking candidates to explain three criticisms of non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). NGOs are a new addition to the syllabus and whilst few candidates answered option **Question 3** those that did made a good attempt here. Common answers included the fact that corruption occurs and money/aid is lost, in some NGOs there is a lack of proper monitoring of the effectiveness of aid projects which means that resources are sometimes squandered. Others pointed out that the existence of NGOs allows governments to shirk their responsibilities to citizens as someone else will provide education, emergency aid etc. There were few references to actual NGOs or case studies and this would have enhanced the development of points.
- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss the view that ethnicity affects life chances. As in option **Question 2**, answers needed to include at least three developed points with evidence for the view; no evaluation is required. Few candidates attained marks in level three and most answers demonstrated a limited or basic understanding of the demands of the question, scoring marks in levels one and two. Popular answers focused on negative labelling in the media, for example Black youth labelled as delinquent or criminal, leading to higher stop and search rates and police targeting; the ethnocentric curriculum in education where minority cultures are either invisible or misrepresented leading to a feeling of alienation and social exclusion which is likely to adversely affect achievement. Discrimination in the workplace also featured with minority ethnic groups being denied jobs or promotions due to their skin colour or culture. Most answers scored marks in level two (4–6 marks) due to several points being made but not all were well developed with evidence.

- (f) The essay-style question asks candidates to evaluate the view that legislation has reduced inequalities in society. As with **Question 2(f)**, the guidance bullets in the question appeared to be helpful in making it clear that at least three arguments for and three against should be given with a conclusion offered at the end. Most candidates presented two-sided answers and offered a range of points. The best answers were consistently conceptual with arguments focused on laws designed to reduce social inequality. The differentiator in terms of level tended to be the degree of knowledge of legislation itself, particularly examples. Equal opportunities and anti-discrimination law in general was referred to, as was the welfare state. Arguments against legislation reducing inequalities focused either on critiquing the effectiveness of laws themselves or arguing that other, more powerful factors are at play regardless of legislation, such as racism or sexism. Still others suggested that laws were often passed by majority groups and would inevitably reflect their interests. In general, many answers did not include points developed with sufficiently robust evidence, resulting in partial development and marks limited to level two.

SOCIOLOGY

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Key messages

- In **Question 1(a)(ii)** and **(a)(iii)** the same technique should be used for answering both questions. Firstly, identify an element from *within the source itself* and, secondly, *clearly* explain why it is useful **1(a)(ii)** or problematic **1(a)(iii)** for studying or understanding *the topic in the question*. When using words like validity, representativeness or reliability ensure these are explained fully by reference to the source material.
- In **Question 1(e)** the justifications for methods, samples and evidence was often done better than the description of them. 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 observation will be conducted.
- In **Question 1(b)** and option **Question (b)**, where candidates are asked to identify/state something or to give examples, an extended response is not required. A word/phrase or sentence will suffice.
- In extended **Question 1(d)** and option **Questions 2/3 (e)** and **(f)** it is helpful if arguments are written in paragraph form. Within each paragraph the point should be developed by reference to explanation and evidence. The latter includes examples, sociological studies, sociological theory or empirical evidence such as statistics.
- **Question 1(c)**, **1(d)**, and **1(e)** all require knowledge of the strengths and limitations of particular research methods and approaches. Avoid making generic points such as ‘people may lie’ which could apply to almost any research method. Ordinarily such points are not creditworthy unless properly contextualised by reference to the method or aspect of methodology being discussed. For example ‘people may lie’ would achieve no credit. What would gain credit would be to say *if a respondent is interviewed on the subject of racial prejudice by someone of from an ethnic minority, they may give a socially desirable answer, i.e., lie in order to maintain a good relationship in the interview situation*. Similarly, answers that assert that a research method is *cheap* or *expensive* or *time-consuming* are often best avoided as they can be hard to contextualise.
- In option **Questions 2/3 (e)** candidates are instructed to include three developed points. All points should be ‘for’ the view; no credit will be given for evaluation.

General comments

This was the first assessment opportunity for the revised 2025 syllabus. Candidate responses showed that they were prepared for the demands of the both the content of the new syllabus and the new assessment structure. Candidates appeared to benefit from the new guidance given in the bulleted instructions in **Question 1(d)**, **1(e)** and option **Questions (e)** and **(f)**. All candidates completed the compulsory **Question 1** on Research Methods. Candidates then answered one of the optional questions, with a more or less even split between **Question 2** on Identity: Self and Society and **Question 3** on Social Stratification and Inequality. Candidates were able to utilise different skills, such as analysing and evaluating source material, defining sociological concepts, designing and justifying a research design and explaining and evaluating sociological views or arguments. Overall, some good quality responses were in evidence across all sections of the paper, demonstrating a positive engagement with the questions and the three assessment objectives. There were relatively few non-responses or timing issues and almost no rubric errors.

Question 1 ‘Research Methods’ proved to be a good test of candidates’ knowledge of key research concepts and methods. There was a good level of engagement and understanding of the source material on population aged under 25 in selected countries and the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used in gathering the data. Responses showed a generally sound understanding of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Knowledge and understanding of sampling choices could be better. Analysis and

interpretation of the source material was generally good. Many candidate responses made clear and confident use of methodological terms.

The 'Identity: Self and Society' option was slightly more popular than 'Social Stratification and Inequality'. In both option questions most candidates showed sound and, in some cases, excellent knowledge and understanding of the key theories, concepts and arguments within the topics. New aspects of the syllabus were generally well understood, including migration, ecological issues and the impact of the internet on identities and societies. The full range of marks was seen by examiners. Some responses showed real insight and sophistication in their grasp of the question and handling of sociological evidence. Many candidates achieved high marks in **Question (c)** and **(d)** by explaining three elements, for example three push factors that may cause people to migrate to another country. In terms of quality, some candidates were well organised and marshalled evidence very effectively in option **Question (e)**, though some mistakenly engaged in evaluation for which there is no credit. In **Question (f)**, some responses lacked range and/or were not sufficiently sociologically developed. A number of the extended responses for option **Questions (e)** and **(f)** were also not organised into paragraphs and tended towards the narrative and description, thereby only achieving limited marks. There were few list-like and/or one-sided answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Research methods

- (a) (i) An excellent response here with almost all the candidates correctly identifying India, Pakistan or the USA as two countries where there had been an increase in the number of people aged under 25 between 1975 and 2015. A few candidates misinterpreted the data in the chart, and incorrectly identified China.
- (ii) This question required candidates to use information in Source A to explain two reasons why the data is useful for studying population change in people aged under 25. It drew a mixed response. The majority of the responses demonstrated some engagement with the source and presented at least one identified and/or developed point to show why the data is useful. Responses frequently included the data being in numerical or quantitative form, the data came from the census of each country and the fact that the data had been gathered by WHO/professional researchers. Each of these points were clearly potential benefits for studying population change and were from the source. Thus each point could achieve one mark. To achieve the second mark per point the candidate needed to unpack or explain why this aspect of the source was useful or beneficial. For example, the fact that *the source was quantitative data allows researchers to see patterns and trends in population data over time* was sufficient to score both marks. Similarly *censuses are official statistics that will have been put together by government officials who collect population data in a professional manner and thus give an accurate picture of the population under 25*. Some of the responses only referred to information from the source without developing the points, thus being limited to one mark per point. Others offering vague explanations that could not be credited, e.g. simply asserting *the data is valid/ easy to understand*, etc.
- (iii) The overall response to this question was stronger than **1(a)(ii)** showing that candidates found it easier to critique the source than to recognise its utility in terms of the study of population change. In terms of possible problems with the source commonly seen answers identified the fact that the data was in quantitative form, only five countries were shown, the timeframe was only 1975–2015, the data is only for the under 25s and the data has been rounded up or down. As with **1(a)(ii)** any of these points by themselves would be awarded one mark. To achieve the second mark the candidate needed to unpack or develop the explanation in terms of why this aspect is not useful for the topic. Answers could be fairly concise. So, to say that *only five countries are shown, this is too few countries/too small a sample to be representative of the population under 25 across the world* was sufficient for both marks. Similarly *the data shown is only for the under 25s, so it is not useful in trying to understand population change as a whole as for that we would need data on those over 25 in each country* is enough for both marks. Weaker answers lacked specificity or merely restated the source. A few answers strayed too far from the source and engaged in a discussion about the source not showing birth and death rates. Such answers were not creditworthy and candidates are advised to focus on something that is an aspect of or in the source rather than on something that is not.
- (b) The majority of candidates scored full marks by stating two stages in research design. Common answers included: identifying a topic, aims or hypothesis, a pilot study, identifying the target

population, sampling and choosing a method. Any task completed by sociologists during the design stage were acceptable. Answers that focused on activities conducted during the implementation of research were not creditworthy, for example conducting interviews or analysing data collected.

