



## GSOC.AL39 Work, Poverty and Welfare: Explanations and Measurement of Poverty

AQA 7192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

**Answer ALL questions. Use full sentences for questions worth 4 marks or more. Spend about 75 minutes on the whole paper.**

- 1** Which one of the following best describes an absolute definition of poverty in the context of policy debates about living standards in the UK?

- ☐ A) Poverty defined relative to the average income in a society
- ☐ B) Poverty defined by a fixed minimum such as inability to afford basic food and shelter
- ☐ C) Poverty defined by survey respondents saying they feel poor
- ☐ D) Poverty defined by the number of people receiving welfare benefits

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Define what sociologists mean by 'relative poverty' when measuring poverty within a nation such as the UK.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Identify and explain one strength of using an income-threshold measure, such as 60% of median household income, to monitor poverty in the UK.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

- 4** Identify and explain one weakness of using a subjective survey question asking people whether they feel poor to measure poverty in a national British sample.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

- 5** Outline two ways Townsend's relative deprivation index differs from a simple government income-threshold measure when assessing poverty in Britain.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

- 6** Identify and explain one criticism of using a simple income threshold such as 60% of median income to decide who is in poverty in the UK.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

**7** Describe one way in which New Right explanations, such as Murray's underclass thesis or culture of dependency, explain persistent poverty in a community.

(Total for Question 7 is 3 marks)

**8** Item A: A local council area survey reports that 25% of households have incomes below 60% of the national median, but the same survey also finds 18% of households lack at least two goods or activities considered typical in that area, such as replacing worn-out clothes or inviting friends to the house. Using Item A and your sociological knowledge, explain two ways these two measures might give different perspectives on poverty in this council area.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

**9** Identify and explain two ways Marxist explanations account for poverty in modern industrial societies.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

**10** Define what Weberian sociologists mean by 'life chances' and explain briefly how this concept helps to explain poverty in a contemporary society like the UK.

(Total for Question 10 is 3 marks)

**11** Explain two ways the feminisation of poverty can be observed in adult households in contemporary Britain.

(Total for Question 11 is 4 marks)

**12** Identify and explain one piece of evidence a sociologist might seek to test Murray's underclass thesis about areas of persistent poverty.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

**13** Compare briefly one New Right explanation and one Marxist explanation for why unemployment and poverty persist in some communities.

(Total for Question 13 is 4 marks)

**14** State one strength of using a multidimensional poverty measure like Townsend's index rather than only an income threshold, in sociological research about poverty in the UK.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

**15** Using your sociological knowledge, explain two policy limitations when trying to reduce the feminisation of poverty in contemporary Britain.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

**16** Discuss how far sociologists would agree that poverty in contemporary industrial societies is best explained by structural factors rather than by culture or individual behaviour. In your answer you should evaluate competing perspectives and reach a supported conclusion.

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**(Total for Question 16 is 12 marks)**

# Mark scheme · GSOC.AL39 Work, Poverty and Welfare: Explanations and Measurement of Poverty

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## Question 1

- **B1** B (poverty defined by a fixed minimum such as inability to afford basic food and shelter)
- **Answer: B**

## Question 2

- **B1** identifies that relative poverty compares someone's resources to the standard of living in their society, not a fixed minimum
- **B1** development, e.g. often operationalised as having income below a percentage of median income, for example below 60% of median household income
- **Answer: Relative poverty compares a person or household's resources to the standard of living in their society; it is often measured as having income below a set percentage of median household income, for example below 60% of the median.**

## Question 3

- **B1** identifies a strength, e.g. it is easy to compare over time and between groups
- **B1** explains the strength, e.g. a clear numerical cutoff allows policymakers and researchers to track changes and target policies
- **Answer: A strength is that an income-threshold measure allows easy comparison over time and between groups, because a clear numerical cutoff facilitates monitoring and policy targeting.**

## Question 4

- **B1** identifies a weakness, e.g. responses are influenced by personal expectations and cultural norms
- **B1** explains the weakness, e.g. two people with similar incomes might answer differently so the measure lacks objectivity and comparability
- **Answer: A weakness is that responses are influenced by personal expectations and cultural norms; two people with similar incomes might answer differently, so the measure lacks objectivity and comparability.**

