

## **Year 12 Sociology Summer Tasks**

Welcome to A level Sociology!

Sociology is the study of society and the interactions and institutions we encounter on a daily basis. Throughout the course we will be studying a range of different topics from a range of different perspectives. Whilst studying this subject you will be able to apply your knowledge to your everyday life, in terms of your family, your time at school as well as what you are viewing in the mainstream and social media.

The following tasks are designed to prepare you for A level Sociology for the topics below;

- Families and Households
- Education
- Crime and Deviance
- Media/Beliefs
- Sociological Theory and Research Methods

Aim to complete all sections of the programme to ensure that you have a thorough understanding of the background for all topics. It is suggested that you complete a task each week.

**Please handwrite all tasks and bring all tasks with you to your first sociology lesson**

### **Task 1: What is Sociology?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK5J0-cM-HE>

1. Watch the video by following the link above.
2. Then write a summary of what you believe sociology to be.
3. Write an explanation of why you want to study Sociology A level.

### **Task 2: Sociological Theories**

Using examples, define what is meant by the following terms;

- |                            |                            |                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Social structure        | 7. Beliefs                 | 13. Validity     |
| 2. Socialisation           | 8. Culture                 | 14. Social Class |
| 3. Primary socialisation   | 9. Structural theories     | 15. Gender       |
| 4. Secondary socialisation | 10. Social Action theories | 16. Ethnicity    |
| 5. Norms                   | 11. Generalisability       | 17. Sexuality    |
| 6. Values                  | 12. Reliability            |                  |

Write a short summary of each of the main perspectives in sociology. A list of them is below. Use the following link to help you. <https://revisesociology.com/introduction-to-sociology/> (you will need to scroll down to about half way on the page.)

1. Functionalism
2. Marxism
3. Marxist Feminism
4. Radical feminism
5. Liberal feminism
6. Postmodernism
7. Social Action Theory

### Task 3: Topics in Sociology

You need to be aware of sociology in the news and media. Read the news articles below this table and answer the questions that follow each of them.

There are **four articles** and you will need to complete the questions for **all** of them.

Extension:

Over the summer, collect **news articles** that covers one of the topics that are outlined at the top of this document. These articles should come from a reputable news source. Write a paragraph explaining why you think this is a sociological issue as well as the social problems that may link to the article.

- Reputable news sources include, but are not limited to; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news> (don't just look at the front page. There is a tab 'education and family' which will be particularly useful.)
- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk> (again, there are several tabs for specific topics which will be useful for you, 'education', 'society', 'world'.)
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/>
- <https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/>
- YouTube news feed, if you prefer to watch videos. Please check who has made or posted the content if you are using this to ensure that you are still using a credible source.

You can use this website <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/> to check how credible a source you have found is

### Task 4: Extended Writing

Choose **one** of the questions from the list below that you find the most interesting. Complete your own research on this question. You can use newspaper articles and any other websites that you think are useful. List the resources you have used at the end of your response. Write up your findings in an extended piece of writing (use paragraphs). You should consider all sides of the argument. Include a brief introduction and conclusion. Answers should be between 400-500 words

1. To what extent does our social class background affect our life chances?
2. What is the role of institutions in society (schools, families, work, media, government, health) – do they perform positive functions, or simply work in the interests of the powerful and against the powerless?
3. How is LGBTQ+ represented in the media?
4. Do social networks bridge the cultural divide between countries?
5. Does household structure contribute to social inequality?
6. How does culture affect the fashion industry?
7. What factors caused the rise of the feminist movement in the UK and what has the feminist movement achieved?
8. How does the mass media affect professional sports?
9. Do sports contribute to public violence?
10. What causes the rise of crime rates in urban areas?
11. What factors discourage sixth form students from going to university? Suggest ways these can be overcome.
12. Should children be given the right to determine their gender?
13. Does the mass media still project a stereotypical message about gender?
14. Analyse the role of patriotism in international sports competitions.
15. Consider the benefits of multiracial neighbourhoods

### **Task 5: Sociology is Everywhere**

Sociology is everywhere so you'll be able to see aspects of it in all forms of media. Search for some of the following titles and make notes on any videos or films you watch, try to keep it relevant to the topics taught in Sociology (see front page).