- (c) In this question candidates were asked to explain one strength and one limitation of participant observation. It drew a fairly good response and most candidates scored at least two marks. In terms of the strengths of the method, many candidates correctly identified that participant observation can be high in validity because it yields qualitative data, allowing the researcher to take an in-depth look at a group or even achieve *verstehen* due to taking part in group activities in a naturalistic setting. Limitations frequently focused on the covert/overt nature of participant observations. The Hawthorne effect featured strongly here, so the idea that people may know the observation is taking place and will change their usual behaviour thereby negatively impacting validity. Others cited ethical and practical issues with covert participant observations such as researcher safety or the time and cost of extended observations. Such answers were acceptable as long as the candidate specified the overt/covert nature of the observation. Answers which simply assumed that all participant observations are either covert or overt were more problematic. Ultimately the question is about *participant* observation and ideally answers needed to focus wholly upon the consequences of the researcher being part of the group under study and undertaking their activities with them.
- (d) This essay-style question asked candidates to evaluate the effectiveness of semi-structured interviews in sociological research by developing at least two arguments for and two against. Most candidates provided a two-sided answer with the required range of points and came to a conclusion. The quality of arguments varied. Most answers scored in level two (4–7 marks) due to some points being only partially rather than fully developed or explained. Most candidates mentioned the flexibility of the semi-structured format and developed that aspect in different ways. Some arguments considered the idea that the ability of the researcher to probe respondents, where needed, allowed more qualitative and in-depth information to emerge, with a positive impact on validity. Others explained that the element of standardisation in a semi-structured format allowed for some questions to be repeated in other interviews enabling comparability. On the against side of the argument many responses discussed issues related to interviewer presence, such as the interviewer effect or interviewer. Practical issues such as the interviews being time consuming and/or expensive were often not well explained; the best responses linked the ability to ask open additional questions to adding time to both the interview itself but also to the analysis of the data at the end. A few answers discussed strengths and/or limitations of other types of interviews, most commonly structured and/or unstructured without direct comparison to semi-structured interviews and this was not creditworthy.
- (e) The research design question is a new addition to the assessment structure. It therefore posed a new challenge for candidates. The full range of marks was seen, though relatively few candidates scored in the 10–12 mark range (level 3/4). The first of the marking criteria for this question was for **Knowledge and understanding** of methods and evidence. Here successful answers provided detailed and accurate *descriptions* of the research methods chosen, with relevant sampling, along with a *description* of a suitable piece of secondary evidence. For example, describing the types and examples of questions to be asked in an interview, the size of a sample and how access could be gained or exactly how an observation was going to be carried out. Such descriptions integrated sociological concepts such as open/closed questions, a standardised approach, rapport, qualitative/quantitative data, probing etc. Too many answers gave only a brief description of how research choices were to be implemented which meant that they were likely to score only 1 or 2 marks for Knowledge and understanding. The second marking criteria was for **Reasons for choices**, in other words for explaining why a particular method or sample was chosen, including the use of appropriate terms such as reliability, validity, representativeness and generalisability. This was often done much better than the description of methods and evidence. However, many justifications tended to be rather generic – for example a semi-structured interview was chosen to gain ‘deep insight’, with little explanation as to how such insight could be arrived at using this interview technique. The final marking criteria was for **Application to context** or how well the candidate was able to orient their research choices to the context of the topic of age inequality in the workplace. Many responses simply repeated the phrase inequality/workplace with little or no real engagement. The best answers *integrated* contextual insights into their descriptions and rationale for methods, sampling and secondary evidence. A few candidates engaged in evaluation, describing the disadvantages of chosen methods or evidence which was not creditworthy.

Question 2 Identity: self and society

- (a) (i) The definitional question on 'the penal system' drew a mixed response. The majority of the responses demonstrated some understanding of the term though relatively few achieved full marks. The best answers made reference to an agency or formal agency of social control that enforces sanctions/punishment. Some gave the obvious example of prison. References to policing were not generally creditworthy unless sanctions such as fines were mentioned. Candidates also referred to the justice system and courts as those who pass sentence and set punishments but did not recognise that they are not responsible for administering them.
- (ii) The question was answered well in general, with a large number of candidates scoring full marks for their definition of the term 'consensus', most frequently identifying it as agreement in the society/shared values in the society. The most common misunderstanding lay in confusing the term consensus with the term 'census'. Answers that scored only one mark were usually connected with the idea of agreement but needed a second element to score the second mark.
- (b) This question asked candidates to give two examples of protest groups. Some gave two specific examples such as Black Lives Matter or Greta Thunberg's School strikes for climate group. Others gave more generic examples such as feminists or human rights protest groups. Both approaches were creditworthy. Answers which achieved no credit included vague references to the LGBTQ+ community, pressure groups or youth subcultures.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain three ways an individual's identity can be positively affected by social networks. In the syllabus the concept of social networks is included under the heading of 'The digital self and online identities' and it was anticipated that students would briefly explain the impact of online communities of one kind or another. For example, people who are members of Facebook can choose which aspects of their identity they wish to make public and such profiles can be edited in line with the image they wish to present. In fact, many students made no connection to the digital world at all in their answers, focusing instead on broader offline networks such as the family, peer groups or workplace connections. These are, of course, legitimate forms of social networks and hence credit was duly given. Some answers neglected to exemplify any kind of social network (either on- or offline) and made generalised comments about networks boosting self-esteem or allowing people to socialise, thereby also neglecting a substantive to the impact on identity. The best answers identified a social network, for example LinkedIn, and then explained exactly how it could positively affect identity, in this case providing contacts which may be useful in terms of the role a person plays within the workplace.
- (d) The question about reasons why the media is an effective agency of socialisation drew a better response than the previous question. High scoring answers identified three different examples of media and linked them to socialisation. For instance, the news showing the consequences of deviant behaviour, celebrities as role models influencing young people in terms of norms of appearance, films teaching gender roles or the impact of social media on the values and behaviours of the young. Less strong answers talked in simple terms about meeting people online/socialising or staying in touch with relatives with little or no engagement with the effectiveness of the media as a socialising force.
- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss the view that cultural identities are becoming the same all over the world. It drew a mixed response. In their answer candidates were asked to include at least three developed points with evidence. This is not a question where candidates are expected to engage in evaluation, unlike **Question 1(d)** and option **Question (f)** where there is a specific instruction to create arguments for and against. In option **Question (e)** candidates need to develop three points or arguments about the view, namely whether cultural identities are becoming the same all over the world. Any points arguing against the view, therefore, were not creditworthy. In terms of the content this is really a question about globalisation and specifically the emergence of a global culture in which cultural identities are becoming homogenised. The most successful answers focused on the idea of westernisation/Americanisation/McDonaldisation as the driving force behind the sameness of cultural identities, providing examples in support of that view. Examples of universal food/drink, music, movies, the English language and globalised clothing etc. were frequently seen. A few answers discussed attitudes and values that are becoming universal, such as more freedom and rights for women or the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, etc. Stronger responses had three clearly different and fully developed points whereas weaker responses were either narrower or less well developed. Candidates who 'bunched' their examples into a single point or perhaps two points scored in level two. Many tried to argue incorrectly that the increase of

cultural blending in multicultural societies and the emergence of hybrid cultures within a society constituted a global culture. However, such arguments fail to address the global sameness referred to in the question as hybrid differ from society to society.

- (f) This proved to be a somewhat challenging question for the majority. In their answers candidates were asked to evaluate Marxist views of social control, including at least three arguments for and three arguments against, with a conclusion. Stronger answers frequently referred to Althusser's ideological state apparatus, principally the media and education as the purveyor of capitalist norms and values to the masses, keeping them in unquestioning subordination. Others explained how the family continues to reproduce a capitalist workforce thus maintaining the status quo, in effect controlling society by keeping the cogs on the capitalist machine turning. Many also focused on the repressive state apparatus in the form of formal agencies such as police, courts and armed forces which use coercion and the law to control and deter resistance. Many answers, however, tended to be less well directed and tended towards more generic descriptions of the Marxist view of society, i.e. the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, without explicitly focusing on their views on social control. In evaluation functionalist, feminist, and occasionally postmodernist views were put forward and these were generally well unpacked. Most answers drew a conclusion which was most often a summary rather than a reasoned judgement based on the actual arguments presented.

Question 3 Social stratification and inequality

- (a) (i) The definitional question on capitalism proved difficult for many candidates who did not give a clear answer. Partial definitions often made reference to society being divided into the proletariat and the bourgeoisie or economic exploitation. The better answers defined capitalism as an economic system and one that is based on private ownership of the means of production.
- (ii) Some candidates provided a comprehensive definition of the term 'modern slavery', defining it as the exploitation of vulnerable people for personal or commercial gain. Debt bondage, forced marriage and child labour were often given as examples of modern slavery. A large number of responses offered only partial definitions about people being exploited or vague definitions, for example *working class people kept on a minimum wage*, that could not be credited.
- (b) This question required candidates to give two examples of ecological issues. Candidates' responses showed generally good knowledge. Common answers seen included climate change, global warming, pollution (of various kinds), deforestation etc. Some responses, however, identified issues that were not ecological, e.g., racial inequality, poverty, lack of human rights etc. which could not be credited. A few answers gave extra and unnecessary explanation for their points.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain three push factors that may cause people to migrate to another country. It was answered well in general and many candidates scored full marks. Common push factors identified included poverty, famine/natural disasters and war. Others discussed a lack of various things in society such as a lack of human rights, healthcare or educational and job opportunities. These just needed to be unpacked a little to achieve the second mark per point. Some answers showed some confusion and identified pull factors instead such as seeking better education and job opportunities. Candidates need to take care to keep their points oriented to the question asked.
- (d) This question asked candidates to explain three reasons why social mobility exists. Common answers included the idea of society having an open structure or being a meritocracy, allowing people to move from one social class to another. References to both intra and intergenerational mobility were seen. Other popular answers explained that individuals can work hard, get educated, gain promotion, win the lottery or get married as ways of improving their social class. The best answers also referred to changing one's social class rather than simply achieving more status or moving up the social hierarchy. Examples of downward social mobility, as a result of losing a job or going bankrupt, were also acceptable though less common.
- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss the view that people's life chances are affected by age. Answers needed to include at least three developed points with evidence; no evaluation is required. Whilst few candidates attained marks in level three, the majority of answers demonstrated a good understanding of the demands of the question and scored marks in level two. Most answers mentioned ageism in the workplace, for both younger and older people. Many also discussed age-differences in the provision of healthcare and education. Less confident answers mentioned different social expectations of different age groups – older people being seen as wise and so on –

or stereotypes of age groups with no application to life chances. As with **Question 2(e)** a few candidates mistakenly believed that a balanced argument was required and went on to discuss other factors that may affect life chances, most commonly gender, ethnicity and class. Answers should include at least three developed points for the view in the question. No evaluation is required.

- (f) The essay-style question asked candidates to evaluate the extent to which labelling theory is the best explanation for social inequalities. As with **Question 2(f)**, the guidance bullets in the question appeared to be helpful in making it clear that at least three arguments for and three against should be given with a conclusion offered at the end. Most candidates presented two-sided answers and offered a range of points. The best answers were also consistently conceptual and focused arguments, both for and against, on social inequalities of various types. The differentiator in terms of level tended to be the degree of knowledge of labelling theory itself. Arguments against labelling theory being the best explanation were frequently done more effectively than arguments for it. Less developed responses explained some of the key concepts including stereotyping of social groups, the development of a master status and a self-fulfilling prophesy. A few made reference to moral panic theory and deviancy amplification. However, many answers did not develop such points in terms of explaining social inequality, resulting in partial development and marks limited to level two. By contrast many strong points were given in evaluation, drawing upon Marxism, feminism and functionalism.

