



GSOC.ST3 Poverty and Wealth

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show your understanding by using sociological vocabulary and, where asked, your own examples.

- 1** Which term describes not having enough income to afford the minimum needed for physical survival, such as food, clothing and shelter?

- ☐ A) Relative poverty
☐ B) Absolute poverty
☐ C) Wealth inequality
☐ D) Social exclusion

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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- 2** Define the term 'relative poverty'.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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- 3** Explain Seebom Rowntree's approach to measuring poverty in his studies of York.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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- 4** Explain Peter Townsend's approach to measuring poverty.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain one difference between Rowntree's and Townsend's approaches to defining poverty.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Explain the difference between poverty and wealth inequality.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 State one reason wealth in the UK is unevenly distributed.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 State one criticism of using an absolute measure of poverty.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 State one criticism of using a relative measure of poverty.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 Sociologists disagree about the main causes of poverty.

Evaluate the view that poverty is best explained by structural factors, such as low pay and unemployment, rather than by the culture or behaviour of the people experiencing it. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one explanation.

(Total for Question 10 is 12 marks)

11 For each statement below, state which approach or thinker it best matches.

- (a) A household cannot afford items and activities considered normal in society, such as an annual holiday. (1)
- (b) A household's income falls below the amount needed for basic physical survival. (1)
- (c) Poverty results mainly from a set of values and behaviours passed on within a group. (1)

(Total for Question 11 is 3 marks)

12 Explain one way poverty can affect a child's educational life chances.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

13 Give one reason sociologists give for why poverty can be difficult to measure precisely.

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

14 State one strength of Townsend's relative approach to measuring poverty.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

15 Explain two reasons some sociologists are cautious about the underclass thesis as an explanation of poverty.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

16 State one similarity between wealth inequality and income inequality as forms of economic inequality.

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

17 Explain why sociologists distinguish between poverty and low income.

(Total for Question 17 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ST3 Poverty and Wealth

Question 1

- **B1** B (absolute poverty)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies relative poverty as lacking the income or resources needed to reach the standard of living considered normal or customary in the society a person lives in (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. this means the poverty line can differ between societies and change over time, unlike absolute poverty
- **Answer: Relative poverty is lacking the income or resources needed to reach the standard of living considered normal in the society a person lives in, so the poverty line can differ between societies and change over time.**

Question 3

- **B1** identifies that Rowntree studied poverty in York around the turn of the twentieth century
- **B1** identifies he calculated a poverty line based on the minimum income needed for physical efficiency, e.g. food, shelter and clothing
- **B1** development, e.g. households below this line were classed as being in 'primary poverty'
- **B1** further development, e.g. Rowntree's approach is an example of measuring absolute poverty, a fixed minimum standard rather than one relative to others in society
- **Answer: Rowntree studied poverty in York, calculating a poverty line based on the minimum income needed for physical survival; households below it were in 'primary poverty', an example of measuring absolute poverty.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies that Townsend (1979) argued poverty should be measured relative to the normal living standards of the society a person lives in, not just physical survival
- **B1** development, e.g. he developed a deprivation index, looking at whether households could afford or take part in customary activities and possessions, such as having friends or family round for a meal, or a week's holiday away from home
- **B1** identifies that households falling below a certain number of these customary items or activities were classed as being in relative poverty
- **B1** development, e.g. this approach reflects the idea that poverty is about social participation, not only physical survival
- **Answer: Townsend (1979) argued poverty should be measured relative to normal living standards, developing a deprivation index of customary activities and possessions; households falling below a threshold were classed as in relative poverty.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies that Rowntree's approach was absolute, based on a fixed minimum standard needed for physical survival
- **B1** identifies that Townsend's approach was relative, based on the standard of living customary in society at the time
- **B1** development, e.g. this means Townsend's poverty line would rise as the general standard of living in society rises, while Rowntree's would not
- **B1** further development, e.g. critics of relative measures argue they mean poverty could never be eliminated even if everyone's absolute living standards improved
- **Answer: Rowntree's measure was absolute (a fixed survival minimum) while Townsend's was relative (tied to customary living standards, so it rises as society's standards rise); critics argue relative poverty could never be eliminated on this basis.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies poverty as lacking sufficient resources to meet a minimum (absolute) or socially expected (relative) standard of living
- **B1** identifies wealth inequality as the unequal distribution of assets, such as property, savings and investments, across society, which can exist even among people who are not in poverty
- **B1** development, e.g. a society could have low absolute poverty but still have very unequal wealth if assets are concentrated among a small group

Question 7

- **B1** identifies a genuine reason, e.g. wealth such as property and savings tends to be passed down through inheritance, so existing inequalities can persist across generations
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Wealth such as property and savings tends to be passed down through inheritance, so existing inequalities can persist across generations.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. it does not reflect what people need to participate fully in the society they actually live in, only physical survival
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that the fixed minimum can quickly become out of date as general living standards change
- **Answer: Absolute measures do not reflect what people need to participate fully in the society they live in, only physical survival, and the fixed minimum can become out of date as living standards change.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. relative poverty can never be fully eliminated, since it is defined by comparison with the rest of society, even if everyone's living standards improve
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Relative poverty can never be fully eliminated, since it is defined by comparison with the rest of society, even if everyone's living standards improve.**

