2023 VCE Sociology external assessment report

General comments

Students' responses to the 2023 Sociology examination paper contained an interesting array of examples and case-study descriptions. Stronger answers included specific details from primary and/or secondary sources. This evidence was used to show an understanding of key ideas and to support specific contentions. Ways to gather this type of information include interviewing research participants and summarising lectures, news articles, documentaries, podcasts and ABS statistical data.

During the examination revision period, teachers are encouraged to help students identify and address all components of complex questions. For example, does the question require students to form a contention or compare factors? Practising with reference to the VCAA command term definitions is encouraged. It is also recommended that students define key concepts, such as the meanings of social movement and social change, as per the explanations outlined in the VCE Sociology study design.

Teachers are reminded that examples related to Australian Indigenous cultures cannot be used in other parts of the study design, for example as an ethnic or community group or as a social movement in the context of the Change the Date of Australia Day campaign.

When preparing for Unit 4, Area of Study 1 – Social Movements, teachers are encouraged to carefully consider their choice of class case study. Current social movements need to be explored. Groups such as Australian Marriage Equality are not suitable for selection as a case study group. They entered the decline stage due to success in 2017. Similarly, it is important to consider reasons as to why a group can be classified as a social movement. Veganism, for example, is a lifestyle choice rather than a specific social movement.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding, resulting in a total of more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	19	38	29	14	1.4

This question required students to show an understanding of the 'sociological imagination', including demonstrating how the theory can be used to study the experiences of Australian Indigenous cultures. Higher-scoring responses acknowledged that the theory was coined by Charles Wright Mills. They also used this framework to explore the personal challenges experienced by Australian Indigenous peoples with reference to a specific public cause.

For full marks, students were required to:

- outline the concept of the sociological imagination according to Charles Wright Mills, including exploring the link between 'personal troubles and public issues'
- provide an example of how this concept can be used to better understand Australian Indigenous cultures, such as the impacts of colonisation, cultural suppression, reconciliation, the need to 'close the gap' and the experiences of the Stolen Generations
- connect use of a sociological imagination to 'a better understanding' of personal troubles.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	36	28	28	9	1.1

This question required students to describe a historical protection and segregation policy. They also needed to explain how the policy was implemented. Higher-scoring responses included evidence relating to the nature and implementation of the policy. Many students incorrectly referred to the policy of Assimilation.

For full marks, students were required to:

- identify a specific protection or segregation policy, such as the Aboriginal Protection Act (1869, Victoria)
- demonstrate an understanding of the key features of the policy, such as the name, date and a policy statement
- provide an accurate description of how the policy was implemented, such as the creation of missions, enforcing the speaking of English and practice of Christianity, and the removal of children (Stolen Generations).

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	54	15	14	12	5	1.0

This question required students to provide a detailed example of how Indigenous Australians responded to the policy outlined in the preceding question. Some students incorrectly included responses to later policies, such as the Freedom Ride or acceptance of Exemption Certificates. Higher-scoring answers linked features of the response to specific components of the policy, such as secretly practising the customs that had been banned on the missions and reserves.

For full marks, students were required to:

- identify one example of how Indigenous Australians resisted the protection and segregation policy, such as Coranderrk Reserve activism or the Cummeragunja Walk Off
- provide detail of the aspect/s of the policy being rejected
- provide an outline of the response with reference to the suppression policy, including details such as when it happened, who was involved and what was being resisted.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	4	2	7	18	32	20	12	6	4.1

This question required students to assess the degree of Australia's ethnic diversity. This assessment needed to be supported by a range of data from Representation 1. Higher-scoring responses articulated a clear contention, highlighting the significant ethnic diversity of Australian society. They also referred to all three data sets in support of their argument.