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<p>Paper 0495/13</p> <p>Research Methods, Identity and Inequality</p>

Key messages

- In **Questions 1(a)(ii)** and **(a)(iii)** the same technique should be used for answering both questions. Firstly, identify an element from *within the source itself* and, secondly, *clearly* explain why it is useful **1(a)(ii)** or problematic **1(a)(iii)** for studying or understanding *the topic in the question*. When using words like validity, representativeness or reliability ensure these are explained fully by reference to the source material.
- In **Question 1(e)** the justifications for methods, samples and evidence was often done better than the description of them. 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 observation will be conducted.
- In **Questions 1(b)** and option **Question(b)**, where candidates are asked to identify/state something or to give examples, an extended response is not required. A word/phrase or sentence will suffice.
- In extended **Question 1(d)** and option **Questions 2/3 (e)** and **(f)** it is helpful if arguments are written in paragraph form. Within each paragraph the point should be developed by reference to explanation and evidence. The latter includes examples, sociological studies, sociological theory or empirical evidence such as statistics.
- **Question 1(c), 1(d), and 1(e)** all require knowledge of the strengths and limitations of particular research methods and approaches. Avoid making generic points such as 'people may lie' which could apply to almost any research method. Ordinarily such points are not creditworthy unless properly contextualised by reference to the method or aspect of methodology being discussed. For example 'people may lie' would achieve no credit. What would gain credit would be to say *if a respondent is interviewed on the subject of racial prejudice by someone of from an ethnic minority, they may give a socially desirable answer, i.e., lie in order to maintain a good relationship in the interview situation*. Similarly, answers that assert that a research method is *cheap* or *expensive* or *time-consuming* are often best avoided as they can be hard to contextualise.
- In option **Question (e)** candidates are instructed to include three developed points. All points should be 'for' the view; no credit will be given for evaluation.

General comments

This was the first assessment opportunity for the revised 2025 syllabus. Candidate responses showed that they were prepared for the demands of the both the content of the new syllabus and the new assessment structure. Candidates appeared to benefit from the new guidance given in the bulleted instructions in **Question 1(d), 1(e)** and option **Questions (e)** and **(f)**. All candidates completed the compulsory **Question 1** on Research Methods. Candidates then answered one of the optional questions, with around 80 per cent of candidates choosing to answer **Question 2** on Identity: Self and Society and only 20 per cent choosing **Question 3** on Social Stratification and Inequality. Candidates were able to utilise different skills, such as analysing and evaluating source material, defining sociological concepts, designing and justifying a research design and explaining and evaluating sociological views or arguments. Overall, some good quality responses were in evidence across all sections of the paper, demonstrating a positive engagement with the questions and the three assessment objectives. There were relatively few non-responses or timing issues and almost no rubric errors.

Question 1 'Research Methods' proved to be a good test of candidates' knowledge of key research concepts and methods. There was a good level of engagement and understanding of the source material on the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey and the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used in gathering the data. Responses showed only a fair understanding of systematic sampling but a better grasp

of the scientific approach to sociological research. Analysis and interpretation of the source material was generally good. Many candidate responses made clear and confident use of methodological terms.

The 'Identity: Self and Society' option was far more popular than 'Social Stratification and Inequality'. In both option questions most candidates showed sound and, in some cases, sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the key theories, concepts and arguments within the topics. New aspects of the syllabus were generally well understood, including the social construction of identity and the impact of the migration on societies. The idea of a universal basic income and non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and also the pros and cons of the penal system were handled with less confidence. The full range of marks was seen by examiners. Some responses showed real insight and sophistication in their grasp of the question and handling of sociological evidence. Many candidates achieved high marks in **Questions (c) and (d)** by explaining three elements, for example three economic consequences of migration. In terms of quality, some candidates were well organised and marshalled evidence very effectively in option **Question (e)**, though some mistakenly engaged in evaluation for which there is no credit. In **Question (f)**, some responses lacked range and/or were not sufficiently sociologically developed. A number of the extended responses for **Questions (e) and (f)** were also not organised into paragraphs and tended towards the narrative and description, thereby only achieving limited marks. There were few list-like and/or one-sided answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Research methods

- (a) (i) An excellent response here with almost all candidates identifying two issues researchers ask about in the BSA survey. A long list of answers were acceptable but the most commonly seen were social issues, political issues, welfare benefits, healthcare and education.
- (ii) This question required candidates to use information in Source A to explain two reasons why the BSA survey is useful for studying public opinion. It drew a mixed response. The majority of responses demonstrated some engagement with the source and presented at least one identified and/or developed point to show why the data is useful. Responses frequently included the data being in numerical or quantitative form, the survey uses random sampling, the sample is fairly large at 4000 people and the fact that pre-coded questions are used. Each of these points were clearly potential benefits for studying public opinion and were from the source. Thus each point could achieve one mark. To achieve the second mark per point the candidate needed to unpack or explain why this aspect of the source was useful or beneficial. For example, the fact that *the source was quantitative data allows researchers to see patterns and trends in public opinion on various issues over time* was sufficient to score both marks. Similarly the fact that *the survey uses random sampling means that selection bias can be avoided, thus opening up the possibility of a more representative sample of the British public*. Some of the responses only referred to information from the source without developing the points, thus being limited to one mark per point. Others made a 'double reference' to the source. For example *the BSA survey is to study changes in public opinion on social and political issues over time, so some questions are the same and repeated every year* is simply an extended source reference so could only achieve one mark.
- (iii) This question asked candidates to use the information in Source A to explain three limitations of the BSA survey. In general, it was well answered with many candidates scoring good marks. Commonly seen answers identified the fact that the data was in quantitative form/the survey used closed questions, only 4000 adults were surveyed and some questions used in the survey differ year on year. As with **1(a)(ii)** any of these points by themselves would be awarded one mark. To achieve the second mark the candidate needed to unpack or develop the explanation in terms of why this aspect is not useful for the topic. Answers could be fairly concise. So, to say that *only 4000 adults were surveyed could be developed in terms of it being a relatively small sample of the British public and therefore unlikely to be generalisable* was sufficient for both marks. Similarly the fact that *closed questions were used means that the data could be collected in quantitative form with patterns and trends in public opinion being easily identifiable*. Weaker answers failed to make a specific source reference or else merely restated the source.
- (b) This question required candidates to state two digital sources of secondary data. Many candidates gave two sources of secondary data but not all gave *digital* sources and hence lost marks. Acceptable answers embraced any source that was inherently digital such as blogs, emails, social media posts and websites but also online newspapers, online statistics etc. Answers which simply

gave diaries or official statistics were not credited as they lacked such an explicit link to the internet (though *the internet* by itself was not acceptable as a source of secondary data).

- (c) In this question candidates were asked to explain one strength and one limitation of systematic sampling. It drew a fairly good response and many candidates scored at least two marks. In terms of the strengths of the method, many candidates correctly identified that there is no selection bias because systematic sampling is random in nature, the researcher has no influence over whose names are chosen from the sampling frame. Others noted that it is a simple and convenient method of sampling as all the researcher has to do is select the *n*th name from a list, unlike, for example stratified sampling which may involve several complex stages. Limitations frequently focused on the idea that a systematic sample is unlikely to be representative because there is no guarantee of getting the appropriate proportion of gender, age etc. The other most common limitation was that in order to do systematic sampling a sampling frame is needed, so this method may not be suitable for groups where no such frame is available e.g. gang members. A few candidates had no knowledge of the term or wanted to argue, incorrectly, that it is more representative than other sampling methods.
- (d) This essay-style question asked candidates to evaluate the view that the scientific method is the best approach to use in sociological research by developing at least two arguments for and two against, with a conclusion. The question revolves around aspects of a positivist approach and most candidates provided a two-sided answer with the required range of points and come to a conclusion. The quality of arguments varied. Most answers scored in level two (4–7 marks) due to some points being only partially rather than fully developed or explained. Many candidates mentioned the idea that scientific method uses standardised methods and so research can be repeated to produce the same or similar results, making it high in reliability. Others pointed out that scientists aim to be objective in their research, minimising bias by using methods where the researcher is not present or at least not directly interacting with participants. Still others focused on the importance of quantifiability in results, enabling patterns and trends in data to be seen across different variables and/or time. On the against side of the argument most arguments adopted an interpretivist perspective arguing that methods that use a micro, qualitative approach can more faithfully render social reality for individuals. Others argued that validity is more important than reliability and the findings of in-depth research methods such as unstructured interviews allow the researcher to develop a detailed grasp of the participants and what they think and feel about the topic. The objectivity prized by the scientific approach was also criticised, being impossible to achieve as scientific research is still influenced by a researcher's values from the very beginning e.g. through their choice of topic and approach.
- (e) The research design question is a new addition to the assessment structure. It therefore posed a new challenge for candidates. The question asked candidates to explain the research methods and evidence that they would choose to investigate why some young people join gangs. The majority of answers were at the low to mid-range (1–6 marks). Relatively few candidates scored in the 10–12 mark range (level 3/4). The first of the three marking criteria for this question was for **Knowledge and understanding** of methods and evidence. Here, more successful answers provided detailed and accurate *descriptions* of the research methods chosen, with relevant sampling, along with a *description* of a suitable piece of secondary evidence. For example, describing the types and examples of questions to be asked in an interview, the size of a sample and how access could be gained or exactly how an observation was going to be carried out. Such descriptions integrated sociological concepts such as open/closed questions, a standardised approach, rapport, qualitative/quantitative data, probing etc. Too many answers gave only a brief description of how research choices were to be implemented which meant that they were likely to score only 1 or 2 marks for Knowledge and understanding. The second marking criteria was for **Reasons for choices**, in other words for explaining why a particular method or sample was chosen, including the use of appropriate terms such as reliability, validity, representativeness and generalisability. This was often done much better than the description of methods and evidence. However, many justifications tended to be rather generic – for example a semi-structured interview was chosen to gain 'deep insight', with little explanation as to how such insight could be arrived at using this interview technique. The final marking criteria was for **Application to context** or how well the candidate was able to orient their research choices to the context of why some people join gangs. Many responses simply repeated the phrase gangs with little or no real engagement. The best answers *integrated* contextual insights into their descriptions and rationale for methods, sampling and secondary evidence. A few candidates engaged in evaluation, describing the disadvantages of chosen methods or evidence which was not creditworthy.

