



GSOC.RM10 Primary and Secondary Data, Quantitative and Qualitative Data

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 50 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. For questions worth 2 marks or more write your answers using full sentences where requested. Spend about 50 minutes on this paper.

- 1** Which one of the following, in the context of GCSE sociology research methods, is an example of primary data?

- ☐ A) A government survey dataset published last year
- ☐ B) A police crime table from the national statistics website
- ☐ C) Notes from an interview the researcher conducted themselves
- ☐ D) A historic diary held in an archive

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Define the term 'primary data' as it is used in GCSE sociology research methods.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Define the term 'secondary data' in the context of GCSE sociology.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

- 4** Which one of the following is primarily quantitative data in GCSE sociology?

- ☐ A) A set of interview transcripts about students experiences
- ☐ B) A table showing percentages of pupils who passed an exam
- ☐ C) A researcher field diary describing classroom interactions
- ☐ D) Photographs of neighbourhood conditions

(Total for Question 4 is 1 mark)

5 Which one of the following is primarily qualitative data in GCSE sociology?

- ☐ A) A frequency distribution of traffic stops by time of day
- ☐ B) A researcher coding responses into categories and counts
- ☐ C) A set of detailed interview transcripts about young peoples views
- ☐ D) A chart of average household incomes

(Total for Question 5 is 1 mark)

6 Explain one strength of quantitative data for sociological research, in the context of GCSE sociology topics.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

7 Explain one weakness of quantitative data for sociological research, as taught in GCSE sociology.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 Explain one strength of qualitative data for sociological research, in the context of GCSE sociology topics.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 Explain one weakness of qualitative data for sociological research, as presented in GCSE sociology.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

- 10** Classify the following source in the context of sociology research: 'A local council publishes an annual table of homelessness counts for each neighbourhood.' Is this primary or secondary data? Explain your answer briefly.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** Classify the following example: 'A school produces annual league tables showing average exam scores for each class.' Is the data quantitative or qualitative? Explain your answer briefly.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

- 12** Name two kinds of secondary quantitative sources that a GCSE sociology researcher might use and explain briefly why each counts as secondary quantitative data.

(Total for Question 12 is 4 marks)

- 13** Item A: A researcher visits a youth club and records short notes describing how members talk about their neighbourhood during one evening session. Using Item A and your own knowledge, identify two reasons why this information would be classed as qualitative primary data.

(Total for Question 13 is 4 marks)

- 14** Describe one reason why quantitative data may be easier for sociologists to compare across time, in the context of GCSE sociology.

(Total for Question 14 is 3 marks)

- 15** Describe two features of qualitative data that make it useful for understanding social meanings, as taught in GCSE sociology.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** Discuss how far sociologists would agree that qualitative data gives a better picture of society than quantitative data, using relevant examples from the distinctions between data types in GCSE sociology.

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that qualitative data gives a better picture of society than quantitative data.

(Total for Question 16 is 12 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.RM10 Primary and Secondary Data, Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Question 1

- **B1** C (notes from an interview the researcher conducted themselves)
- **Answer:** C

Question 2

- **B1** identifies primary data as data collected first-hand by the researcher, or
- **B1** development, e.g. examples such as questionnaires, interviews or observations collected by the researcher
- **Answer:** Primary data is data collected first-hand by the researcher, for example through questionnaires, interviews or observations carried out by the researcher themselves.

Question 3

- **B1** identifies secondary data as pre-existing data not collected by the current researcher, or
- **B1** development, e.g. examples such as official statistics, published research, letters or archival records
- **Answer:** Secondary data is pre-existing data not collected by the current researcher, such as official statistics, published research, letters or archival records.

Question 4

- **B1** B (a table showing percentages of pupils who passed an exam)
- **Answer:** B

Question 5

- **B1** C (a set of detailed interview transcripts about young people's views)
- **Answer:** C

Question 6

- **B1** identifies a strength, e.g. it allows measurement and comparison using numbers
- **B1** development, e.g. numerical results can be presented in tables and graphs to compare groups or track change over time
- **Answer:** One strength of quantitative data is that it allows measurement and comparison using numbers, for example presenting results in tables and graphs to compare groups or track change over time.

Question 7

- **B1** identifies a weakness, e.g. it can miss meanings and context behind the numbers
- **B1** development, e.g. surveys or statistics may show patterns but not explain why people think or behave as they do
- **Answer:** A weakness of quantitative data is that it can miss the meanings and context behind the numbers, for example surveys or statistics may show patterns but not explain why people think or behave in certain ways.

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a strength, e.g. it gives rich, detailed insight into people's meanings and experiences
- **B1** development, e.g. interview transcripts or diaries can reveal motivations and feelings that numbers alone cannot show
- **Answer:** Qualitative data gives rich, detailed insight into people's meanings and experiences, for example interview transcripts or diaries can reveal motivations and feelings that numbers alone cannot show.