For full marks, students were required to:

- show an understanding of the concept of ethnic diversity, such as the cultural diversity of societies in terms of their demographic make-up and social presence in the society
- outline a contention, e.g. that Australia has a moderate to high level of ethnic diversity
- use Australian Bureau of Statistics data from the Country of Birth, Ancestry and Language tables (in Representation 1) to support their contention. For example:
  - Country of Birth – '27.6% of the population were born overseas (from more than 200 countries)'
  - Ancestry – '22.2% of people living in Australia who were born in Australia have one or both parents born overseas'.
  - Language – 'More than 400 languages other than English are spoken in Australia'.

The following excerpt from a high-scoring response includes a contention and supports it with evidence from Representation 1.

Australia could be classified as an ethnically diverse society to a moderate extent - ethnic diversity refers to a large range of ethnic identity's existing in Australia. Firstly, regarding countries of birth in Australia, '27.6%' of the population were born overseas. (Rep 1) This is a relatively high percentage and given that these countries of birth cover a range of different nations, including England, India, China, New Zealand and over 200 countries total, this indicates Australia is ethnically diverse, as a country of birth is part of what makes up ethnicity.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	23	27	41	9	1.4

This question required students to compare Australia's current ethnic diversity to that of another developed nation. In doing so, they were able to draw on the representation material and/or other material studied. Higher-scoring answers made accurate comparisons. To compare within the context of this question, students needed to examine both the similarities and differences between two developed nations. Many answers only looked at similarities. In addition, many students also incorrectly included evidence from developing countries such as North Korea, China and Vietnam rather than developed nations.

For full marks, students were required to:

- identify and describe a developed country in terms of its ethnic diversity, referring to net migration rates, languages spoken and diversity in ethnic backgrounds for example. Some of the developed countries referenced included England, Canada, New Zealand and Japan
- explain, using supporting evidence, one similarity between Australia and the identified developed country. This could comprise, for example, the number of official spoken languages, or government policy impacting diversity
- explain, using supporting evidence, one difference between Australia and the identified developed country.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	13	38	21	23	2.5

This question required students to explain, using examples from Representation 2, how information and communication technology (ICT) might increase feelings of inclusion or exclusion. Higher-scoring responses provided two accurate representation examples and demonstrated how each could include or exclude. Some students who selected appropriate examples did not, however, illustrate how each example might influence feelings.

For full marks, students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of information communication technology, e.g. that it encompasses a range of information communication technology used to store and distribute information including broadcast media, social media platforms, the internet and networks, and communication technology such as mobile phones, tablets and computers.
- show an understanding of the concepts of inclusion and exclusion:
    - Inclusion relates to feelings of identity with and belonging to a group, having a sense of security and support within the group.
    - Exclusion relates to feelings of isolation or alienation.
- identify two examples of information communication technology from Representation 2, such as the Disability Arts Collaboration Space being connected through an online platform, sharing 'links' from other 'websites', 'news articles' (online or print media) and 'posts'.
- explain how each example may increase feelings of inclusion or exclusion. Examples could have included:
    - allowing connection without physical proximity
    - giving recommendations for how to make posts accessible, e.g. image description, content warnings and avoiding flashing lights
    - advising not to delete posts of others

–   warning not to indulge in 'pile-ons' or personal attacks
–   some members may be excluded as a result of inability to access and use appropriate technology.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	16	16	17	21	18	7	6	2.6

This question required students to analyse how non-information communication technology examples from Representation 2 could potentially maintain and strengthen a sense of community. Higher-scoring responses demonstrated an understanding of the notion of a sense of community. They also explored the 'maintenance' and 'strengthening' of a sense of community separately. Some responses inaccurately referenced information communication technology–based examples.