Question 2 Identity: self and society

- (a) (i) The definitional question on 'norms' drew a confident response. The majority of the responses demonstrated an understanding of the term and achieved full marks. The best answers made reference to behaviours that are expected in a society. Some answers gave an example of children putting their hands up in class or greeting others with a handshake. Answers that drew only one mark invariably gave an example but no definition as such.
- (ii) The question was not answered as well as (a)(i), with only some candidates scoring full marks for their definition of the term 'canalisation', most frequently identifying it as channelling children towards activities or toys seen as appropriate for their gender. Answers scoring one mark usually identified either the idea of channelling or the idea of teaching gender appropriate behaviour. A small number of responses showed no understanding of the term.
- (b) This question asked candidates to give two positive sanctions used to control children. It was an accessible question and drew an excellent response. Sanctions given included praise, sweets, toys and pocket money. Answers which achieved no credit included examples of negative rather than positive sanctions.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain three ways societies are culturally diverse and drew a mixed response. Popular correct answers focused on the diversity of norms and values in society and ethnically diverse communities that have emerged as a result of immigration and multiculturalism, the wide range of languages within some societies as well as food, drinks and dress. Points made needed only relatively simple unpacking to achieve the second mark. Examples worked well in this regard. Answers that score between one and three marks often stated points but then did not explain them.
- (d) The question about the ways identities are socially constructed clearly posed something of a challenge. Higher scoring answers identified three different reasons such as that gender, age and social class identities are all created in and through social processes. For example, gender identities are socially constructed because children are not born masculine or feminine but must be socialised into such roles via processes like canalisation and manipulation. Others discussed how agencies of socialisation such as school and work help to build a person's identity. Less confident answers frequently fell short in terms of development.
- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss how the workplace is an effective agent of socialisation. There were some excellent responses which showed that candidates were well prepared by utilising the new content in the syllabus on this issue. In their answer candidates were asked to include at least three developed points with evidence. This is not a question where candidates are expected to engage in evaluation, unlike **Questions 1(d)** and option **Question (f)** where there is a specific instruction to create arguments for and against. In option **Question (e)** candidates need to develop three points or arguments about the view, namely how the workplace is an effective agent of socialisation. Any points arguing against the view, therefore, for example points arguing schools are a more effective agent of socialisation, were not creditworthy. The most successful answers focused on company training on norms and values and how to behave in the workplace, workers being sanctioned either positively (e.g. promotion) or negatively (e.g. being dismissed) depending on how they behave. Others pointed out that many workplaces have their own 'canteen culture' where people begin to share and develop their own set of occupational norms and values as they mix with others in their job; other workers are assigned a mentor who acts as a role model for them to look up to and imitate and this aids the induction into workplace skills, norms and values. The other popular answer discussed how peer pressure operates in the workplace and individuals may change their behaviour to fit in with colleagues to gain acceptance and fit in e.g. joining in with gossip, dressing in a certain way etc. Stronger responses had three clearly different and fully developed points whereas weaker responses were either narrower or less well developed.
- (f) This proved to be a somewhat challenging question for many candidates. In their answers candidates were asked to evaluate the view that the penal system is the most effective agent of formal social control, including at least three arguments for and three arguments against, with a conclusion. Stronger answers frequently devoted separate points to a range of punishments administered by formal agencies such as prisons, police or on occasion the armed forces and explained why these were effective in controlling people. So, serious punishments act as a deterrent to make people aware that breaking the most serious laws will have serious consequences backed up by law e.g. fear of the death penalty in some countries is likely to deter

people from committing the most serious crimes. A few answers adopted a theoretical approach, arguing from a Marxist perspective that the repressive state apparatus in the form of police, courts and armed forces use coercion and the law to control and deter working class resistance. Others discussed punishments in terms of the condemnation and social exclusion that they bring to offenders, the fear of which may lead people to conform. Not all points were fully developed; descriptions of punishment were done well but their effectiveness for social control was not always explained fully. In evaluation some answers focused on criticising the effectiveness of, say, prison sentences, arguing that re-offending rates are high which means that prison is ineffective in deterring criminal behaviour. Some candidates strayed from the question into discussions of informal social control in the family or by peers such as being told off or denied pocket money for poor behaviour. Arguments which used rule-based formal controls in schools or the workplace were deemed acceptable and were duly rewarded. Most answers drew a conclusion which was most often a summary rather than a reasoned judgement based on the actual arguments presented.

Question 3 Social stratification and inequality

- (a) (i) The definitional question on universal basic income proved very difficult for many candidates who did not give a clear answer. The term is a new addition to the syllabus and indicates when the government pays everyone a fixed sum of money as a regular income. References to government payments was seen and did receive partial credit. However, there were many answers that scored no marks. Those that scored full marks had clearly learned a 'textbook' definition.
- (ii) This question drew a generally good response. Some candidates provided a comprehensive definition of the term 'poverty trap' by defining it in different but acceptable ways. Some referenced the inability to escape being poor due to the cycle of poverty or a culture of dependency. Others included structural barriers such as racism or living in a closed society as reasons why it is difficult to rise from poverty.
- (b) This question required candidates to give two examples of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Candidates' responses often lacked knowledge of concrete examples such as Save the Children, BRAC or the Red Cross/Red Crescent. Credit was given to types, as well as specific examples, and therefore disaster aid groups, groups that provide education and medical aid groups were all acceptable answers.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain three economic consequences of migration. The question does not specify whether these consequences are positive or negative or whether they occur in the original country or the country to which a person migrates, thus correct points from all variations were acceptable. It was answered fairly well in general and most showed some understanding of 'economic consequence'. Common negative consequences included a 'brain drain' in the original country with highly qualified and skilled workers leaving for better prospects abroad causing a lack of skills and expertise in certain areas. Also, the fact that, in host countries, migrants may accept lower wages just to get work, and this can suppress wages for other workers in the country. The other popular answer was that mass immigration into a country can cause overcrowding and put a strain on resources and services such as housing, education and healthcare. In terms of positive consequences some noted that emigrants often send money back home to their family in the form of remittances that can be an important source of foreign currency; also, that in countries receiving immigrants there will be an influx of people with much needed skills which will boost the economy of that country. Candidates who scored lower marks often made fewer than the three points required or failed to develop points identified.
- (d) This question asked candidates to explain three ways labelling theory explains social inequality. Some organised their answers in terms of social characteristics; so, arguing that gender inequality, racism or discrimination based on social class were attributable to labelling, citing teacher stereotypes in schools, for example, as the origins of a particular form of inequality. Other answers focused on key concepts within labelling theory itself such as master status, self-fulfilling prophecy or a moral panic and then unpacking these with further detail linked to social inequality. For example, the labelling of some minority ethnic groups as deviant leads to higher stop and search rates, higher arrest and conviction rates in the criminal justice system. Lower scoring answers frequently made less than three points or made vague attempts to unpack the link between the labelling process and social inequality.

- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss how the culture of poverty keeps people poor. Answers needed to include at least three developed points with evidence; no evaluation is required. Whilst few candidates attained marks in level three, the majority of answers demonstrated a good understanding of the demands of the question and scored marks in level two. Most creditworthy answers mentioned values that the poor may hold or develop, such as, fatalism, immediate gratification, not valuing education or laziness. These were then unpacked in terms of how they exacerbate poverty – for example, having a fatalistic mindset prevents people from even seeing new possibilities and hence they don't try to achieve social mobility which keeps them in poverty. Many also discussed age-differences in the provision of healthcare and education. Less confident answers made only vague reference to cultural values and wrote in vague terms about poverty in general. As with **Question 2(e)** a few candidates mistakenly believed that a balanced argument was required and went on to discuss other factors that may affect life chances, most commonly gender, ethnicity and class. Answers should include at least three developed points for the view of the question with evidence. No evaluation is required.
- (f) The essay-style question asked candidates to evaluate the functionalist view that social stratification is positive for society. As with **Question 2(f)**, the guidance bullets in the question appeared to be helpful in making it clear that at least three arguments for and three against should be given with a conclusion offered at the end. Most candidates presented two-sided answers and offered a range of points though not all gave the required number. The best answers were also consistently conceptual in arguments both for and against the functionalist view. Many argued that social stratification – by social class – is functional for society in sorting people into the level of job most appropriate for their talents and abilities. Others argued that social stratification brings with it an inherent inequality, but this encourages hard work and is an incentive for those at different points in the social hierarchy to try to achieve a social mobility. A few answers argued that the functionalist view allows gender roles to be divided according to the biological capabilities of men and women – with males as the breadwinner and women as the child-carers and housewives and this is functional for society. The differentiator in terms of arguments for the view tended to be the degree of knowledge of functionalism itself. Arguments against frequently focused on feminist and Marxist arguments, for example, feminists may argue that functionalist accounts of sex role theory undermine the idea of a meritocracy as women are already seen as primary caretakers for men and children, or that social class stratification is inherently unjust as it oppresses the working class and lowers their life chances. A few candidates also referred to the situation in closed societies where social stratification is fixed and the functionalist view, underpinned by the idea of meritocracy, does not apply. Less developed responses missed the idea of social stratification in the question and referred only to social inequality. The two ideas are obviously interlinked but not identical in meaning. Many answers did not fully explain and develop such points, resulting in partial development and marks limited to level two.

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<p>Paper 0495/21 Family, Education and Crime</p>
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Key messages

- Candidate knowledge of the limitations of theoretical perspectives could be improved, perhaps by getting candidates to draw up 'for and against' tables during preparation and revision.
- In **part (a) (i) and (ii)** of the questions candidates did not always include two separate elements, which prevents full marks being awarded.
- In **part (b)** some responses presented long paragraphs which were unnecessary.
- Candidates did not always develop their points in the **(c), (d), (e) and (f)** questions, and, particularly in the **(e) and (f)** questions, some of the responses lacked range and/or were not sociologically engaged to a sufficient degree, and therefore did not achieve marks in the highest level.
- In **Question (e)** there is no requirement to evaluate, nor to provide a conclusion; candidates should focus only on providing three developed (i.e. evidenced) points **for** the view in the question.
- Some responses in the **(f)** questions were not organised into paragraphs and in some areas were underdeveloped, and/or descriptive, lacking clarity and synthesis. There were also some list-like and/or one-sided answers that could not score higher than Level 2. Most candidates, nonetheless, provided a judgement, mainly as a conclusion to their answer, although developed conclusions were rare.
- Key concepts could be improved. Candidates need a good working knowledge of key terms and concepts within the specification and the topics. A glossary for each of the units studied would be of great use to the candidates.
- Time management should be better considered. The **(a)** and **(b)** questions are worth just two marks, as such, there is no need for candidates to write lengthy paragraphs. A number of candidates ran out of time and potentially were not able to demonstrate all they knew in the higher tariff questions.
- Candidates must read the questions carefully – this caused issues with a number of questions. For example, if the question asks for limitations of a theory, answers that simply describe the theory will not be credited. Another example would be if the question asks for positive views, raising negative issues will similarly not be credited.
- Sociological theories – candidates are expected to have a good working knowledge of the main theoretical approaches in Sociology for Family, Education and Crime. The key aspects, ideas, strengths and weaknesses of each theory in relation to each topic need to be covered.
- Using distinct paragraphs for each point made – it is good practice for candidates to separate answers into clear paragraphs, making it obvious where one point ends and another begins. For example, using discourse markers such as, 'Firstly', 'Secondly', 'On the other hand' etc.
- The **(f)** question is the only one which requires evaluation, a number of candidates were evaluating in **(c), (d) or (e)** questions when this is not required and will not be credited.
- Candidates could develop their points further and demonstrate more sociological engagement, especially in the **(e) and (f)** parts of the questions.
- Candidates should avoid writing introductions and conclusions where they are not required. Introductions are never needed and conclusions only in the **(f)** questions.
- Generic, common-sense, list-like answers should be avoided.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read all questions thoroughly before starting to write and to make a short plan to best answer each essay question.

