2.3 Questionnaires and Social Surveys: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary and name sociologists where you can.

1 Using your knowledge of response rates and representativeness, explain what is happening in this scenario, including the response rate as a percentage.

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

2 Evaluate the view that questionnaires are the best method for sociologists studying people's attitudes and behaviour. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one point of view.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 Calculate the overall response rate for the year group, and explain whether the response is likely to give a representative picture of Year 10 pupils' views on homework.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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4 State one change the school in Q16 could make so that Year 10's views on homework are more evenly represented across groups.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.3 Questionnaires and Social Surveys: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

calculates the response rate: 145/500 x 100 = 29%	**B1**
identifies this as a fairly low response rate for a postal questionnaire	**B1**
identifies that respondents are not spread evenly across the sample, being skewed toward older/detached-house streets	**B1**
explains this pattern suggests non-response bias: flats and rented housing are under-represented among respondents	**B1**
explains the consequence: findings may not be representative of attitudes across the whole town	**B1**
accurate use of terminology throughout (response rate, representativeness, non-response bias)	**B1**

Answer: Response rate = 145/500 x 100 = 29%, which is fairly low. Because returns are skewed toward older, detached-house streets, flats and rented housing are under-represented among respondents (non-response bias), so the findings are unlikely to be representative of attitudes across the whole town.

Question 2

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the strengths and the weaknesses of questionnaires, supported by accurate reference to studies such as Young and Willmott's and to the positivist/interpretivist traditions. Strengths and weaknesses are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout.	**10-12**
Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains both strengths and weaknesses of questionnaires, with some accurate detail. Some analysis and an attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.	**7-9**
Level 2 Some relevant explanation of questionnaires, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison of views.	**4-6**
Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about questionnaires, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Strengths: questionnaires can reach large samples quickly and cheaply, giving representative, reliable data favoured by the positivist tradition, as in large-scale surveys like Young and Willmott's.
- Strengths continued: closed questions are easy to quantify and compare; postal/online questionnaires can offer anonymity that may increase honesty on sensitive topics.
- Weaknesses: response rates can be low and uneven, creating non-response bias that undermines representativeness, as illustrated by scenarios like Q12.
- Weaknesses continued: closed and leading questions can restrict or distort answers, reducing validity compared with methods like unstructured interviews.
- Weaknesses continued: questionnaires depend on respondents' literacy and willingness to answer honestly, and cannot probe or clarify answers the way an interviewer can.
- The interpretivist tradition argues questionnaires' standardised format cannot capture the depth of meaning behind people's attitudes and behaviour, which qualitative methods are better suited to reach.
- A balanced conclusion should weigh questionnaires' strength in scale, cost and reliability against their weaknesses in response rate, question design and depth of validity, noting the choice often depends on the researcher's aims and theoretical approach.

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Question 3

calculates total returned = 40+35+20+15 = 110, out of 200 sent	**B1**
calculates overall response rate = 110/200 x 100 = 55%	**B1**
identifies the response rate varies a lot between groups, from 80% in 10A (40/50) down to 30% in 10D (15/50), so some groups are under-represented among returns	**B1**
concludes the overall picture may not be representative of the whole year group because some teaching groups' views are much less strongly represented than others	**B1**

Answer: Total returned = 110 out of 200 sent, an overall response rate of 55%. But response rates vary sharply by group, from 80% in 10A to 30% in 10D, so pupils in low-responding groups are under-represented and the overall picture may not be representative of Year 10 as a whole.

Question 4

identifies a genuine change, e.g. sending targeted reminders specifically to the lower-responding groups, such as 10C and 10D	**B1**
brief development linking it to bringing returns from all groups closer to balance	**B1**

Answer: The school could send targeted reminders specifically to the lower-responding groups, such as 10C and 10D, until returns from all four groups are more evenly balanced.

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