For full marks, students were required to:

* demonstrate an understanding of a sense of community, e.g. that it involves feelings of belonging, connection, participation and shared purpose.
* identify two non-ICT examples from the representation. Examples from the source text are:
    – 'Artists working in all art forms.'
    – 'Deaf and disabled people of all backgrounds are welcome.'
    – 'We value contributions from First Nations people, LGBTIQA+ people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people of colour.'
    – 'This is not a group for parents, carers, support worker or disability allies.'
* analyse how an example from Representation 2 could strengthen the sense of community
* analysis how an example from Representation 2 could maintain a sense of community.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

The Disability Arts Collaboration Space … maintains a sense of community by sustaining exclusivity. As only 'deaf and disabled' people are accepted entry into the community, it means there is homogeneity of values, experiences and interests which strengthens the social cohesion (the strength of bond) in the community, whilst also reducing the space for discrimination.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	24	32	25	8	2.0

This question required students to explain the relationship between the concept of social change and the concept of social movement. Higher-scoring responses referenced the definitions of each concept as outlined in the study design. They also provided examples of the links between the concepts.

For full marks, students were required to:

* demonstrate an understanding of the concept of social change, being the alteration of culture and social institutions over time reflected in social behaviour.
* demonstrate an understanding of the concept of a social movement, such as an organised group or activity that encourages or discourages social change (alteration of social behaviour) through collective action.
* explain how the two concepts are related. For example:
    – Social movements come from a desire or need to seek and/or resist social change.
    – Social change often results from the activities of social movements.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	25	13	20	15	18	5	4	2.3

This question required students to explore the nature and purpose of two different types of social movements. In doing so, an assessment of the extent to which each of the two movements could be categorised as alternative, redemptive, reformative or revolutionary was needed. Some answers incorrectly explored emergence of the social movement, rather than type of social movement. Higher-scoring responses provided specific details about 'who' and 'what' the social movement wanted to change.

For full marks, students were required to:

- identify and describe two different types of social movement
- justify how each social movement meets the various characteristics of the type
- assess the extent to which each movement meets the 'type' classification.

The following excerpt from a high-scoring response highlights the extent to which the movement is reformative.

Black Lives Matter (BLM) are a reformative social movement, which refers to a movement that instigates or resists minor change amongst society. Though such change is targeted at the whole society, BLM are a group committed to creating a world free of anti-blackness, aiming to bring an end to police brutality, racial profiling and racism... This is considered a reformative social movement as while its purpose is to target all of society in changing social attitudes and institutions, it is regarded as a minor change as it does not challenge the fundamentals of society.

Section B

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	20	16	15	15	13	11	6	3	2	0.3	0	2.7

This question required students to describe the historical and political context of an issue relating to Australian Indigenous cultures. As specified by the VCE Sociology study design, the issue must be within the last 10 years. The 'Voice to Parliament' and the 'Change the Date of Australia Day' campaign were accurate common choices. Higher-scoring responses used sourced evidence to support their assessment of how and in what way awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures has changed in response to the issue. Many students outlined an appropriate example of an issue but did not link it to awareness.

Students were required to:

- provide a detailed description of the issue by, for example, outlining the nature and the historical and political context of the issue, including details such as names of individuals, groups or political parties involved, what was said, by whom, when and where
- demonstrate an understanding of the term 'awareness' (i.e. level of knowledge about Australian Indigenous cultures)
- explain how the historical and political context of the issue is linked to changing awareness
- assess how awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures changed as a result of the issue
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their answer.

The following excerpt from a higher-scoring response links the issue to a political context.

Change the date is related to the issue of Australia day. … Awareness instils an understanding of a social issue. This is seen through First Nations politician Linda Burney who sees Australia Day as a painful day of 'dispossession and oppression'. This raises awareness of the legacy of colonisation.

This excerpt from a higher-scoring response links the issue to changing awareness and includes evidence.

As a result of the change the date's campaign's efforts in explaining the historical significance of January 26 … there has been an increase in support for the campaign over time. A Sydney Morning Herald survey found that while in 2003, only 20% of Australians supported changing the date, now, 44.3% support the change (Sydney Morning Herald, 2023). This general shift is a result of increasing awareness of Australian Indigenous culture and history.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	10	15	21	17	15	7	4	1	0.5	0.5	3.4

This question required students to analyse the experiences of a specific ethnic group as influenced by ethnocentrism. Higher-scoring responses referred to specific ethnic groups (e.g. Chinese Australians) rather than religious groups (e.g. Muslims or the Jewish community).

