

Beliefs in Society Question Bank



Beliefs in society is examined in paper 2 of the A level paper. You will be asked three question and we'll have 1 hr to answer them.

Question 1 is worth 10 marks and requires you to outline and explain two reasons; ideas; theories or problems to do with beliefs in Society. You should spend around 15 minutes on this question. There is no need for an introduction or conclusion just two clear paragraphs each dealing with a separate point.

Question 2 is also worth 10 marks and requires you to outline and explain two reasons; ideas; theories or problems. The difference between this question and question 1 is that for this question your two points must be taken from the item given. Any points given that do not relate to the item will not be credited.

Question 3 is worth 20 Marks and requires you to evaluate a debate in with in beliefs in society. This question should be approached in the same way that you approached the 20 Mark questions in the AS exam. You are required to include an introduction and a conclusion and you should spend approximately 30 minutes on this question.

This booklet contains multiple example questions and a generic mark scheme they can be used for assessment or for private practice.

Question Type 1: Outline and explain TWO..... – 10 marks

Generic Mark Scheme

Band	Descriptor
8 – 10	Answers in this band will show very good knowledge and understanding of the topic in question. There will be two applications of relevant material. There will be appropriate analysis.
4 - 7	Answers in this band will show a reasonable to good knowledge and understanding of the topic in question. There will be one or two applications of relevant material and there will be some basic analysis.
1 – 3	Answers in this band will show limited knowledge and understanding of the question or the material. There will be limited focus on the question, and there will be limited or no analysis

Please note that these questions should not be marked in terms of 5 + 5 but as a response as a whole

1. Outline and explain two ways in which the growth of sects and New Age movements may be related to secularisation.
2. Outline and explain two functions of religion.
3. Outline and explain two causes of the process of secularisation.
4. Outline and explain two reasons why figures on attendance at mainstream churches may overstate the degree of secularization in Britain today.
5. Outline and explain two ways in which religion and development may be related in the world today.
6. Outline and explain two ways in which religion can act as a force for change in society.
7. Outline and explain two differences between a church and a sect.
8. Outline and explain two problems with using church attendance statistics as a way of measuring the extent of secularisation.
9. Outline and explain two possible reasons for the growth of new religious movements.
10. Outline and explain two ways in which religion can act as a source of conflict in Society.
11. Outline and explain two ways of defining religion.
12. Outline and explain two ways in which science is not as open as it claims.

13. Outline and explain two reasons why young middle class university educated people were attracted to sex in the 1970s.
14. Outline and explain two reasons working-class people tend to oppose religious associated with the establishment.
15. Outline and explain two reasons why older people are more religious than younger people.
16. Outline and explain two reasons why religious pluralism is seen as evidence of secularisation.
17. Outline and explain two ways in which the UK differs from the rest of the world in terms of religiosity.
18. Outline and explain two examples of how religion may have disengaged from Society.
19. Outline and explain two ways in which science differs from religion.
20. Outline and explain two ways in which religious interpretations of the world might differ from scientific ones.
21. Outline and explain two ways in which religion may act as an agency of social control.
22. Outline and explain two ways in which the growth of new religious movements and new age spirituality may be a response to conditions of rapid social change.
23. Outline and explain two reasons why people from some ethnic minority groups may seem to participate more in religious activity than others social groups.
24. Outline and explain two ways in which a decline in participation in religious institutions may not mean that Society is becoming more secular.
25. Outline and explain two ways in which the emergence of religious fundamentalism may be a consequence of globalisation.
26. Outline and explain two reasons why secularisation may be occurring in Britain today.

Question Type 2: Applying material from Item A outline and explain TWO..... – 10 marks

Generic Mark Scheme

Band	Descriptor
8 – 10	Answers in this band will show good knowledge and understanding of relevant material on the topic of the question. There will be two developed applications of material from the Item. There will be appropriate analysis/evaluation of two differences.
4 - 7	Answers in this band will show a basic to reasonable knowledge and understanding of one or two points on the topic of the question. There will be some successful application of material from the Item and there will be some analysis/evaluation
1 – 3	Answers in this band will show limited knowledge and understanding of one or two points on the topic of the question. There will be limited application of material from the Item. Some material may be at a tangent to the question and there will be limited or no analysis/evaluation.

Please note that these questions should not be marked in terms of 5 + 5 but as a response as a whole and only points from the item can be credited.

Item A1

Both science and religion are belief systems that involve sets of knowledge-claims: that is, statements that claim to offer explanations of why things are as they are. For example, science uses concepts such as germs to explain why people fall ill from infectious diseases, while some religions use ideas such as the will of God to explain human illness and suffering.