## Question 5

- **B1** identifies first difference, e.g. Townsend uses multiple indicators of resources and living standards rather than income alone
- **B1** develops first point, e.g. Townsend included lack of common goods, overcrowding and inability to afford social activities
- **B1** identifies second difference, e.g. Townsend emphasises socially perceived necessities and exclusion rather than a single income cutoff
- **B1** develops second point, e.g. his approach captures exclusion from ordinary living standards as judged against society's norms
- **Answer: Townsend uses multiple indicators of living standards rather than income alone, for example lack of common goods and overcrowding, and he emphasises socially perceived necessities and exclusion rather than a single income cutoff, capturing inability to participate in ordinary social life.**

## Question 6

- **B1** identifies a criticism, e.g. it can classify people as poor even if they can afford essentials
- **B1** develops that point, e.g. households just below the threshold may not lack basic needs and differences in cost of living and household composition are not accounted for
- **B1** identifies a second criticism, e.g. it ignores non-income resources and debts
- **B1** develops second criticism, e.g. two households with similar incomes may differ in wealth, housing costs or in-kind benefits such as free school meals
- **Answer: A criticism is that an income threshold can label people as poor even if they can afford essentials, since it does not account for household composition or regional costs; it also ignores non-income resources and debts, so households with similar incomes may have very different material circumstances.**

### Question 7

- **B1** identifies a relevant New Right claim, e.g. that long-term welfare dependency weakens work ethic and family stability
- **B1** develops the claim, e.g. Murray argued that lack of adult role models, absent fathers and reliance on benefits create an underclass culture
- **B1** further development, e.g. this culture then perpetuates unemployment and anti-social behaviour across generations
- **Answer: The New Right argues that long-term welfare dependency weakens work ethic and family stability; Murray suggested absent fathers and reliance on benefits create an underclass culture that perpetuates unemployment and anti-social behaviour across generations.**

### Question 8

- **B1** first point: identifies that income-threshold measure captures people below a numerical cutoff whereas Townsend-style goods measure captures actual deprivation
- **B1** development of first point, e.g. some households below 60% median may still afford common goods due to savings or benefits, while some above threshold may lack goods due to high household costs
- **B1** second point: identifies that goods-based measure reflects social exclusion and inability to participate in normal social life, not just low income
- **B1** development of second point, e.g. the 18% lacking goods may indicate pockets of severe exclusion even if they are not all income-poor by the threshold
- **Answer: An income threshold counts households below a set percentage of median income, so 25% may include some with temporary low income or with savings; a goods-based Townsend measure records actual inability to afford socially typical items, so the 18% figure highlights social exclusion. Thus the two measures can differ because income alone does not always reflect material deprivation or social participation.**

### Question 9

- **B1** identifies first Marxist point, e.g. poverty results from capitalist exploitation where surplus value is taken from workers
- **B1** develops first point, e.g. low wages and insecure employment are structural outcomes of profit maximisation
- **B1** identifies second Marxist point, e.g. poverty is maintained by ruling class ideology and institutions that legitimise inequality
- **B1** develops second point, e.g. education, media and the state reproduce ideas that blame the poor and justify low pay
- **Answer: Marxists say poverty arises from capitalist exploitation, where profit motives produce low wages and insecure jobs, and is reproduced by ruling class ideology and institutions such as education and media that legitimise inequality and blame the poor.**

### Question 10

- **B1** definition: identifies life chances as opportunities individuals have to improve their quality of life and access resources
- **B1** applies the concept to poverty, e.g. limited life chances due to low status, poor education or weak marketable skills reduce access to well-paid jobs
- **B1** development, e.g. this explains poverty as a result of unequal distribution of economic and social resources rather than individual moral failure
- **Answer: Life chances are the opportunities individuals have to improve their quality of life and access resources; limited life chances, through low status, poor education or weak marketable skills, reduce access to well-paid jobs and so help explain poverty as a result of unequal distribution of economic and social resources.**

### Question 11

- **B1** identifies first way, e.g. higher rates of poverty among single parent households, which are often headed by women
- **B1** develops first way, e.g. single mothers face low pay, childcare costs and part-time work, increasing poverty risk
- **B1** identifies second way, e.g. older women have higher poverty risk in retirement due to interrupted careers and lower pension contributions
- **B1** develops second way, e.g. career breaks for caring reduce lifetime earnings and pension entitlements
- **Answer: The feminisation of poverty is seen in higher poverty among female-headed single parent households, where childcare costs and low pay increase risk, and among older women in retirement, who often have lower pensions after interrupted careers for caring responsibilities.**

