

Key terms

Absolute poverty - Not being able to afford the basic things you need to survive in life e.g. food, clothing,

Achieved status - Social positions are earned through personal talent, merit and effort, not fixed at birth

Ascribed status - Social positions/status are fixed at birth (due to class) and do not change over time

Bourgeoisie - The ruling class who owned the means of production and exploited the working class

Culture of dependency - The welfare system encourages people to stay on benefits rather than support themselves through work

Glass ceiling - An invisible barrier in employment that prevents some groups such as women or ethnic minorities from gaining promotions

Life chances - The opportunity/chance of achieving positive or negative outcomes (e.g. healthy/ill, rich/poor) as you progress throughout life

Power - The ability to get what you want, despite opposition

Pressure group - A group formed to influence government policy on a particular issue

Relative poverty - Not being able to afford to meet the general standard of living compared to most other people in their society

Social exclusion - The inability of some groups in society (e.g. the elderly, the working class) to play a full part in society/access the full benefits

Social inequality - The uneven distribution of resources (e.g. money or power) and opportunities

Social mobility - The ability to move up the social ladder

Social stratification - How society is structured in a hierarchy of layers based on factors such as age, gender

Status - The social standing or prestige someone is given by other members of society.

Underclass - A group in society who have different attitudes and values to others. They experience long-term unemployment, tend to be reliant on benefits

Wealth - The ownership of assets (e.g. property, land, jewelry) and savings, shares etc.

Welfare dependency - When individuals are reliant on the government for income for a prolonged period of time

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Social stratification

Theories of social stratification

Functionalist - Social stratification is positive for society. Society is based on meritocracy and status is 'achieved' through hard work and effort.
'Role allocation' - top roles are filled by those who are able, ambitious and competitive - allows society to run smoothly.

Marxists Social stratification is negative for society. Society is based on conflict and status is 'ascribed' - is fixed at birth by class and cannot be changed.
Top roles are filled by the bourgeoisie and creates inequality.

Feminists Social stratification is negative for society. Society is based on conflict and patriarchy with the top roles being filled by men and women being lower in the hierarchy.

Social stratification and class

	Working class Unskilled/manual work, lack of formal education	Middle class Professional jobs, formal education e.g. University	Upper Aristocracy, elite education, 'titles' given
How is class measured?	NS-SEC: Measures class by occupation (job) × Ignores wealth/status as a measure of class		
Does class affect life chances?	Yes - Marxists - status is ascribed, working classes have poorer opportunities in education, employment, health, housing		
	No - Functionalists - status is achieved, society is based on meritocracy - equal chances to succeed Feminists - gender has more of an influence on life chances than class		
Do we still have different classes in society?	Yes - Marxists - still a divide between the working and middle classes Life chances are still poorer for the working class, low social mobility Devine - there is still a separate working class		
	No - Functionalists - meritocracy, more w/c going to university etc. Embourgeoisement - the w/c may be becoming more middle class Less people may be working class due to changes in occupation		

Social stratification and gender

Policies to reduce inequality - Equal pay act (1970), Sex Discrimination Act (1975), Equality Act (2010)

Does gender affect life chances?	Yes - Feminists - women have poorer life chances due to patriarchy Women less likely to be CEOs, to be paid a high wage, face a glass ceiling, pay gap still exists
	No - Functionalists - society is based on meritocracy Improvements for women - more likely to attend University, pay gap has decreased, women have a higher life expectancy
Reasons why	Glass ceiling/patriarchy in the workplace Gender socialisation - women may take expressive role/lower paid careers

Factors affecting life chances

Life chances	Life expectancy, income, wealth, employment, education, housing, health
Class	Education: W/C - poorer GCSE grades Income: W/C - earn less, minimum wage Housing: W/C - rented, poor quality Life expectancy: W/C - lower, poorer health
Gender)	Education: Girls outperform boys Employment: Women lower paid, less income/wealth, less likely to be in top jobs Life expectancy: Women live longer
Ethnicity	Employment: 20% of black Caribbean men unemployed Employment: 4% of CEOs are BAME Education: Poorer GCSEs among some BAME groups and less likely to go to University
Age	Youth - lower income, higher unemployed Older age - more at risk of poverty, ageism in the workplace, poorer access to health services

Other factors - Disability, Sexuality, Religion/beliefs

Social stratification and ethnicity

Policies to reduce inequality - Race relations act (1976), Equality act (2010)

Does ethnicity affect life chances?	Yes - 4% of CEOs are BAME, some groups have lower life expectancy, glass ceiling/lower paid jobs, poorer GCSE grades
	No - Laws/policies have reduced inequality, some BAME groups more likely to go to University, differences among groups

Social mobility

Yes More w/c go to University, achievement is increasing, functionalists- achieved status / meritocracy, statistics may not be accurate	No UK - one of lowest rates of mobility, top jobs more likely to be privately educated, only 35% think they have a fair chance, Marxists - inequality due to capitalism
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Key studies

Davis and Moore (functionalist)

Society needs to place people into roles / social positions that need to be filled for society to operate smoothly. Some roles come with higher status (doctors, lawyers). People who fill the top roles are the most able, have the most drive/ambition and are the most competitive.