Applying material from Item A1, analyse two differences between science and religion as belief systems.

Item A2

On many counts of religiosity, women appear to be more religious than men. In the Christian faith, for example, women are more than likely than men to attend religious services and to say that religion is important to their life. Some claim that this is because men and women within different social spheres, so that men are more exposed than women to the influences of secularization.

Applying material from item A2, analyse two explanations the apparently greater religiosity of women compared with men.

Item A3

Some sociologists believe that religious ideologies are used to manipulate or control the levers so that they think and behave in certain ways that are beneficial to the interests of those in power. Althusser, for example, saw religion as part of the ideological state apparatus which serves to prevent the majority of people from seeing what he considered to be the true class position.

Applying material from item A3, analyse two ways in which religious ideologies can be seen as serving the interests of a particular social group.

Item A4

While fundamentalism is often associated with Islam, there are fundamentalist groups in many other major religions, including Christianity. In the USA, for example, the so-called New Christian Right is a significant political force in some States, and it's members have challenged many liberal reforms such as legislation on abortion. Some sociologists argue that fundamentalism is an inevitable reaction to the erosion of religious certainties in modern and postmodern Society.

Applying material from item A4, analyse two explanations for the rise in religious fundamentalism

Item A5

One view of religion sees it as a unifying force, binding individuals together and integrating them into the values of their Society. An opposing view see is religion as essentially based on conflict, helping to maintain an unequal Society and preventing Birds at the bottom from seeing their true class position.

Applying material from item A5, analyse two differences between functionalist and Marxist views on the role of religion in Society.

Item A6

From the late 1960's, many Western societies for a growth in the number of new religious movements, particularly sects. Concerns were raised about the number of young people cutting ties with their families and friends to join sects with charismatic leaders. Some sect seemed to have been particularly successful, claiming that they had thousands of members.

Applying material from item A6, analyse two problems of measuring the extent of sect membership in Society.

Item A7

Both religion and ideology as belief systems that provide a means for understanding, interpreting and explaining the world. Religion and ideology often differ, as religion usually involves faith in spiritual and supernatural forces of some kind to explain the world, while ideologies are more generally concerned with explanations that protect and promote the interests of social groups. Religion, though, can sometimes also act as an ideology.

Applying material from item A7, analyse two differences between religion and ideology as belief systems.

Item A8

Religion was provided what Berger called a 'universe of meaning', and religion acted as a 'sacred canopy' stretching over Society. These helped people to interpret and make sense of the world and their position within it. Religion gave some focus, order and meaning to their lives, and protecting them from the uncertainties of Life. However, in many contemporary societies, religion is losing this role for a lot of people.

Applying material from item A8, analyse two reasons why for many people religion may no longer be acting as a 'universe of meaning' and is a 'sacred canopy' today.

Item A9

Contemporary Western societies involve a wide diversity of religious, spiritual and other beliefs. Postmodernists see the beliefs that people hold as purely a personal matter. They can go spiritual and religious shopping, and pick and mix religious beliefs to suit their own lifestyles without long-term commitment to any religion or religious organisation. This means that many religious cults and sects are short lived, as a consumer tastes and fashions change.

Applying material from item A9, analyse two influences on whether a religious sect or cult is short lived or long lived.

Item A10

Compared to older people, young people are generally less religious in terms of their expressed beliefs in surveys and their participation in religious activities, although this is not true among young Muslims, who show greater religious participation and commitment. Young people seem to be attracted to new age spirituality and new religious movements, but the vast majority do not participate in either.

Applying material from item A10 analyse two differences between the religious belief and participation of young people compared to those of older people.

Item A11

Sociologists disagree about the extent of secularisation in the modern world. For example, some suggest that the development of Science and Technology has the plate displaced religious face as a means of interpreting the world. Postmodernists point to the decline of metanarratives, which mean people are abandoning once taken-for-granted belief systems, like religion. Other sociologists suggest religion is not declining, but simply changing an appearing in new forms.

Applying material from item A11, analyse two ways in which religion, rather than declining, is changing and appearing in new form full stop

Item A12

Churches and denominations are generally seen as fairly respectable and mainstream organisations, whereas sects and cults tend to be seen as more deviant. Media treatment of sects and cults has meant they are associated in the popular imagination (often quite unfairly) with groups seen as evil, controlling, extremist and manipulative, as brainwashing the members, and as harmful to both their own members and the wider Society.

Applying material from item A12, analyse two ways in which churches and denominations may differ from sects and cults.