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of ethnocentrism, i.e. the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture
- identify and briefly describe a specific ethnic group
- describe the experience of ethnicity of the group generally
- explore the nature of the ethnocentrism experienced by the ethnic group, such as racist social attitudes

- analyse the impact on the experience of ethnicity of the group, such as group members feeling 'othered' and socially excluded
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their answer.

The following excerpt from a high-scoring response explored ethnocentrism, rather than barriers, and linked the example to the experience of ethnicity.

Ethnocentrism acted as a barrier for 'Emma', an 18 year old Hazara girl … She stated how 'where [she] works … customers, usually white men … say racist things to [her]' … the 'white' men's ethnocentric views made Emma feel like she doesn't belong and excluded … Ethnocentric views impede a sense of belonging for people like Emma, making it harder to have a positive experience of ethnicity in Australia.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	7	9	14	20	17	18	9	4	1	0.5	0.5	3.6

This question required students to explain why a group they had studied throughout the year could be classified as a community. Higher-scoring responses referenced a range of variables to justify their classification. In addition, they linked their answer to the definition of community as outlined in the VCE Sociology study design.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of community. Community refers to a group of people who share social relationships through being geographically close to each other and/or being in regular contact with each other, and through having similarities such as mutual interests and/or shared ideology.
- describe the nature of a specific community, including details such as the name, location, members and purpose of the group
- provide examples to show how the group can be classified as a community, such as:
  - referencing features of Ferdinand Tonnies' concept of Gemeinschaft
  - having strong social and family ties
  - having a shared identity and a sense of unity
  - maintaining close personal connections and relationships
  - sharing interests which benefit the whole.
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their answer.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response that links to the concept of community, rather than just Tonnies' theory.

VYE youth group consists of approximately 100 members, aged 12-18 … The group meets weekly, on a Friday night, in person, to socialise, play games, participate in Christian based musical praise and worship, and listen to Christian sermons. VYBE was established in 2016. 'VYBE' can be considered a community, firstly, because members are in regular contact, both by meeting every week for services, and, in cases where members cannot attend, following vibe on / connecting by social media … Additionally, VYBE can be considered a community, as it is formed based on a shared ideology – Christianity … VYBE possesses characteristics off both gemeinschaft and gesellschaft communities.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	11	11	10	19	23	13	7	3	1	0.5	0.5	3.3

This question required students to examine the link between a group studied and the social movement life cycle. Higher-scoring responses explored a current social movement, such as Black Lives Matter, rather than a historical movement. For full marks, students were required to explore all four stages: emergence, coalescence, bureaucratisation and decline. Some answers only explained the current stage of the movement or referenced emergence theories, such as relative deprivation and/or new social movements theory.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of a social movement, e.g. as an organised group or activity that encourages or discourages social change through collective action
- identify and describe an appropriate social movement (i.e. a current movement with readily available sources)
- describe the movement at emergence (e.g. founders, date, number of members)
- describe the movement at coalescence (e.g. initial strategies used to recruit members and raise awareness about the group's purpose)
- describe the movement at bureaucratisation (e.g. use of power, membership, goals and interaction with their opposition/s)
- describe the decline or potential decline of the movement (e.g. links to success, failure, repression, co-optation or going mainstream)
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their answer.

The following excerpt from a high-scoring response describes the complex stage of coalescence.

One social movement currently progressing through the stages of the lifecycle is the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). The group emerged in 2006, when key founders, an assortment of peace activists and medical professionals 'met up in a Carlton café' … The group had yet to take collective action or determine policies of leadership. However, in 2007 upon the opening of ICAN's office at Trades Hall in Melbourne, the group's leadership determined goals, a way forward, settled upon a 'broad diverse inclusive and open' leadership approach (ICAN site 2023), and began to utilise direct, collective action through protests in Melbourne's CBD gaining media attention and support for their cause. This constitutes the group's coalescence. … ICAN ... is yet to decline.