



GSOC.RM3 Questionnaires and Social Surveys

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

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

1 A question that gives respondents a fixed list of possible answers to choose from is called a...

- ☐ A) open question
- ☐ B) closed question
- ☐ C) leading question
- ☐ D) pilot question

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Define what sociologists mean by 'social desirability bias' in questionnaire research.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Questionnaires can use closed or open questions.

(a) State one advantage of closed questions over open questions.

(2)

(b) State one advantage of open questions over closed questions.

(2)

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Sociologists try to avoid a particular type of poorly-worded question in a questionnaire.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Postal and online questionnaires are a common way of collecting sociological data.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Not every respondent sent a questionnaire returns it.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 State one reason respondents might give inaccurate answers on a questionnaire about a sensitive topic.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 State one criticism of using a Likert scale (e.g. 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree') to measure attitudes.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 Michael Young and Peter Willmott's classic 1957 study of family life in Bethnal Green used structured interviews as part of a large-scale...

- ☐ A) covert observation
- ☐ B) social survey
- ☐ C) content analysis
- ☐ D) case study

(Total for Question 9 is 1 mark)

10 Young and Willmott's Bethnal Green study is a classic example of the social survey method.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

11 The social survey method, as used in studies like Young and Willmott's, has limitations as well as strengths.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

12 A researcher sends a postal questionnaire to 500 randomly selected households in a town, asking about attitudes to a new recycling scheme. 145 questionnaires are returned completed. The researcher notices that most of the returned questionnaires come from streets with older, detached houses, with very few returned from streets with flats and rented housing. [This is a hypothetical scenario, written for this exercise.]

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 12 is 6 marks)

13 Sociologists disagree about how far questionnaires are the best method for studying attitudes and behaviour.

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 13 is 12 marks)

14 Researchers report how many questionnaires were successfully completed and returned.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

15 State one way a researcher could try to improve the response rate to a postal questionnaire.

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

- 16** A school sends a questionnaire about homework to all 200 pupils in Year 10. The table below shows how many questionnaires were returned by each teaching group.

Group	Number sent	Number returned
10A	50	40
10B	50	35
10C	50	20
10D	50	15

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 16 is 4 marks)

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- 17** 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 17 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.RM3 Questionnaires and Social Surveys

Question 1

- **B1** B (closed question)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies social desirability bias as the tendency for respondents to give answers that present themselves in a positive light rather than answers that are strictly true (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. under-reporting embarrassing behaviour or over-reporting socially approved behaviour, such as exercising regularly
- **Answer: Social desirability bias is the tendency for respondents to give answers that present themselves in a positive light rather than answers that are strictly true, for example under-reporting embarrassing behaviour or over-reporting socially approved behaviour.**