Item A13

According to Tom Shakespeare, 1 in 3 Americans now define themselves as spiritual but not religious. Putnam and Campbell have highlighted the number of 'Nones' in the USA. These are people who belong to no religion but still believe in God. Grace Davie has used the term 'believing without belonging' and 'vicarious religion' to explain why affiliation with particular churches and religion is in decline.

Applying material from item A13 analyse two reasons why filiation with particular churches and religions is in decline.

Item A14

Religions typically hold strong beliefs and values about issues such as family life, gender roles and relationships, sexuality and how society should be organised. Through its rituals, religion can make individuals feel part of something greater than themselves and bind them together, curbing the selfishness and enabling them to co-operate to achieve shared goals. However, religion has also often been closely allied to privileged groups in society and has been accused of upholding their interests.

Applying material from item A14, analyse two arguments in support of the idea that religion is a conservative social force.

Item A15

In today's secular Western societies such as Britain full, traditional religion is still remains an important source of identity and belonging for some people. For many, religious socialisation into the base of their parent has formed an important part of their upbringing. Traditional religion may also appeal to some because it celebrates their role. For others, new age spirituality may have particular appeal because it allows them to deal with the role conflicts that arise in modern societies and choose an authentic identity for themselves.

Applying material from item A15, analyse two reasons for differences in religiosity between social groups.

Item A16

As a result of globalisation, the world today is increasingly interconnected. New information technology has created a global communication network and the media transmit images and ideas around the world, often spreading Western values to developing worlds. Globalisation has produced economic growth and brought rising prosperity to some groups in developing countries, creating a new middle class but has also widen the gap between rich and poor. It has also lead to greater flows of people across frontiers as people seek opportunities in developed countries.

Applying material from item A16, analyse two effects of globalisation on religion.

Item A17

United States is home to groups such as the New Christian Right that campaign to promote religious values in wider Society, and opinion polls show that about 40% of Americans describe themselves as regular church attenders. Although these figures may lack validity, church attendance in the USA is certainly higher than in European societies such as the United Kingdom. Such as such large numbers of people are church goers, it is likely that there are a wide variety of motives for church attendance.

Applying material from item A17, analyse two reasons why apparently high Church attendance figures may not mean that the United States is a religious Society

Item A18

Religious organisations tend to be patriarchal. Many religions exclude women from leadership roles and segregated the sexes in worship. Often, religions legitimate and regulate women's domestic roles or require women to cover their bodies in particular ways, such as veiling. However despite this, women are generally more likely than men to hold religious beliefs and to participate in religious organisations. They are more likely to attend church and to be involved in its day-to-day functioning. For example, women are often heavily involved in running fundraising events and in carrying out pastoral work in community as well as missionary work.

Applying material from item A18, analyse two reasons why women are generally more involved than men in religion, despite its apparent patriarchal nature.

Question Type 3: Using material from the item and your own knowledge, evaluate the view.... – 20 marks

Generic Mark Scheme

Band	Descriptor
17 - 20	Answers in this band will show sound, conceptually detailed knowledge of a range of relevant material on the topic of the question. Sophisticated understanding of the question and of the presented material will be shown. Appropriate material will be applied accurately and with sensitivity to the issues raised by the question. Analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant. Evaluation may be developed for example through a debate between different perspectives. Analysis will show clear explanation. Appropriate conclusions will be drawn.
13 - 16	Answers in this band will show accurate, broad and/or deep but incomplete knowledge. Understands a number of significant aspects of the question; good understanding of the presented material. Application of material is largely explicitly relevant to the question, though some material may be inadequately focused. Some limited explicit evaluation, some appropriate analysis, e.g. clear explanations of some of the presented material.
9 - 12	Answers in this band will show largely accurate knowledge but limited range and depth. Understands some limited but significant aspects of the question; superficial understanding of the presented material. Applying listed material from the general topic area but with limited regard for its relevance to the issues raised by the question, or applying a narrow range of more relevant material. Evaluation will take the form of a juxtaposition of competing positions or one to two isolated stated points. Analysis will be limited, with answers tending towards the descriptive.
5 - 8	Answers in this band will show limited undeveloped knowledge, e.g. two to three insubstantial points about the question topic. Understands only limited aspects of the question; simplistic understanding of the presented material. Limited application of suitable material, and/or material often at a tangent to the demands of the question. Very limited or no evaluation. Attempts at analysis are thin and disjointed.
1 - 4	Answers in this band will show very limited knowledge, e.g. one to two very insubstantial points about the topic in general. Very little/no understanding of the question and of the presented material. Significant errors and/or omissions in application of material. No analysis or evaluation.