#### Documentaries

Educating Essex/greater Manchester/Yorkshire  
(4OD/YouTube)  
Stacey Dooley documentaries (BBC iPlayer/YouTube)  
Black Mirror (Netflix)  
Louis Theroux documentaries (BBC iPlayer/Netflix)  
Dispatches documentaries (4OD)  
Panorama documentaries (BBC iPlayer)  
Disclosure (Netflix)

#### Films

- Freedom Writers
- The Truman Show
- I, Tonya
- Love Simon
- The Wife
- Philomena
- Wonder
- Pride
- The Help
- Detachment
- Dallas Buyers Club

### **Task 3 - News Articles and Questions**

#### **1.Education: As few as one in 20 born in poorest areas go to university**

14th August 2017

Only one in 20 pupils in some of the country's poorest postcodes progress to higher education, according to new analysis by Teach First. The charity has called for the government to improve entry rates by writing off student debt to get better teachers into challenging schools. It has also called on universities to start offering university access programmes at primary level.

According to Teach First's research, on average only one in five young people born in the country's poorest postcodes progress to university, while half of those born in the wealthiest postcodes do so. However, the gap is even more stark between some areas.

#### **Big differences**

For example, in some parts of Derbyshire, as few as one in twenty students go to university, while in parts of Buckinghamshire it is more than 80 per cent. This means that those born in some of the richest areas are up to 18 times more likely to attend university than those in some of the poorest areas.

Teach First also found big differences between the choices made by disadvantaged young people when it came to university compared to their more privileged peers.

A ComRes poll of 18-25 year olds found that 41 per cent of the most advantaged students said they chose their university because it was the best for what they wanted to study, compared to only 31 per cent of the least advantaged. Similarly, the reputation of a university was important to 53 per cent of the most advantaged students, but it only was for 46 per cent of the most disadvantaged.

Disadvantaged students are also more likely to choose an institution close to where they live, with 29 per cent saying they chose their university on this basis, compared to 24 per cent of the most advantaged.<sup>5</sup>

Of the most disadvantaged pupils who did not go to university, only 12 per cent said this was because their grades weren't good enough.

#### **'More must be done'**

To ensure students were able to make more informed choices when it came to university, Teach First said there should be a trained careers middle leader in every school to develop and lead a careers strategy. It suggested this could be paid for out of money councils and academies are required to set aside for the apprenticeship levy.

Teach First says the government should offer student loan forgiveness to attract the best possible graduates into teaching, where they can help young people from deprived communities achieve their potential.

It suggests 20 per cent of student debt could be cleared for those working for two years, increasing to 50 per cent for those who remain in certain geographic or subject areas for five years.

The charity also says that universities' access work is coming too late, with programmes frequently aimed at pupils aged 16-18 "by which point much of the effects of disadvantage have already played out".

Instead, it argues that access work should start at primary school to give pupils "the best possible opportunity to make informed and supported decisions about their futures at an earlier age".

Brett Wigdortz, Teach First's chief executive and founder, said "there are still far too few disadvantaged pupils getting to university".

"They're simply not given the same chance to reach their full potential, with less access to brilliant teaching and less guidance on how they can turn their aspirations into reality. " He added: "More must be done by the government, universities and society as a whole to break down the barriers to social mobility that are preventing too many of our young people reaching as far as their potential allows".

#### **Questions**

1. What is a meritocracy?
2. Does this article suggest we live in a meritocracy?
3. Why is it important that 'poor' students go to university?

## **2. Families and Households**

### **Troubled Families programme could be renamed, says minister**

James Brokenshire fears that title of scheme is isolating and accusatory

**Jessica Elgot** *Chief political correspondent*

*19<sup>th</sup> March 2019 (The Guardian)*

Ministers could rebrand the Troubled Families programme because of concerns the name is isolating and accusatory, the communities secretary, James Brokenshire, has said in a speech defending its results.

The scheme, [launched by David Cameron](#) in 2011 after the London riots, targets families with repeating generational patterns of youth crime, long-term unemployment, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse.

It was [expanded in 2015](#) to reach 400,000 families, but has attracted criticism for the pejorative ways that it has described the families it had been designed to help. Cameron blamed a small number of families for “a culture of disruption and irresponsibility that cascades down the generations”.

Louise Casey, the high-profile government adviser who launched the programme, [told the Telegraph at the time](#): “We should be talking about things like shame and guilt ... we have lost the ability to be judgmental because we worry about being seen as nasty to poor people.”