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a weakness, e.g. it is often harder to compare and generalise from qualitative data
- **B1** development, e.g. detailed interviews typically involve smaller samples so findings may not be representative
- **Answer:** A weakness of qualitative data is that it is often harder to compare and generalise from, because detailed interviews typically involve smaller samples so findings may not be representative.

Question 10

- **B1** identifies it as secondary data
- **B1** brief development, e.g. it is pre-existing published information produced by the council, not collected first-hand by the researcher
- **Answer: This is secondary data, because it is pre-existing published information produced by the council rather than data collected first-hand by the researcher.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies it as quantitative data
- **B1** brief development, e.g. average exam scores are numerical measures that can be compared and graphed
- **Answer: This is quantitative data, because average exam scores are numerical measures that can be compared and presented in tables or graphs.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies one correct source, e.g. national census statistics
- **B1** brief explanation of why it is secondary quantitative, e.g. it is pre-existing numerical data collected and published by another organisation
- **B1** identifies a second correct source, e.g. local authority crime figures or school exam results
- **B1** brief explanation of why it is secondary quantitative, e.g. they are numerical counts or rates published by institutions and not collected first-hand by the researcher
- **Answer: Examples: national census statistics, which are pre-existing numerical data collected and published by another organisation; and local authority crime figures or school exam results, which are numerical counts or rates published by institutions and not collected first-hand by the researcher.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies that the notes are collected first-hand by the researcher, so they are primary
- **B1** development showing understanding of primary data, e.g. the researcher was present and directly recorded the interaction
- **B1** identifies that the notes are descriptive and concerned with meanings and speech, so they are qualitative
- **B1** development showing understanding of qualitative data, e.g. the notes capture feelings, language and context rather than numbers
- **Answer: The notes are primary because they were collected first-hand by the researcher while present at the youth club; they are qualitative because they record descriptive material about how members talk, capturing meanings and context rather than numerical measures.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a correct reason, e.g. numbers allow consistent measurement
- **B1** development, e.g. the same statistic, such as unemployment rate, can be calculated in the same way each year
- **B1** further development, e.g. numerical trends can be graphed to show increases or decreases over time
- **Answer: Quantitative data are easier to compare across time because numbers allow consistent measurement: the same statistic, such as an unemployment rate, can be calculated the same way each year and graphed to show increases or decreases over time.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies feature one, e.g. detailed descriptions of feelings, motives or meanings
- **B1** development of feature one, e.g. such detail helps sociologists understand why people act in certain ways
- **B1** identifies feature two, e.g. context and interactions are recorded, not just isolated responses
- **B1** development of feature two, e.g. context allows interpretation of behaviour within its social setting
- **Answer: Two useful features of qualitative data are: it provides detailed descriptions of feelings, motives and meanings which help sociologists understand why people act in certain ways; and it records context and interactions rather than isolated responses, allowing interpretation of behaviour within its social setting.**

Question 16

- **Level 1** (1-3): Basic statements about qualitative or quantitative data with little development. Limited use of sociological ideas or examples. Conclusion, if present, is unsupported or simplistic.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Clear description of strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative data with some development. Some use of sociological examples or reasons why one type may be better. Limited evaluation and an attempt at a judgement.
- **Level 3** (7-9): Well developed discussion of both qualitative and quantitative data, showing understanding of how each contributes to a picture of society. Good use of examples and reasons, with balanced evaluation and a supported judgement.
- **Level 4** (10-12): Excellent, balanced discussion that evaluates the claim in depth. Shows how qualitative data provides rich meanings and context while quantitative data provides comparability and generalisability. Uses relevant examples, considers limitations of both approaches, and reaches a clear, supported conclusion about the extent of agreement among sociologists.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Qualitative data strengths: rich, detailed insight into meanings, motives and social context; useful for understanding processes and experiences; examples include interview transcripts, field notes and diaries.
 - Qualitative data limitations: often small samples, harder to generalise, potential researcher bias, time-consuming to collect and analyse.
 - Quantitative data strengths: numerical measures allow comparison, trends and statistical testing; easier to present in tables and graphs; useful for measuring the scale of social patterns, for example exam pass rates or unemployment rates.
 - Quantitative data limitations: can miss context and subjective meanings, may impose researcher categories that distort participants views, and may hide important variations within groups.
 - Sociological perspectives: some interpretivist-leaning sociologists value qualitative depth for understanding social action, while other sociologists value quantitative breadth for general patterns; most would argue the choice depends on the research question.
 - Practical and ethical factors: time, cost and access affect which data are feasible; consent and confidentiality may be managed differently for qualitative and quantitative work.
 - Conclusion guidance: a balanced answer may argue qualitative data gives a better picture in terms of depth and meaning, while quantitative data gives a better picture in terms of scale and comparability; many sociologists favour a mixed approach to gain the strengths of both.