Item B1

Many sociologists argue that religious beliefs and organisations act as conservative forces and barriers to social change. For example, religious doctrines such as the Hindu belief in reincarnation or Christian teachings on the family have given religious justification to existing social structures. Similarly, it is argued that religious organisations such as churches are often extremely wealthy and closely linked to elite groups and power structures.

Applying material from Item B1 and your knowledge, evaluate the view that religious beliefs and organisations are barriers to social change.

Item B2

There is a wide variety of different kinds of religious and spiritual organisations and movements in today's society. As well as the major churches, there are now also a large number of sects, cults and new religious movements that lie outside the traditional religious mainstream. These terms cover a diverse range of groups, some of which offer their followers worldly success, while others are resolutely hostile to wider society. Some have particular appeal to the poor and oppressed, but others draw support from more affluent groups.

Applying material from Item B2 and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations for the existence of sects cults and new religious movements.

Item B3

The term ideology usually refers to a belief system that serves the interests of a particular social group or class. For example, Marxists argue that The Ruling Class use ideologies that would trade inequality is inevitable and or desirable. By doing so, they seek to persuade subordinate classes to accept the dominance of The Ruling Class over Society. Institutions such as religion, the media and education play an important role in creating ideology. From a functionalist perspective civil religion and political beliefs such as nationalism may be seen as ideologies that combine to society together.

Applying material from item B3 and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the nature and role of ideology.

Item B4

Marxist sociologists tend to take a negative view of the nature of religion and its role in society. For example, Marx regards religion as the product of the alienation that is found in all class societies. In his view, it's role is to act as an ideology that keeps the proletariat subordinated. Religion acts like a drug to dull the pain of exploitation and oppression. However, religion may also be a channel through which people protest against these conditions and make demands for change.

Applying material from item B4 and your own knowledge, evaluate Marxist views of the nature and role of religion.

Item B5

Some sociologists argue that religion performs an ideological function and operates in the interests of powerful groups in society. For example, feminists see religion as helping to sustain male domination of society. They point to the patriarchal nature of sacred texts, such as the biblical story of Eve causing humanity's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and their role in legitimating the subordination of women. Marxists, too, see religion as an ideology that distorts people's perceptions of reality in capitalist society and helps prevent revolution. However, religion may also perform positive functions for society, and subordinate groups may also use religion to serve their interests.

Applying material from item B5 and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that religion performs an ideological function in the interests of powerful groups

Item B6

Max Weber argued that religious beliefs can lead to important social changes. According to Weber, Calvinist Protestant beliefs in the 16th century were crucial in bringing about the emergence of modern capitalism in Western Europe. By contrast, the beliefs of some other major religions have acted as a barrier to such change. Some sociologists argue that religion has a dual character: its beliefs can have a negative impact on social change and a positive one, for example by inspiring protest against the status quo.

Applying material from item B6 and your own knowledge, evaluate the extent to which religious beliefs can be a force for social change.

Item B7

Some sociologists claim that society has entered a new era, that of postmodernity, in which religion and spirituality take on new forms. In postmodern society, tradition loses its influence over people. Consumption and choice become more important, and people are free to choose their identity and their beliefs. Postmodern society is increasingly globalised, and the media and information technology become more and more important, for example moving religious ideas and images out of their traditional physical home in churches and making them available around the globe. However, other sociologists argue that these trends merely promote secularization.

Applying material from item B7 and your own knowledge, evaluate the impact of postmodernity on religious and spiritual beliefs and practices.

Item B8

Many functionalist sociologists argue that religion is a 'universal' feature of social life. In their view, this is because it performs indispensable function without which society would to centigrade. It symbolises the power of society and it's shared rituals instil a sense of solidarity and loyalty to the community, and it legitimizes society's central values. Religion also performs important psychological functions, answering 'ultimate' questions and enabling individuals to cope with emotional stress and thus continue performing the roles society requires of them. However, critics argue that functionalists ignore the negative aspects of religion and that functional definitions of religion disregard the particular nature of religious belief.

Applying material from Item B8 and your own knowledge, evaluate functionalist explanations of the nature and role of religion.

Item B9

Functionalists believe that religion performs a number of positive the Conservatives functions for society that help preserve consensus and community, and therefore social order. Marx also believe that religion was a conservative force because he saw it as an ideology aimed at preserving class inequality. However, the neo-marxist Gramsci and Maduro both agreed that religion was sometimes capable of bringing about revolutionary change and improving the lives of the poor. Weber saw most religion as a conservative ideologies but claimed that Protestantism brought about massive economic change in 17th and 18th century.