Question 3

- (a) **B1** identifies a genuine advantage, e.g. closed questions are quicker to answer
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. and easier to code and quantify into statistics
- **(a) Answer: Closed questions are quicker for respondents to answer, and answers are easier to code and quantify into statistics than answers to open questions.**
- (b) **B1** identifies a genuine advantage, e.g. open questions allow respondents to give detailed answers in their own words
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. rather than being restricted to a limited set of pre-set options, which can improve validity
- **(b) Answer: Open questions allow respondents to give detailed, valid answers in their own words, rather than being restricted to a limited set of pre-set options.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies a leading question as one phrased in a way that suggests, or hints at, the answer the researcher wants
- **B1** development, e.g. a question such as 'Do you agree that X is a serious problem?' pushes the respondent toward agreeing
- **B1** identifies the effect: this reduces validity because the respondent's answer no longer reflects their genuine, independent view
- **B1** further point, e.g. well-designed questionnaires use neutral wording to avoid this
- **Answer: A leading question is phrased in a way that suggests or hints at the answer the researcher wants, for example 'Do you agree that X is a serious problem?', which pushes respondents toward agreeing. This reduces validity because the answer no longer reflects the respondent's genuine, independent view, so well-designed questionnaires use neutral wording.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies a first strength, e.g. they can reach a large, geographically spread sample relatively cheaply and quickly
- **B1** development of the first strength
- **B1** identifies a second strength, e.g. respondent anonymity may increase honesty on sensitive topics
- **B1** development of the second strength
- **Answer: Postal and online questionnaires can reach a large, geographically spread sample relatively cheaply and quickly, since no interviewer needs to travel to each respondent. They can also offer respondents anonymity, which may increase honesty on sensitive topics compared with a face-to-face method.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies that those who respond may differ systematically from those who do not, e.g. being more interested in the topic or more literate
- **B1** development, e.g. the achieved sample may then over-represent certain types of people
- **B1** further point, e.g. the researcher cannot know the views of the non-respondents, since they have no data from them
- **B1** concludes this reduces how far the findings can be generalised to the wider target population
- **Answer: Those who respond to a questionnaire may differ systematically from those who do not, for example being more interested in the topic or more literate, so the achieved sample may over-represent certain types of people. Since the researcher has no data from non-respondents the findings cannot safely be generalised to the wider target**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies a genuine reason, e.g. social desirability bias, embarrassment, or fear of judgement
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Respondents may give inaccurate answers because of social desirability bias, for example feeling embarrassed or fearing judgement if they gave a fully honest answer on a sensitive topic.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. it forces an answer into fixed categories that may not capture a respondent's true, more nuanced feeling
- **B1** brief development, e.g. respondents may cluster around the neutral middle option rather than committing to a real view
- **Answer: A Likert scale forces an answer into fixed categories that may not capture a respondent's true, more nuanced feeling, and respondents may cluster around the neutral middle option rather than committing to a genuine view.**

Question 9

- **B1** B (social survey)
- **Answer: B**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a social survey as a large-scale study collecting standardised data, usually via structured questionnaires or interviews, from a sample intended to represent a wider population
- **B1** development, e.g. Young and Willmott surveyed a sample of Bethnal Green residents about their contact with extended family
- **Answer: A social survey is a large-scale study that collects standardised data, usually via structured questionnaires or interviews, from a sample intended to represent a wider population. Young and Willmott used this method to survey Bethnal Green residents about their contact with extended family.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies a genuine limitation, e.g. structured survey questions may not capture the full depth and meaning of family relationships
- **B1** development, e.g. an interpretivist researcher would want to explore this through more in-depth qualitative methods instead
- **Answer: Structured survey questions may not capture the full depth and meaning of family relationships; an interpretivist researcher would want to explore this through more in-depth qualitative methods, such as unstructured interviews, instead.**

Question 12

- **B1** calculates the response rate: $145/500 \times 100 = 29\%$
- **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)
- **Answer: Response rate = $145/500 \times 100 = 29\%$, 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 13

- **Level 4** (10-12): 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.
- **Level 3** (7-9): 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.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of questionnaires, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison of views.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about questionnaires, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **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.

Question 14

- **B1** identifies the response rate as the proportion, usually expressed as a percentage, of a sample who complete and return a questionnaire out of the total number sent out
- **B1** development, e.g. calculated as number returned divided by number sent, multiplied by 100
- **Answer: The response rate is the proportion, usually expressed as a percentage, of a sample who complete and return a questionnaire out of the total number sent out, calculated as number returned divided by number sent, multiplied by 100.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies a genuine method, e.g. sending reminder letters, offering a small incentive, keeping the questionnaire short, or providing a prepaid return envelope
- **B1** brief development linking it to encouraging more people to complete and return the questionnaire
- **Answer: A researcher could send reminder letters, offer a small incentive, keep the questionnaire short, or provide a prepaid return envelope, all of which can encourage more people to complete and return the questionnaire.**

Question 16

- **B1** calculates total returned = $40+35+20+15 = 110$, out of 200 sent
- **B1** calculates overall response rate = $110/200 \times 100 = 55\%$
- **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
- **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 17

- **B1** 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
- **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.**