Question 10

- **Level 4** (10-12): A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH structural explanations of poverty AND the cultural/behavioural (underclass) explanation, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists. Murray's underclass thesis is correctly treated as a contested position with genuine criticisms, not as an accepted fact. Strengths and weaknesses of each explanation are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached that does not attribute poverty to the character of people experiencing it. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A clear evaluation that explains both structural and cultural/behavioural explanations, with some accurate reference to sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of one or both explanations of poverty, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about poverty, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Structural explanations: sociologists such as Townsend argued poverty results mainly from structural factors in society, such as low wages, unemployment, insecure work and inadequate benefits, rather than from the behaviour of people experiencing poverty.
 - Cultural/behavioural explanations: Charles Murray argued in the late 1980s and 1990s that a section of the poor had developed a distinct 'underclass' set of values and behaviours, such as long-term reliance on benefits, which he argued could be passed on and help perpetuate poverty; this is a strongly contested position within sociology, not a settled fact.
 - Evaluation of structural explanations: supporters point to well-established patterns showing that poverty is closely linked to structural conditions such as job insecurity, low pay and housing costs, which individuals experiencing poverty cannot control; critics of purely structural explanations argue they can understate the role of how policy is designed, such as how benefits are structured.
 - Evaluation of Murray's underclass thesis: many sociologists have strongly criticised it for lacking clear evidence of a distinct 'underclass culture', and for risking blame on individuals for problems such as unemployment or low pay that are largely outside their control; supporters of Murray's position argue policy should consider incentives and behaviour as well as structural circumstances.
 - A balanced conclusion should recognise that the weight of sociological evidence favours structural explanations of poverty as the primary cause, while acknowledging that this remains a genuinely debated area, and that framing poverty mainly in terms of the behaviour of people experiencing it risks confusing a symptom of hardship with its cause.

Question 11

- (a) **B1** relative poverty / Townsend
- **(a) Answer: Relative poverty (Townsend)**
- (b) **B1** absolute poverty / Rowntree
- **(b) Answer: Absolute poverty (Rowntree)**
- (c) **B1** underclass thesis / Murray (a contested view)
- **(c) Answer: Underclass thesis (Murray) - a contested view**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies, e.g. a household in poverty may struggle to afford school trips, equipment or a quiet space to study
- **B1** development, e.g. this can put a child at a disadvantage in some aspects of school life, though it does not determine their ability or effort
- **Answer: A household in poverty may struggle to afford school trips, equipment or a quiet study space, which can be a disadvantage in some aspects of school life without determining ability or effort.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies a genuine reason, e.g. sociologists disagree over whether poverty should be measured in absolute or relative terms, which produces different results
- **B1** development, e.g. or that household circumstances, such as unpaid caring responsibilities, can affect real living standards in ways income figures alone do not capture
- **Answer: Sociologists disagree over whether poverty should be measured in absolute or relative terms, and household circumstances such as unpaid caring responsibilities can affect real living standards beyond income figures alone.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a genuine strength, e.g. it reflects that being unable to participate in normal social life, such as affording a child's school trip, is a genuine form of disadvantage, not just a lack of basic survival needs
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Townsend's relative approach reflects that being unable to participate in normal social life is a genuine form of disadvantage, not just a lack of basic survival needs.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. it risks presenting poverty as caused by the choices or culture of people experiencing it, when much of the evidence points to structural causes such as low pay and insecure work
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different reason, e.g. critics argue there is limited clear evidence for a distinct, separate 'underclass culture', and that people move in and out of poverty over time rather than remaining a fixed group
- **B1** development
- **Answer: The underclass thesis risks presenting poverty as caused by the choices or culture of the poor, when evidence points to structural causes; critics also argue there is limited clear evidence for a distinct 'underclass culture', and people move in and out of poverty over time.**

Question 16

- **B1** identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both describe unequal distribution of economic resources across society, and both can affect a person's life chances
- **B1** development, e.g. though income is about money received regularly while wealth is about the value of assets owned
- **Answer: Both describe unequal distribution of economic resources and can affect life chances, though income is money received regularly while wealth is the value of assets owned.**

Question 17

- **B1** identifies, e.g. poverty is about not having enough resources to reach a minimum or customary standard of living, while low income is simply a measure of how much money a household receives
- **B1** development, e.g. a household could have low income but not be in poverty if it has other resources, such as savings or owning its home outright, or vice versa
- **Answer: Poverty is about not having enough resources to reach a minimum or customary standard of living, while low income simply measures money received; a household could have low income but not be in poverty if it has other resources.**