### Question 12

- **B1** identifies suitable evidence, e.g. longitudinal data showing intergenerational unemployment and welfare dependence in certain areas
- **B1** explains why it is relevant, e.g. such evidence would support or challenge the claim that poverty and family breakdown persist across generations
- **Answer: A sociologist could use longitudinal data tracking families to see if unemployment and welfare dependence persist across generations in certain areas; this would test Murray's claim that an underclass culture perpetuates poverty across generations.**

### Question 13

- **B1** identifies New Right view, e.g. welfare dependency and breakdown of family norms lead to poverty
- **B1** develops New Right point, e.g. dependency reduces incentive to work and creates an underclass culture
- **B1** identifies Marxist view, e.g. structural factors of capitalism such as deindustrialisation and exploitation produce unemployment
- **B1** develops Marxist point, e.g. economic restructuring and lack of investment create structural joblessness beyond individual control
- **Answer: The New Right blames welfare dependency and breakdown of family norms, arguing these reduce incentives to work and create an underclass culture; Marxists explain persistent poverty structurally, pointing to capitalist processes like deindustrialisation and lack of investment that create joblessness beyond individuals control.**

### Question 14

- **B1** identifies a genuine strength, e.g. captures different aspects of living standards and social participation
- **B1** brief development, e.g. this provides a fuller picture of exclusion than income alone
- **Answer: A strength is that a multidimensional measure captures different aspects of living standards and social participation, providing a fuller picture of exclusion than income alone.**

### Question 15

- **B1** identifies first limitation, e.g. childcare provision and costs limit womens ability to increase paid work
- **B1** develops first limitation, e.g. even if childcare funding increases, part-time low paid jobs and employer practices may persist
- **B1** identifies second limitation, e.g. pension rules and fragmented employment histories make reducing old-age female poverty difficult
- **B1** develops second limitation, e.g. policy changes to pensions require long lead times and face political resistance
- **Answer: Two limitations are that insufficient affordable childcare and persistent low pay in part-time work limit womens ability to increase paid work, and that fragmented employment histories and pension rules make reducing old-age female poverty difficult, since pension reform is complex and slow.**

### Question 16

- **Level 1** (1-3): Basic statements about causes of poverty with little development or use of sociological perspectives. Limited or no evaluation and a weak or no conclusion.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Clear description of one or two explanations, for example structural factors and cultural explanations, with some use of sociological ideas. Limited evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and a simple conclusion.
- **Level 3** (7-9): Good analysis of competing views: clear explanation of structural accounts such as Marxist and Weberian arguments and cultural or individualist accounts such as New Right explanations. Relevant evidence or examples used. Balanced evaluation showing understanding of limitations on both sides.
- **Level 4** (10-12): Excellent analysis and evaluation, comparing Marxist, Weberian and structural accounts with New Right and cultural explanations, and feminist perspectives on gendered poverty. Discussion of empirical evidence and methodological issues, recognition of complexity and interaction between structure and agency, and a supported, well-reasoned conclusion.
- **Indicative content:**
  - Structural explanations: Marxist view of capitalism producing low pay, insecure employment and spatial concentration of poverty; Weberian life chances showing how class, status and party affect access to resources.
  - New Right and cultural explanations: Murray's underclass and culture of dependency, claim that attitudes, family breakdown and welfare dependency reduce employment incentives and perpetuate poverty.
  - Feminist perspective: feminisation of poverty shows structural factors intersect with gendered roles and labour market inequalities to produce gendered patterns of poverty.
  - Evidence and evaluation: use of longitudinal studies, regional unemployment data and measures of material deprivation to assess structural causes; criticisms of cultural explanations for blaming the poor and insufficiently accounting for economic restructuring.
  - Interactionist or nuanced approaches: some sociologists argue for a combination of factors, where structural economic change produces conditions in which certain cultural patterns emerge, so structure and agency interact.
  - Methodological issues: difficulties in proving causation, limits of income-thresholds versus multidimensional measures, and the role of ideology in shaping policy responses.
  - Conclusion should weigh the relative explanatory power of structural factors against cultural and individual explanations and argue a justified position, for example that structure provides the primary cause but culture and agency shape outcomes and policy effects.