General comments

- **Section A**, Family, was the most answered section, followed by **Section B**, Education, and then **Section C**, Crime.
- This was the first paper of the new specification to be sat. Overall, it was accessible to all and a full range of marks were seen.
- The new question format gives candidates clear instructions on what is required to answer the question.

- There were very few rubric errors seen this session. The evaluate question, on the whole, saw some excellent responses and there were many with conclusions.
- Generally, answers were well written, and candidates signposted their points using clear signal words, discourse markers and punctuation.
- Overall, there were some high quality responses seen with candidates showing very good knowledge of the subject matter and successfully integrating sociological concepts and theory into their answers.
- In addition to sociological knowledge, many candidates used localised examples well as evidence for the arguments they were making.
- Candidates must ensure they include the question number next to their responses to ensure they are credited.
- Candidates who performed well demonstrated a secure knowledge of sociological concepts and theories, with some reference to specific studies; answers were written in direct context of the question and there was good use of evidence to support answers.
- Conclusions should be justified and developed and not just a restating of earlier points in a summative way.
- Time management was generally good, with a small number of candidates opting to answer the **(e)** and **(f)** questions first. Those candidates that did run out of time typically spent too long on the lower tariff questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Family

- (a) (i)** The majority of candidates achieved one mark, offering a partial definition but without the clarity required for the full two marks. The most common answer being marriage between different cultures. More focus on the term 'cultural' would have been helpful and allowed candidates to explore ideas of contrasting/unique norms, values and beliefs. Candidates producing a glossary of key terms would be useful in terms of effective exam preparation.
- (ii)** Almost all candidates had a clear understanding of what is meant by the term nuclear family, the two creditable elements needed were usually constructed concisely, key to success in the definition questions.
- (b)** Candidates need to be clear that this question is worth only two marks, hence there is no need for lengthy paragraphs. The majority of candidates achieved two marks, although many spent too long on this and thus ran out of time later. The most common responses included men doing less housework, men benefiting from the warm bath and men holding all the power in the family. As shown by these examples, responses should be concise to match the command word of 'state'.
- (c)** Candidates do need to ensure they read the question carefully and that their answer then meets the question requirements. Here, the question is about changing *patterns in marriage* not changes to the family. This lack of focus on the question led to many responses not gaining credit, there needed to be a clear focus on marriage for the response to be rewarded. When answering the question, it would be helpful if candidates split the three points needed into clear paragraphs, each point made then needs to be unpacked to achieve the second mark. There were some well-constructed answers looking, for example, at the increased numbers of marriages that break down, the fact that many people today do not get married and that many marriages now occur later in life.
- (d)** As in the **(c)** question, candidates should follow the same format, three clear paragraphs with a different unpacked point in each. This question was generally well answered with candidates usually focusing on the positive roles grandparents play in the family. Typical responses included: emotional support for mothers/children, socialisation, childcare, passing on culture/heritage and financial support. Some candidates did not give enough detail in their unpacking of the point to achieve the 'explain' mark. For example, if the point was on grandparents taking care of children the unpacking may include that this is due to the increase of dual worker families so parents are not available, or sending children to nursery is very expensive, hence grandparents, who no longer work, are an ideal solution.
- (e)** This is a higher tariff question, meaning more in-depth explanations are required along with relevant sociological concepts. The same principles as the **(c)** and **(d)** questions do still apply regarding splitting points into clear separate paragraphs. The answers to this question were very

mixed. Some responses did not demonstrate understanding of the term 'triple shift' and consequently were not credited. Some candidates demonstrated understanding of the term and explained why it was unfair for women. Typical answers included the strain it put women under, lack of help from the male and the feminist viewpoint. This is not an evaluate question, a number of candidates looked at why it *was* fair, for example the functionalist view, this question requires only points **for** the view being put forward.

- (f) This is a high tariff essay style 'evaluate' question and candidates should ensure they follow the question instructions, giving three points for the view in the question and three against, plus a conclusion. This structure guidance really will help support candidates to achieve their best. Candidates should also ensure that they include relevant key concepts, sociological studies and theories as appropriate. This question produced answers which covered the whole mark range. Many responses remained in Level 2, the main reason being that points lacked development, or were not sociological in focus, taking a common-sense approach instead. The majority of candidates demonstrated an understanding of the debate within the question, although the 'for' side was usually done better. Points made typically included the different family types now available and why these had emerged such as reconstituted and lone parent families. Also, the changing family roles, differences in ethnic groups such as arranged marriage and the impact of external factors such as an ageing population. The evaluation, or arguments against, was less well done, for example some candidates criticised the different family types presented which prevented full development as the view in the question was not being explicitly evaluated. Other candidates took the approach of using different theoretical perspectives, such as Functionalism, New Right, Marxism and Feminism, looking at their views of diversity i.e. the Functionalist view that the nuclear family is best. However, unfortunately this was not linked back to the question, for example after describing the Functionalist view of the nuclear family, candidates could say that this is why it remains the dominant family type and so there is a lack of diversity in society.

Question 2 Education

- (a) (i) The majority of candidates gained credit for an answer here, showing at least partial understanding of the concept of 'role allocation' through ideas such as putting people into the correct position/sifting and sorting etc. The clearest responses often linked back to the role of setting and streaming in schools in terms of this process.
- (ii) Many candidates produced partial answers here, they clearly understood the concept of racism but the examples used tended to be personal rather than institutional, e.g. not linked to a school or workplace. This link was essential in order to score full marks for this definition.
- (b) Lengthy responses are not required for the two marks available. The majority of candidates obtained both marks using points such as more highly qualified teachers, better facilities and smaller class sizes.
- (c) The key words here were *globally* and *girls*, so not gender in general and not a general description of girl's education. For example, a paragraph describing different subjects for boys and girls is not specific to the question and does not address the global element of the question. Candidates who did have the correct focus produced some well-developed points, such as countries having different views on educating girls, poverty in some areas of the world and the effect on girl's education and the poor facilities for girls in some areas of the world. Candidates should note the key words in the question and ensure the answer given focuses on these.
- (d) The key word in this question is *positive*, so candidates should not be looking for any negative functions of education as these were not credited. Most candidates identified positive functions, such as socialisation, social control, shared norms and values and preparation for the workplace. The question asks for these positive functions to be explained, so for example, how are they beneficial, both for the individual and society. In all (c) and (d) questions, the point needs to be unpacked to achieve the explanation mark.
- (e) It was evident from responses that there was a lack of understanding of the concept 'hidden curriculum' and why the Marxists would criticise it. Key words here being *hidden curriculum*, as opposed to schools/education in general and *Marxist*. The majority of candidates demonstrated an understanding of Marxist ideas on education such as private/state schools but few applied these ideas to the hidden curriculum. Key areas to explore could have included competition between

students, preparation for working under capitalism, e.g. punctuality, hierarchy and taking orders from a superior and the passing on of capitalist norms and values.

- (f) On this *evaluate* question candidates needed to look for three in-school factors, such as teacher labelling, type of school, setting and streaming, teacher expectations and show how these influence achievement. Then three factors to challenge the view in the question, for example, out of school factors such as material deprivation, home factors (e.g. lack of role models), cultural factors and linguistic factors. Some candidates did not effectively mark out these different ideas and on some occasions this caused their answer to be one sided. A one-sided answer is capped at six marks. However, most candidates did produce a two-sided response, although a lack of development and key concepts prevented many from reaching Level 3. A conclusion is also expected, as per the structure guidance provided in the question.

Question 3 Crime, Deviance and Social Control

- (a) (i) Candidates clearly knew the meaning of *peer group*, although a number did not give the second element needed to gain full marks, often just stating a group of friends. Two creditable elements are needed for full marks, for example people of the same age, same status, same norms and values.
- (ii) This definition was not always accurate and some candidates missed the importance of looking at the victim's characteristics, such as race or gender. Examples can be used as one of the creditable elements of the definition and this question would have been a good opportunity to do this, e.g. online misogyny.
- (b) The majority of candidates achieved full marks here, showing good understanding of the strengths of using official statistics to measure crime. The most common responses being discovering patterns and trends, ease of access, generalisability/representativeness and the fact they could be trusted as they are produced by officials/the government.
- (c) Candidates found this question difficult, responses showed very little understanding as to what constitutes an instrumental crime. A number of candidates did not attempt this question or received no marks, as they talked about crime in general. Some candidates, however, did produce a good response, with the main focus being on crimes for money/status, often with a pertinent example.
- (d) The key question focus here was *postmodern view*, very few candidates explained the postmodern view on crime, despite this being a part of the specification. Candidates should have a working knowledge of all the different theories of crime as per the specification, and their strengths and limitations. Some stronger responses included ideas about individualism and the emotional link to crime. There was little mention of Katz and Lyng, edgework or green crime.
- (e) Candidates seemed to find the concept of *cross cultural* difficult. Those candidates who did understand it talked about how laws, punishment, norms and values differed between countries and global regions. Good examples were used such as the different approaches to drug possession. Very few looked at differences within cultures such as sub-cultures or class differences which would also have been creditable responses.
- (f) The majority of candidates were able to access this question. Candidates clearly knew the difference between custodial and non-custodial punishments and illustrated and discussed these successfully. There were few specific examples used, the most common ones seen being electronic tags and rehabilitation. Some candidates made good use of looking at different countries approaches e.g. Sweden and the USA. Key reasons for responses not scoring in Level 4 tended to be due to a lack of development of ideas and points being descriptive rather than exploring why the different types of punishment were effective.