Announcing the interim findings from a national evaluation of the programme, Brokenshire said it had reduced the proportion of children going into care by a third and the proportion of adults being sent to prison by a quarter, compared with a similar control group.

However, he said the government “needs to look again at the name of the programme” and said the use of the term “troubled families” “obscures as much as it enlightens”.

He said: “At its worst, it points an accusing finger at people, who are already isolated, and says to them: ‘You are the “others” and you are not like the rest of us when, in truth, they are like the rest of us; they’ve just had a little less help, been a little less lucky and, yes, made choices themselves that haven’t led to the best outcomes. But we don’t give up on people in this country. People can make the most of a second chance. That is the lesson of the programme.”

The programme’s keyworkers engage with the whole family, rather than individuals. Casey said it had “very deliberately shaken up the way families with complex problems are supported” and said the results proved it had been right to invest in this approach.

Brokenshire said he wanted to see a particular focus on knife crime within the programme. The government said a £9.5m fund would be made available within the existing Troubled Families programme to focus on supporting children and families vulnerable to knife and gang crime.

The government has previously been [criticised for misleading claims that the flagship project turned around the lives of 99% of the most-troubled families](#) and for overstating its money-saving benefits.

A 2016 study by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government concluded there was no clear evidence that the programme had any serious effect and that ministers may have underestimated the scale of the problems.

Tom McBride, the director of evidence at the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), said the new analysis was encouraging. “We hope the government will use the forthcoming spending review to continue to invest in high-quality, targeted support for vulnerable families, to help children growing up in these situations to avoid the very worst life outcomes,” he said.

“The government also deserves credit for investing the time and resources to rigorously evaluate the Troubled Families programme. Most government initiatives are not well evaluated – which doesn’t mean they don’t work, but it does mean we don’t know.

### **Questions**

1. Why is it argued that the ‘Troubled Families’ programme be renamed?
2. How successful has the programme been?
3. Should lower income families be given additional assistance by the government? Why/why not?
4. What would you suggest could be put in place as an alternative to the ‘Troubled Families’ programme?

### **3.Crime and Deviance – Sewage regularly dumped illegally in England and Wales rivers**

**By Zoe Conway** Published 19 January 2022

**Untreated sewage is being dumped illegally in rivers across the country on a regular basis, analysis shown to the BBC suggests.**

It found seven water companies in England and Wales discharged untreated sewage into rivers and the sea more than 3,000 times between 2017 and 2021. The water industry admitted action was needed to address the problem. The fresh data comes a week after **MPs warned of a "chemical cocktail"** of pollutants tainting England's rivers. The Environmental Audit Committee said raw sewage and microplastics were putting health and nature at risk. Chairman Philip Dunne MP said self-monitoring by water companies had "allowed a blind eye to be turned" to unpermitted sewage discharges, which he said were unacceptably high. He urged regulators and water companies to "get a grip" on the situation. If illegal discharges were to continue, Mr Dunne said water regulator Ofwat should look at its powers to review those water bosses who receive "lofty bonuses".

Peter Hammond, a retired professor of computational biology and also a campaigner with Windrush Against Sewage Pollution, said the statistics showed that the water industry was flouting poor regulation by the Environment Agency. "In some cases, multiple sewage works are spilling into the same river causing damage for long periods of time, sometimes spilling as long as four months, six months almost without a break," he said. He calculated that together the seven companies - Southern Water, South West Water, Thames Water, United Utilities, Wessex Water, Yorkshire Water and Welsh Water - discharged untreated sewage from 59 treatment works that treat 4.5 million people's wastewater.

Water companies are allowed to discharge untreated sewage into rivers in exceptional circumstances - for example during heavy rainfall. They can be acting illegally if they discharge when the conditions are dry - this is known as a dry spill. Or they can be breaking the law if they are not treating enough of the sewage before they discharge it - this is known as an early spill.

Prof Hammond looked at data from "event duration monitors", which check every 15 minutes on whether a treatment works is discharging untreated sewage into a river. He then compares this data with rainfall data and with the companies' records on how much sewage they're treating. In response to the report United Utilities, Southern Water and Welsh Water, questioned the accuracy of some of the data while Yorkshire Water said that Prof Hammond had "fundamentally misunderstood" the data.

According to the report the sewage treatment works at Dorking run by Thames Water was responsible for the highest number of unpermitted spills. Untreated sewage was discharged into the River Mole on 223 days over the last four years. Prof Hammond's analysis suggests none of them would have been permitted by the rules, because either the weather was too dry, or not enough of the sewage had been treated properly.