Applying material from item B9 and your own knowledge evaluate the relationship between religion and social change.

Item B10

The greatest challenge to religious belief has come from scientific discoveries. The use of the scientific method and empirical evidence - observable evidence collected in the physical world - to establish the causes and effects of natural phenomena has shown many religious beliefs and explanations to be false, such as the origins and evolution of the world. Religious explanations and superstitions are therefore increasingly being displaced by scientific explanations.

Applying material from item B10 and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that science has replaced religion as the main influence on people's knowledge and beliefs in society today.

Item B11

Some sociologists argue that religion acts as a conservative force that prevents social change. Through its teachings, religion reinforces dominant norms and values, and justifies existing inequalities in social and power structures. Religious organisations like the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church are extremely wealthy and powerful, and have close links with the State, elite groups and the key power holders in society.

Applying material from item B11 and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that religious beliefs and organisations act as conservative forces in Society.

Item B12

Scientific and rational thinking has led to what Weber called growing 'disenchantment' with the world - a decline in spiritual or religious aspects of people's lives. Postmodernists point to a loss of faith in metanarratives, such as the 'universes of meaning' once provided by traditional religions. Some suggest that individuals turn to new religious movements and new age ideas to fill the vacuum of meaning left by the decline of traditional religions.

Applying material from item B12 and your own knowledge evaluate sociological explanations the development of new religious movements and new age spirituality.

Item B14

Globalisation has meant that many of the world's religions are now transnational, and no longer tied to a particular geographical location, country or culture. A wide range of different religions has spread across the globe, creating more religious diversity. Despite suggestions that participation in traditional religion has declined in most European countries, there continues to be great deal of religious activity in the world today.

Applying material from item B14 and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that globalisation has led to major changes in religious beliefs and practices in the world today.

Item B15

Metanarratives are general theories or belief system that claim to provide comprehensive explanation and knowledge of the world. Postmodernists see secularisation arising in part from the general collapse of metanarrative. Secularisation has relegated traditional religion beliefs and organisation to the margins of contemporary society. Personalised beliefs have replaced the metanarrative of religion, and people pick 'n' mix whatever believe they choose from a global spiritual supermarket.

Applying material from item B15 and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that religion is of declining significance in people's lives in the world today.

Item B16

New religious movements have emerged in many parts of the world and take many forms. Compared with the major world religions, their membership is small, though the problems of defining what is a new religious movements means that statistics have to be treated with caution. Some claim that people are drawn to such groups because many focus on current concerns, such as our relationship to the Natural World and anxieties about the environment, while others argue that many new religious movement of the hope and comfort to those who feel socially marginalised and alienated from modern society.

Applying material from item B16 and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that membership of new religious movements is a response to social deprivation.

Item B17

It is often claimed that western societies are becoming increasingly secular. Those holding this view point to features such as the decline in attendance at religious services and the growing number of people who say that they have no religious affiliation. Critics of this view point out that in a postmodern world, religious beliefs and practices are changing, rather than disappearing, and religion still has an important role to play.

Applying material from item B17 and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that despite the apparent Road in secularisation, religion still performs important functions for Society.

Item B18

Regular worshippers at most Christian churches are increasingly female. Since the Church of England voted to permit the ordination of women, and now has a female Bishop, many women have expressed an interest in becoming ministers, and there are now more women than men in training for the ministry. It has been argued that the greater participation of women in many aspects of religious life has led to religion becoming gendered, which partly explains the growing absence of men at religious services.

Applying material from item B18 and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that religion is becoming increasingly feminised.

Item B19

Many members of minority ethnic groups practice a religion that is different from the major religion of the host society. The religious and cultural rituals and traditions of their religion not only offer comfort which are very important to the way they live their lives, enabling them to maintain a distinct religious identity.

Applying material from item B19 and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that religious beliefs and practices of many members of ethnic minority groups constitute the most important part of their identity.

Item B20

Many sociologists argue that increasing secularisation is an inevitable feature of modernity. They suggest that the growing acceptance of scientific and rational explanations rather than those based on religious teaching would lead to religious institutions losing their moral authority. Though data from most western societies show a fall in the number of those claiming to have a religious faith, others argue that religious adherence maybe changing, rather than declining, and that there is still room with the spiritual in modern life.

Applying material from item B20 and your own knowledge evaluate the view that the spread of rational thought and scientific exclamation has resulted in the decline in religious faith.