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Key messages

- Candidate knowledge of the limitations of theoretical perspectives could be improved, perhaps by getting candidates to draw up 'for and against' tables during preparation and revision.
- In **part (a) (i) and (ii)** of the questions candidates did not always include two separate elements, which prevents full marks being awarded.
- In **part (b)** some responses presented long paragraphs which were unnecessary.
- Candidates did not always develop their points in the **(c), (d), (e) and (f)** questions, and, particularly in the **(e) and (f)** questions, some of the responses lacked range and/or were not sociologically engaged to a sufficient degree, and therefore did not achieve marks in the highest level.
- In **Question (e)** there is no requirement to evaluate, nor to provide a conclusion; candidates should focus only on providing three developed (i.e. evidenced) points **for** the view in the question.
- Some responses in the **(f)** questions were not organised into paragraphs and in some areas were underdeveloped, and/or descriptive, lacking clarity and synthesis. There were also some list-like and/or one-sided answers that could not score higher than Level 2. Most candidates, nonetheless, provided a judgement, mainly as a conclusion to their answer, although developed conclusions were rare.
- Key concepts could be improved. Candidates need a good working knowledge of key terms and concepts within the specification and the topics. A glossary for each of the units studied would be of great use to the candidates.
- Time management should be better considered. The **(a) and (b)** questions are worth just two marks, as such, there is no need for candidates to write lengthy paragraphs. A number of candidates ran out of time and potentially were not able to demonstrate all they knew in the higher tariff questions.
- Candidates must read the questions carefully – this caused issues with a number of questions. For example, if the question asks for limitations of a theory, answers that simply describe the theory will not be credited. Another example would be if the question asks for positive views, raising negative issues will similarly not be credited.
- Sociological theories – candidates are expected to have a good working knowledge of the main theoretical approaches in Sociology for Family, Education and Crime. The key aspects, ideas, strengths and weaknesses of each theory in relation to each topic need to be covered.
- Using distinct paragraphs for each point made – it is good practice for candidates to separate answers into clear paragraphs, making it obvious where one point ends and another begins. For example, using discourse markers such as, 'Firstly', 'Secondly', 'On the other hand' etc.
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- Generic, common-sense, list-like answers should be avoided.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read all questions thoroughly before starting to write and to make a short plan to best answer each essay question.

General comments

- **Section A**, Family, remained the most answered section, followed by **Section B**, Education, and then **Section C**, Crime.
- This was the first paper of the new specification to be sat. Overall, it was accessible to all and a full range of marks were seen.
- The new question format gives candidates clear instructions on what is required to answer the question.

- There were very few rubric errors seen this session. The evaluate question, on the whole, saw some excellent responses and there were many with conclusions.
- Generally, answers were well written, and candidates signposted their points using clear signal words, discourse markers and punctuation.
- Overall, there were some high quality responses seen with candidates showing very good knowledge of the subject matter and successfully integrating sociological concepts and theory into their answers.
- In addition to sociological knowledge, many candidates used localised examples well as evidence for the arguments they were making.
- Candidates must ensure they include the question number next to their responses to ensure they are credited.
- Candidates who performed well demonstrated a secure knowledge of sociological concepts and theories, with some reference to specific studies; answers were written in direct context of the question and there was good use of evidence to support answers.
- Conclusions should be justified and developed and not just a restating of earlier points in a summative way.
- Time management was generally good, with a small number of candidates opting to answer the **(e)** and **(f)** questions first. Those candidates that did run out of time typically spent too long on the lower tariff questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Family

- (a) (i)** Candidates generally answered this question well. Most demonstrated a clear understanding of the 'warm bath' theory in terms of the functionalist idea of the male breadwinner returning home from work to his wife (and children) who function so as to soothe and relieve the stress generated by the workplace. A few candidates took the phrase 'warm bath' literally and did not score marks.
- (ii)** A well answered question. Most candidates achieved both marks by accurately defining the lone parent family as one parent living with a dependent child, typically due to divorce or death. Candidates who only scored one mark frequently omitted reference to children but spoke about only one parent being present in the family. A few candidates confused the term with the empty nest family.
- (b)** This question asked for two examples of family diversity. It was an accessible question; many different answers were acceptable and hence many candidates scored full marks. The majority used different family types such as nuclear and extended families as examples of family diversity. Others referred to ethnic and cross-cultural differences, diversity of family roles or different types of marriage such as polygamy and monogamy. Some responses mentioned social class/ethnicity/families in different parts of the world/cultures. Some candidates wrote long paragraphs with explanations of, for example, family types which was unnecessary.
- (c)** Many candidates described ways socialisation in the family can be different for girls and boys. Most responses focused on 'ways' or processes such as canalisation, manipulation, verbal appellation and role-modelling. There was some excellent sociological engagement seen here that was duly rewarded. When used, these concepts were generally well understood and applied appropriately in the context of the question. Some responses looked at socialisation by agencies other than the family, such as school which was not answering the question. Also, candidates needed to consider both boys and girls within each point made, a number of candidates only looked at one gender. Alternatively, some identified a 'way' but did not give further detail, in effect simply listing their points; others did not identify a 'way,' but instead described gender differences e.g. boys tend to socialise with other boys and play outside whilst girls stay indoors.
- (d)** Many candidates found this question on the limitations of the Marxist view of the family difficult. The most successful answers frequently identified key features of the Marxist view and then explained how this was challenged by other theorists or perspectives. For example, Marxists focus on the family as a support for an exploitative capitalist system, but functionalists argue this neglects the positive functions of the family such as the physical and emotional care of children. Other popular answers argued that feminists show the Marxist view to be gender blind or that the Marxist view, whilst critiquing the family, fails to offer any alternatives for family life. Several answers described

aspects of the Marxist view of the family and did not explain any limitations, thereby not answering the question.

- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss why alternatives to marriage are becoming more common. Almost all candidates made some relevant points and most answers scored marks in Level 2. Many answers contained three or more points with better answers giving quality development, particularly in terms of evidence given in support of points. Answers which were a mixture of developed and partially developed points scored in Level 2, all three points being fully developed and explicitly sociological is a prerequisite for Level 3. Most candidates included some sociological concepts in their answer. Popular reasons given for the decline of marriage included secularisation and more liberal social norms and values, resulting in higher divorce rates and the proliferation of alternatives such as cohabitation. Many candidates identified the impact of feminism, citing the financial independence of many women along with greater freedom to make the personal decision not to marry but to stay single or cohabit with a partner. Others discussed the increase in friends as family due to financial pressures on the young. However, simply describing alternatives to marriage could not achieve a high mark as the core theme of the question was why alternatives to marriage are becoming more common. A small number of responses engaged in evaluation of the view in the question for which there are no marks available. Weaker responses offered list-like statements, typically scoring only in Level 1. A few candidates misinterpreted the question to discuss, perhaps, less common types of marriage such as arranged marriages. As these are not alternatives to marriage (a clear section in the specification) this could not be credited.
- (f) The essay question on the family asked candidates to evaluate the view that children are an essential part of family life. Most responses were well structured and presented both sides of the argument with various degrees of competency and sophistication. Many better answers engaged with sociological concepts and theory. Candidates chose to answer this question in different ways. Many wrote their arguments as to why children were essential first and then gave their counter arguments. Others wrote an argument in favour, followed by a counter argument and so on. Regardless of either format, better answers were separated into paragraphs; a small number of candidates interwove their arguments and this did, at times, make it more challenging to identify where one point ended and another started. In support of the view in the question, answers typically referenced functionalism, particularly the importance of reproduction and the need to transmit norms and values through the generations via primary socialisation to maintain social cohesion and cultural identity. Others sociological arguments focused on the increasingly child-centred nature of society with children now being seen as in need of care and protection rather than as an economic asset. The idea of the child consumer was also well discussed. However, some of these points focused on whether having children constituted a positive or negative experience rather than children being essential or not, and could often receive partial credit only. Arguments against the view in the question commonly referred to the change in the role and status of children from economic asset to economic burden, the changes in attitudes brought about by secularisation and feminism with the ensuing freedom to choose alternatives to the traditional family, whether this be women choosing singlehood or people choosing to create a childless (DINK) family. Evaluation points tended to be better developed than the points about children being essential. A few candidates used examples of other family members being more important/essential, e.g. mothers, fathers, grandparents, for their evaluation points, which was not creditworthy. Many candidates attempted to sum up their arguments in some form of conclusion with the best ones showing an ability to review, reflect and come to a reasoned judgement based on the evidence presented. The main discriminator in terms of the level awarded was the amount and quality of evidence used to support points made and the clear discussion of said material with an explicit focus on the question.

Question 2 Education

- (a) (i) There were many accurate definitions of the term *value consensus* seen. Two creditable elements were needed to achieve full marks. The best answers defined value consensus as a shared agreement on norms and values or an agreement shared by members of society. A few candidates repeated the word value, some replaced it with norms or beliefs which was fine. Others made the link between value consensus and functionalist theory and it being the foundation of social order and stability.
- (ii) A very well answered question with a significant number of candidates achieving full marks by correctly defining the concept of a co-educational school. Creditable elements included schools

that admit both sexes/male and female learners, and that the different sexes study together in the classroom or the same institution and that they are taught the same curriculum. A small minority of candidates incorrectly said that a co-educational school was a school where all subjects are taught, or where schools teach about life as well as education. No credit was given to such responses.