Thames Water said it "regards all discharges of untreated sewage as unacceptable and will work with the government, Ofwat and the Environment Agency to accelerate work to stop them being necessary and say they are determined to be transparent". Prof Hammond said the Environment Agency is failing to detect thousands of illegal spills because it is not scrutinising the available data closely enough. "It's as if the Environment Agency is looking through a telescope and we're looking through a microscope." Water UK, which represents the water companies, said all the water companies agree there is an "urgent need for action to tackle the harm caused to the environment by overflows".

An Environment Agency spokesperson said where there was evidence of non-compliance "we will not hesitate to pursue the water companies concerned, and take appropriate action". They added that 1,300 storm overflows and storm tanks at waste water treatment works have been identified as "spilling frequently" and that "a major investigation into possible unauthorised spills at thousands of sewage treatment works is ongoing".

#### **Questions**

1. This is an example of green crime. What is the definition of a green crime?
2. Who benefits from this crime?
3. Why is this type of crime committed? Who commits this type of crime?
4. Do you think society takes this type of crime as seriously as it should? Are the perpetrators punished adequately?
5. Why do you think we do not hear about this crime as much as street crime? Is it simply that it does not happen as often?

## **4. Media**

### **Monopoly Is a Threat to Democracy**

By Tom Chivers

16<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Britain's media is owned by a tiny handful of corporations, with three companies controlling 90% of newspaper circulation – if we want a real democracy, it's time to break the power of the media moguls.

The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the serious challenges facing British media institutions.

Traditional broadcasters are locked in fierce competition with global streaming services, and the BBC—between [attacks on its independence](#), [cuts to its services](#), and threats to its funding—faces a political reckoning. The pandemic has intensified concerns about the role of social media platforms in [spreading misinformation](#) and fostering online abuse, while the [‘anti-woke’, ‘anti-metropolitan’ GB News](#) and Rupert Murdoch’s News UK look tailor-made to further polarise audiences when they launch later this year.

Trust in news organisations is already precipitously low, with [research by the Reuters Institute](#) suggesting just 28 percent of the public feel they can trust the news. Worse still, the [latest Eurobarometer figures](#) place UK journalists as by far the most distrusted out of 33 European countries.

Yet these debates often overlook the dangerous levels of concentrated media ownership in the UK, and how a few powerful media corporations are stifling public debate through their control of the majority of newspapers, broadcasters, and online media platforms. That’s why the Media Reform Coalition has published [new research on the state of media ownership in the UK](#), and our results paint a grim picture for anyone who cares about a free, independent, and vibrant media.

Take the UK’s newspaper industry: in a national market of 20 daily and Sunday newspaper titles, just three companies control 90 percent of newspaper circulation. Lord Rothermere’s DMG Media— publishers of the *Daily Mail*, the *Mail on Sunday*, the *Metro*, and the *i*—accounts for almost 40 percent of all national newspapers sold each week in the UK, while Rupert Murdoch’s News UK and Reach (which publishes the *Mirror* and *Express* titles) command one third and one fifth of the market, respectively.

When online readers are included, the same companies control a four-fifths market share among the major newspaper groups, giving these publishers an unparalleled influence for setting the agenda across the rest of the news media.

Even after years of an industry-wide decline in readers and a drastic slump in circulation during last year’s lockdown, the national newspaper market has become more concentrated since our last report in 2019. More worryingly, the editors, executives, and owners at the top of this corporate oligopoly still enjoy routine, unaccountable, private access to our political leaders, as the recent accounts of [Rupert Murdoch’s numerous meetings with government ministers](#) make all too clear.

The share of ownership in Britain’s local press is hardly any better. Six publishers control 80 percent of the more than 1,000 local newspapers published across the country, and three of these companies—Newsquest, Reach, and JPI Media—each own a greater market share than the other 50 publishers combined.

The long-term decline in circulation and advertising revenue has put the UK’s local newspaper industry in a perilous state: our research has found that as many as 295 local titles have closed since 2005, while between 2,000 and 5,000 local journalists’ jobs have been lost or put at risk as a result of the pandemic.

The growing trend of chain ownership, takeovers, and buy-outs is also causing serious harm to the basic provision of news at the local level. [Research commissioned by the government](#) in 2019 found that 65 percent of the UK’s local authority districts were not served by a single daily local newspaper, as big publishers have looked to cut costs by merging local titles into online-only, homogenised regional ‘newsbrands’, depriving smaller communities of dedicated journalists and focused news coverage.

Piecemeal efforts by the government to save the local newspaper industry, like the [Cairncross Review](#), seem more interested in propping up big corporate publishers than supporting new, independent, and locally-based journalism. The same dominant publishers who have withdrawn from local journalism and helped create the growing number of ‘news deserts’ around the UK can even dip into public subsidies from the licence fee: of the 149 journalists funded by the BBC’s Local Democracy Reporter scheme, [more than 9 in 10](#) of them are contracted to the UK’s three largest local publishing companies.



Online media, meanwhile, have allowed a swathe of alternative journalistic enterprises across the left and right of British politics to challenge 'traditional' news organisations. Yet the audiences and revenues of new online outlets like *Novara Media*, *Unherd*, and *OpenDemocracy* pale in comparison to the UK's legacy news websites and international digital natives like *BuzzFeed*.

Monthly traffic to the *MailOnline*, the *Guardian*, and *Sun Online* websites sits comfortably in the hundreds of millions, and their reach is amplified by the prominent position that social media platforms give to large newspapers and news broadcasters. More than 22 million people in the UK use Facebook to find and consume news content on a regular basis, and [research by Ofcom](#) suggests that traditional news organisations make up almost half of the news sources that these users encounter on their feeds.

Unregulated, unaccountable, and with revenues that dwarf even the largest UK media businesses, companies like Facebook (which also owns Instagram), Alphabet (Google and YouTube), and Apple hold an unprecedented gatekeeping power to determine what news we see online. As the Australian government's farcical News Media Bargaining Code has shown, global tech giants are more than happy to make [cosy deals with dominant media groups](#) while depriving smaller and typically underrepresented voices their access to the public.

What about the broadcasters? The BBC remains the UK's leading source of news, holds the largest TV viewing share, and provides a wealth of national and local radio services – but a decade of funding freezes has kept its budget far below that of its commercial competitors. Even Sky and BT, the UK's major pay-TV providers, are struggling to keep pace with the market power of American streaming juggernauts like Amazon, Disney, and Netflix.

On radio just two companies—Bauer and Global—have swept up control of almost 70 percent of the UK's commercial local analogue stations, and together with Wireless Group (a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp) these three companies control more than three-quarters of the national DAB market.

News Corp's share of news consumption across print, TV, and radio has dropped markedly since it sold Sky to Comcast in 2018, but the launch of Times Radio and the soon-to-come News UK TV show that Murdoch isn't about to relinquish his grip on British audiences so easily. GB News, for all its claims of going against the 'mainstream', is nonetheless intimately connected with established commercial media players. US-based multimedia giant Discovery has contributed £20 million to the venture, and the channel's co-founders hold close links with John Malone, the US 'cable cowboy' and chair of Liberty Global.

Both channels threaten to further tip the uneasy balance of political opinion represented in UK media, with GB News chairman Andrew Neil promising clickbait-ready programmes like 'Wokewatch' and 'Mediawatch' in its launch lineup. Ofcom's impartiality regulation—which only requires that broadcasters give general coverage of differing views—will do little to stop these new networks from trying to steer the UK news agenda in favour of their proprietors' interests. Media plurality is not a luxury in the digital age, but an essential part of a free and democratic media system – and vested interests, whether newspaper publishers, commercial broadcasters, or tech companies, should not be allowed to control the public conversation. 'Business as usual' will not do, and any action from government or Ofcom should not simply bolster the same handful of corporate giants that already dominate the media system.

We need reformed regulation that gets to grips with the complexities of media ownership in the twenty-first century, taking on concentrated political power at the heights of the media industries as well as supporting genuinely independent public interest media. The new online platforms that govern more and more of how we find and consume information must be made subject to public accountability, and the rapid consolidation in the UK's print and broadcasting markets into fewer and fewer hands must be brought into check.

The immense challenges of trust, truth, and technological change currently affecting UK media won't be resolved overnight, but tackling concentrated ownership and its dangerous influence on media's democratic purpose is an essential starting point.

## Questions

1. Why is it dangerous for there to be a monopoly of the media?
2. Who controls the media?
3. How can we ensure pluralism in the media?
4. What changes can you think of that would reduce the monopoly of the media?