- (b) In this question candidates were asked to give two examples of what students learn from the hidden curriculum. No further description or explanation was needed. Some candidates did confuse the hidden curriculum with the official curriculum, however most candidates achieved both marks. Common responses included: norms and values, punctuality, manners, hierarchy, respect for authority and gender roles.
- (c) This question asked candidates to describe three ways education can cause gender inequalities. It was generally well answered. Candidates varied in response length, but even concise answers were able to achieve full marks if the content was clearly explained. The best responses identified in-school factors contributing to gender inequality, such as teacher expectations/labelling, teachers encouraging stereotypical subject choice, the hidden curriculum and the lack of role-models for girls, whether this be in the hierarchy of the school or in textbook representations. Some candidates pointed to problems for girls in accessing education at a higher level or, in certain parts of the world, accessing any education at all. An example of a point that would not gain the development mark would be simply describing the different subjects taken by boys or girls in schools; to be developed it would need to add how that causes inequality.
- (d) In this question candidates were required to explain three reasons why education is not meritocratic for working class children. As with the previous question it drew typically good responses from candidates. Many responses used the Marxist critique of meritocracy, highlighting factors such as the lack of access to the best quality education (private schools) and the material and cultural deprivation experienced by working class children as a barrier to their success. Other popular points included the impact of negative teacher labelling and other school-based inequalities like the over representation of working class children in lower sets and streams. Other creditable points included the necessity for some children to work part-time, to the detriment of their schooling, and the fact that working class children are likely to speak in restricted rather than elaborated code which is the currency of schools and high academic achievement. Similar to **Question 2(c)**, answers varied in length and sophistication. Answers which scored fewer marks were usually not entirely clear, limited in their explanations and/or made fewer than the required number of points as per the question guidance. Some candidates lost focus on the question set and wrote about their family's impact on their education, rather than the system itself being meritocratic or not. This negatively impacted marks.
- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss why educational achievement differs globally. Three points supported by evidence were sufficient to score full marks. The challenge was to link reasons for differential achievement to global differences, whether this be between particular countries or regions such as developing and developed nations. It drew a fairly good response with the strongest responses highlighting the lack of access to schools (particularly for girls) or the poor quality of school infrastructure, resources and teaching in some countries compared to others. The best responses effectively illustrated how development levels impact the quality of education and how cultural beliefs shape educational aspirations and gender-based preferences across different societies. Specific examples were often seen, perhaps drawing upon the candidates own cultural context, and this helped in the making of global comparisons and the specificity of responses. Some responses described educational inequalities but either did not make a connection to different locations across the world or discussed differences within societies e.g. based on social class, gender or ethnicity. For example, discussing the inequalities in opportunities and outcomes linked to private versus state education in Britain or the United States. A few candidates ended their answers with a conclusion which was unnecessary in this question.
- (f) In this question candidates were required to evaluate the view that homeschooling is the best approach to education. Many high quality responses were seen. The question was clearly accessible to all. It drew a variable response in terms of quality and some answers illustrated more common sense rather than sociological knowledge of the debate. The concept of home schooling is new to the syllabus, many candidates offered a range of arguments both for and against. Candidates who responded to this question showed a clear understanding of home schooling as learning that occurs within the home environment, outside the formal school system. Some then discussed home schooling as provided by teachers either online or in person whilst others saw it as something delivered by parents themselves. Both approaches were creditable. Common correct

points included cost benefits, the flexibility of homeschooling (particularly for children with disabilities/special educational needs), the desirability of a one-to-one focus with a teacher and protection from school-related issues such as bullying and labelling. Some responses overlooked the fact that homeschooling can still follow formal curricula and provide access to recognised assessments for progression to tertiary/higher education. In arguments against the view candidates often drew on more sociological conceptuality, referencing vocational and progressive education as superior to home schooling as well as functionalist ideas about formal education as a vehicle for secondary socialisation and the teaching of social norms and values via the hidden curriculum. The weaker answers were not organised into paragraphs, offering undeveloped (sometimes list-like) or underdeveloped points as well as common-sense arguments that did not engage sociologically. Again, most candidates included a conclusion but very few wrote a developed, evaluative conclusion.

Question 3 Crime, Deviance and Social Control

- (a) (i) This question required a clear definition of vigilante groups. Candidates who knew what they were often offered a 'textbook' definition in terms of them being self-appointed individuals or groups who seek to punish offenders without any formal legal authority. These responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept and its distinction from officially sanctioned law enforcement and hence achieved full marks. Some candidates demonstrated no knowledge of the term and linked the phrase to gangs or other deviant groups.
- (ii) A significant number of responses correctly defined the concept misogyny as the hatred of women mostly by men. Other acceptable elements were a contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against, women. Some candidates were clear on their definition linking to hatred and men as the perpetrators whilst others gave a partial definition by defining patriarchy. Answers that scored only one mark often referenced inequality against women but neglected to link this to males.
- (b) Most responses correctly identified at least one, if not two, features of gang culture with most scoring at least one mark. Acceptable answers seen included deviant or violent behaviour, a hierarchical structure with a leader, specific dress codes, territorial behaviour, drug dealing and group loyalty. Some candidates also pointed out the fact that gangs are often composed of young, working class males which were also creditable elements. As with the other (b) questions it is not necessary to write paragraphs when the command word is 'state'.
- (c) In this question candidates were asked to describe three ways the police can control individuals. A range of correct answers were offered and developed including powers such as stop and search, fines, warnings, arrest, weapons and the use of surveillance to monitor and manage potential criminal activity. There were some cultural differences within answers that were also creditable, e.g. sending individuals to prison, police violence etc. The quality of the descriptions often varied, with some candidates elaborating well on the impact on the police's ability to control, with other candidates neglecting this aspect.
- (d) This question clearly posed a challenge to candidates in a similar vein to **Question 1(d)**. Both questions focused on the limitations of a theoretical view, in this case the interactionist explanation of crime and deviance. A higher proportion of no responses were seen on this question than any other on the paper, perhaps due to candidates not recognising the connection between interactionism with the more familiar-sounding labelling theory or moral panic theory. Of those who did respond, very achieved good marks. Some provided a general description of the interactionist perspective on crime and deviance without addressing its limitations. Others confused interactionism with other sociological theories. A few responses did accurately explain some key criticisms of interactionism and were rewarded appropriately. Such criticisms included the theory's failure to fully account for the origin of labelling, the fact that some crimes are always deviant regardless of any labelling, the committing of crimes by those who have not been labelled (e.g. white collar crime) and its tendency to portray criminals as mere victims of the labelling process. There was very little mention of moral panics or folk devils.
- (e) In this question candidates were asked to discuss the view that prisons prevent crime. It drew a confident response from many candidates. Commonly, answers focused on how prisons prevent crime by incapacitating offenders, usually by removing them from society and locking them up. The idea of rehabilitation also featured strongly either through structured programmes or simply by virtue of the fact that offenders are given the time to reflect on what led to their past behaviours and the opportunity to be re-socialised by prison staff. Most answers also featured arguments around

the power of prisons to instil fear and thus to deter, both by discouraging the offender from recidivism and simultaneously issuing a warning to others in society about the consequences of committing criminal acts. Weaker answers offered common-sense information with list-like and/or partially developed points. A few candidates engaged in unnecessary evaluation of why prisons did not prevent crime (similarly in 1e and 2e) despite the scaffolded instructions in the question. Evaluation in an **(e)** question will not be credited, however good it may be.

- (f)** In the essay question candidates were asked to evaluate the view that gender is the most important factor in explaining why an individual commits crime. Many candidates displayed an impressive array of arguments both for and against. Many different concepts, studies and sociological theories were used to good effect. Most candidates demonstrated strong sociological understanding of the role of gender in explaining crime, usually concentrating on trying to explain why males commit more crime, and more violent crime, according to official crime statistics. Many highlighted differential socialisation and social control, with boys being encouraged to adopt aggressive, risk-taking traits, while girls are socialised into more passive, conforming behaviours. The culture of masculinity, including toxic masculinity, was frequently referred to. Others attributed the traditional male role of the breadwinner as a reason for crime when legitimate means to fulfilling this role are blocked. Some answers also attempted to explain why women do not commit as much crime as males, particularly violent crime. There were many discussions of the chivalry thesis, with some even suggesting that women were emboldened to commit more crime by the knowledge that they were likely to 'get away with it'. Arguments against the view were also strong, with candidates effectively discussing the role of social class, ethnicity and age as equally if not more influential than gender as a factor in explaining crime. Competing theoretical arguments featured Cohen's status frustration, labelling theory and Lyng's 'edgework' idea. Many candidates scored marks in Levels 2 and 3 though relatively few maintained quality development through six points (three either side) necessary for Level 4. Like in the other **(f)** questions, some candidates provided only brief list-like answers, sometimes leaning heavily towards one side of the debate. The weaker answers were not organised into paragraphs, offering undeveloped or underdeveloped points as well as common-sense arguments. As with the other essays on the paper candidates made a good effort to conclude their arguments with some offering thoughtful summations on the basis of the evidence presented. Few developed and evaluative conclusions were seen.

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Key messages

- Candidate knowledge of the limitations of theoretical perspectives could be improved, perhaps by getting candidates to draw up 'for and against' tables during preparation and revision.
- In **part (a) (i) and (ii)** of the questions candidates did not always include two separate elements, which prevents full marks being awarded.
- In **part (b)** some responses presented long paragraphs which were unnecessary.
- Candidates did not always develop their points in the **(c), (d), (e) and (f)** questions, and, particularly in the **(e) and (f)** questions, some of the responses lacked range and/or were not sociologically engaged to a sufficient degree, and therefore did not achieve marks in the highest level.
- In **Question (e)** there is no requirement to evaluate, nor to provide a conclusion; candidates should focus only on providing three developed (i.e. evidenced) points **for** the view in the question.
- Some responses in the **(f)** questions were not organised into paragraphs and in some areas were underdeveloped, and/or descriptive, lacking clarity and synthesis. There were also some list-like and/or one-sided answers that could not score higher than Level 2. Most candidates, nonetheless, provided a judgement, mainly as a conclusion to their answer, although developed conclusions were rare.
- Key concepts could be improved. Candidates need a good working knowledge of key terms and concepts within the specification and the topics. A glossary for each of the units studied would be of great use to the candidates.
- Time management should be better considered. The **(a)** and **(b)** questions are worth just two marks, as such, there is no need for candidates to write lengthy paragraphs. A number of candidates ran out of time and potentially were not able to demonstrate all they knew in the higher tariff questions.
- Candidates must read the questions carefully – this caused issues with a number of questions. For example, if the question asks for limitations of a theory, answers that simply describe the theory will not be credited. Another example would be if the question asks for positive views, raising negative issues will similarly not be credited.
- Sociological theories – candidates are expected to have a good working knowledge of the main theoretical approaches in Sociology for Family, Education and Crime. The key aspects, ideas, strengths and weaknesses of each theory in relation to each topic need to be covered.
- Using distinct paragraphs for each point made – it is good practice for candidates to separate answers into clear paragraphs, making it obvious where one point ends and another begins. For example, using discourse markers such as, 'Firstly', 'Secondly', 'On the other hand' etc.
- The **(f)** question is the only one which requires evaluation, a number of candidates were evaluating in **(c), (d) or (e)** questions when this is not required and will not be credited.
- Candidates could develop their points further and demonstrate more sociological engagement, especially in the **(e) and (f)** parts of the questions.
- Candidates should avoid writing introductions and conclusions where they are not required. Introductions are never needed and conclusions only in the **(f)** questions.
- Generic, common-sense, list-like answers should be avoided.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read all questions thoroughly before starting to write and to make a short plan to best answer each essay question.

General comments

- **Section A**, Family, was the most answered section, followed by **Section B**, Education, and then **Section C**, Crime.
- This was the first paper of the new specification to be sat. Overall, it was accessible to all and a full range of marks were seen.
- The new question format gives candidates clear instructions on what is required to answer the question.

- There were very few rubric errors seen this session. The evaluate question, on the whole, saw some excellent responses and there were many with conclusions.
- Generally, answers were well written, and candidates signposted their points using clear signal words, discourse markers and punctuation.
- Overall, there were some high quality responses seen with candidates showing very good knowledge of the subject matter and successfully integrating sociological concepts and theory into their answers.
- In addition to sociological knowledge, many candidates used localised examples well as evidence for the arguments they were making.
- Candidates must ensure they include the question number next to their responses to ensure they are credited.
- Candidates who performed well demonstrated a secure knowledge of sociological concepts and theories, with some reference to specific studies; answers were written in direct context of the question and there was good use of evidence to support answers.
- Conclusions should be justified and developed and not just a restating of earlier points in a summative way.
- Time management was generally good, with a small number of candidates opting to answer the **(e)** and **(f)** questions first. Those candidates that did run out of time typically spent too long on the lower tariff questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Family

- (a) (i)** The majority of candidates scored full marks by saying the parts taken by husband and wife within the family, e.g. joint conjugal roles. Some candidates spoke about generic roles within the family, rather than specifying husband and wife or intimate partners, which is essential to any definition of conjugal roles.
- (ii)** This question was generally answered well. The most common responses defined secularisation as a decline in religion in society. A small number of candidates did not understand the term secularisation and, as a result, incorrectly guessed concepts such as segregated conjugal roles.
- (b)** Most candidates were aware of the term triple shift and made two relevant points about it, the most common ideas being, women doing paid work, domestic work and emotional care. Each of these was credited as a separate point as it demonstrated understanding of the concept.
- (c)** This was an accessible question, with many candidates achieving full marks. The most commonly seen points included, reproduction, primary socialisation, care of children, status and economic function. When answering the question candidates should split their three points into clear paragraphs, each point given then needs to be unpacked to achieve the development mark. The main reason for limited marks was lack of detail in the description, candidates need to be clear that this is not a state or an identify style question. Lists, for example, were sometimes seen and this does not match the demands of the command word in the question.
- (d)** As in the **(c)** question, candidates should follow the same format of three clear paragraphs with a different unpacked point in each. Candidates who knew that the New Right were opposed to family diversity did well on this question, however a significant number thought that they saw family diversity in a positive light and hence could not score any marks. Theoretical sociological knowledge is expected to be accurate. Candidates who understood the negative viewpoint of the New Right used points such as lone parent families, cohabitation and why the nuclear family is best as it carries out the key functions to exemplify their views.
- (e)** This is a higher tariff question, meaning more in-depth explanations are required along with relevant sociological concepts, theories and studies. The same principles as the **(c)** and **(d)** questions do apply regarding splitting ideas into clear unpacked points. It is important to note that the **(e)** questions do not ask for evaluation, a number of candidates explained why the extended family is not the best type of family which was not creditworthy. The best responses included ideas such as, increased emotional/financial support, care of children/the elderly and the passing down of cultural norms and values. Some candidates made good use of the different types of extended family, vertical, horizontal and modified, within their answer to highlight sociological knowledge and

to better differentiate their points. Common-sense reasoning tended to characterise the discussion in less successful answers and should consequently be avoided.

- (f) This is a high tariff *evaluate* question and candidates should ensure they follow the question instructions to maximise chances for success, giving three points for the view in the question, three against plus a conclusion. Candidates should also ensure that they include relevant key concepts/studies/theory to substantiate and develop the ideas presented. This question produced answers which covered the whole mark range. Overall, the 'for' side tended to be done better than the 'against'. On the 'for' side, candidates looked at the increasing number of career women/role models, increasing awareness of the dark side of the family and social attitudes changing regarding women living alone due to the spread of feminist ideas. Some candidates mentioned better education for women leading to job security and financial independence, but did not always explicitly link these points to feminism which prevented them achieving a fully developed point. On the against side, candidates either took the approach that marriage has not declined, using cultural or religious examples, or that the decline in marriage is not down to feminism but other factors such as secularisation. Both approaches were fine to credit. The very best candidates typically used a combination of both, for example feminism has not spread to the same extent in all cultures and that in combination with less strong religious beliefs has led to the decline of marriage, it is not due to feminist ideas.

Question 2 Education

- (a) (i) The majority of candidates knew that linguistic factors meant language and as such scored at least one mark. However, many responses were too brief, and some candidates did not achieve the second mark as they only mentioned the connection to language without further elaboration. Awarding the second mark was thus rarer but some candidates did talk about the restricted/elaborated code well and hence could achieve full marks.
- (ii) This question was answered effectively, with candidates linking the question to abiding by or following of norms and values, often specifically within the context of education. Most candidates had an idea of the meaning of conformity, but most responses only gained one mark as they lacked the two creditable elements needed.
- (b) Responses to this question were very mixed. Some responses did not demonstrate knowledge of the term 'ethnocentric' at all, others were vague and linked to culture/religion. There were also some excellent responses seen using examples such as teaching predominantly white European history, emphasising native languages, celebrating Western cultural or religious festivals. Some candidates did not focus on the 'curriculum' aspect of the question, talking instead about the expectations of teachers. Others confused the ethnocentric curriculum with the official or hidden curriculum.
- (c) This question was accessible to candidates with the majority knowing what a private school was. Most identified key benefits such as smaller class size, better resources/facilities, more highly qualified teachers and better life chances. The unpacking of these points was key to gaining the second mark available for development. Some candidates' explanations of their points were far too brief so it is essential that candidates can confidently and sociologically describe/explain the point made.
- (d) This question illustrates the need to read the question carefully, here it was not asking for the Functionalist view of education in a positive sense but, instead three limitations. Candidates found this question challenging, many described the functionalist view or looked at the Marxist/feminist view without any links to functionalism at all. Both perspectives could clearly be used in the answer but only in the context of describing a limitation of Functionalism. Those candidates who focused on the idea of limitations did produce some well thought out developed points, such as, the myth of meritocracy, values not being shared, ethnic, class or gender inequalities and the idea that there is not a close link between what is taught in school and the skills needed for the workplace.
- (e) This was a very accessible question and the majority of candidates did reasonably well, demonstrating some good sociological knowledge and understanding. A wide range of differences could have been discussed, for example, gendered subject choice, influence of peers/subcultures, teacher expectations, the influence of the hidden curriculum etc. The main reason for candidates not maximising marks was only considering one gender in a description of a point, both boys and girls needed to be included in order to sufficiently demonstrate how boys and girls experience

school differently. For example, within a point on peer group influence, discussing how boys are more likely to join an anti-school subculture and girls a pro-school subculture and then showing how this will lead to a different experience of school based on gender.

- (f) On this evaluate question candidates needed to look for three cultural factors, such as the influence of ethnicity, cultural capital, fatalism of the working class, parental attitudes to education, linguistic factors e.g. restricted/elaborated code and show how these influence achievement. On the 'against' side, three factors which are not linked to culture such as material deprivation, home factors (e.g. lack of role models), gender, type of school attended, teacher labelling and setting and streaming. Candidates did not always make it clear if their point was for or against the debate in the question, and clearly some points could be either, depending on the explanation. Clear signalling really helps to clarify whether a point is 'for' or 'against' and therefore centres could usefully work on these skills with candidates. For example, 'My first point agreeing with the view in the question is ...' or 'However, cultural factors are not the only important influence on educational achievement...'.

Question 3 Crime

- (a) (i) Most candidates achieved at least one mark, understanding that targeting was linked to stopping individuals/groups from committing crime. Many candidates achieved a second mark by linking it to an example, the police focus on ethnic minority groups was commonly seen.
- (ii) Most candidates achieved a mark for either saying punishment or revenge, those that linked the two ideas together typically gained full marks. Some candidates incorrectly gave definitions of the term rehabilitation.
- (b) Most candidates knew two agencies of formal social control, the most commonly seen being, police, courts, armed forces, prisons and the government. Some candidates did confuse formal with informal agencies such as education which were not credited or stated things which were not agencies such as the law.
- (c) The key word in the question was *global*, so candidates needed to focus on crimes such as people trafficking, drug/weapon smuggling, cybercrimes, organised violent crime usually relating to worldwide gang activity and green crimes. Many candidates were clear on the global aspect, making good, unpacked points, however some did not understand this idea of a global crime, giving examples such as theft or murder that were not creditable.
- (d) As in the Education (d) question, candidates found this question challenging, with many not attempting an answer. Candidates will be asked about the strengths and limitations of sociological theories as they relate to specific topic areas and so it is vital that they are prepared for this. The key word of this question was *limitation*, so candidates could not gain marks by simply describing the Marxist view of crime, or giving alternative theoretical views, unless it was linked to a Marxist limitation. For example, a strong point might say, Marxists only consider class when looking at crime, they ignore other factors such as gender which Feminists say is a key factor in many crimes, particularly those against women.
- (e) This was an accessible question. The majority of candidates focused on formal punishment, however informal methods of punishment were also fine to credit. This question does not require evaluation, or points against the view, some responses discussed why prisons did not reduce crime which was not creditworthy. It is only **Question (f)** which requires evaluation (points against the view). There were some excellent, detailed responses seen which made good use of key sociological concepts such as deterrence, rehabilitation, retribution, re-offending and incapacitation. Examples of different global systems and their success in reducing crime were also used effectively, for example the harsher style of punishment in the Middle East and the more therapeutic punishment style seen in Scandinavia.
- (f) If candidates had a clear understanding about victim surveys they produced some excellent two sided essays. A number of candidates were not clear, frequently confusing them with self-report studies or official statistics. Another misconception was the involvement of police in victim surveys, for example victims would not participate as they did not want to talk to the police. This led to superficial, inaccurate points being made. Also, candidates use of concepts such as validity, reliability and generalisability demonstrated further confusion, to be credited these need to be used accurately. However, there were some superb answers seen which used points on the 'for' side

such as, good for trends and patterns, revealing the dark figure of crime, often up to date, carried out both nationally and locally. These answers recognised the key idea that victim surveys could document unreported crimes. Whilst 'against' points typically included ideas such as victimless crimes, poor memory, lack of children surveyed, respondents may lie or exaggerate, self-report studies or OCS being better.