Marx (Marxist)

Class is an important division, the bourgeoisie have power/control over the proletariat who are exploited for profit. The working class and petty bourgeoisie didn't benefit from the growth of capitalism. Small business couldn't compete and had 'downward social mobility'. The working class are not aware of their exploitation.

Devine

Conducted interviews at a car factory in the 1980s. She found evidence of the working class still being separate and still had working class values. This goes against the idea of embourgeoisement.

Townsend

Conducted surveys on 2000 households about poverty, used relative poverty index and found the government underestimated poverty (6% vs. 22%). Concluded that poverty should be measured using a number of factors.

Murray (New Right)

There is a growing underclass in British society caused by overgenerous welfare benefits. Can be seen in three ways – welfare dependency, juvenile delinquency, loss of traditional values.

Weber

Believed class is important but is not just tied to income/wealth, status and power can affect someone's position in society too. He thought capitalism actually expanded the middle class and a revolution by the working class is possible. Distinguished between three types of power in society – charismatic, traditional and rational legal.

Walby (Feminist)

Men have more power in society due to patriarchy. This is shown in 6 ways – paid work/employment, labour in the home, patriarchal culture, sexuality, male violence and the state. Public patriarchy is now more likely to exist than private patriarchy.

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Social stratification

Poverty

Definitions of poverty

Absolute	Relative
Not being able to afford things you need to survive e.g. food/shelter Politicians prefer it (looks like less people are in poverty) and is a fixed definition, does not change between countries	Not being able to afford the general standard of living in society e.g. internet Sociologists prefer it (more accurate) and takes into account differences in standards of living between countries.

Reasons / explanations of poverty

Reasons	Poor health, divorce, old age, disability, unemployment, lack of education
The poor are responsible	Culture of poverty – Socialised within a subculture to accept poverty, see it as normal, unlikely to try and get themselves out of it. Leads to a cycle of deprivation – poverty being passed from one generation to the next.
	Cultural deprivation – May not have the correct norms and values to be motivated to get out of poverty, may seek immediate gratification (e.g. spending money rather than saving)
	Welfare dependency – Overgenerous welfare benefits could mean there's no incentive to work for less than you would receive. Can lead to the poverty trap.
Society is responsible	Class inequality – Marxists argue capitalism is responsible for poverty as the working class are not given opportunities to get out of poverty (low wages and zero hour contracts, low social mobility)
	Globalisation – Has led to a higher cost of living and low minimum wages, with less manufacturing jobs as these have moved abroad.

Are poverty statistics accurate?

Yes	No
Functionalists – official statistics are accurate	Marxists – statistics underestimate poverty so the working class believe society is fair and do not revolt Feminists – statistics underestimate female poverty due to lower wages, less opportunities etc. Townsend – governments underestimate poverty and should use relative measures

Is poverty still an issue in society?

Yes	No
Poverty rates are increasing for all age groups (1/5 people) Marxists – minimum wages and zero hour contracts still cause poverty Feminists – poverty is still an issue for women	Functionalists – government policies have aimed to reduce poverty Less people are in absolute poverty now

Power and authority

Formal power – power from the title/role someone has

Informal – power from respect/appreciation earned

Forms of power / authority	Traditional – inherited (e.g. monarchy), based on established customs/traditions
	Charismatic – shown by a leader with persuasive/inspirational qualities
	Rational legal – shown by organisations through laws, rules and regulations
Who has power?	The ruling class have power over the working class (Marxist view)
	Men have power over women (in employment, the home, society, violence, the government) (feminist view)
	Heterosexuals – LGBT may have less power in politics/police etc.
	White individuals – BAME groups under-represented in politics
	Older people – younger may be excluded from politics (vote at 18)

Power of the state

Political system in the UK – democracy, first past the post system (MPs elected based on votes in constituency)
Other systems – dictatorships (one person in power), proportional representation

Can the public influence the state?	Yes – pluralist view, pressure groups, petitions, protests etc.
	No – conflict approach, Marxists, power of businesses rather than the public

The underclass

Does the underclass still exist?

Yes	No
Murray – underclass is in Britain, can be seen in welfare dependency, juvenile delinquency and a loss of values Members of the underclass were blamed for the London riots There are more lone-parent families in the underclass	Murray blames the victims for being welfare dependent but could be due to divorce etc. Marxists – the underclass are scapegoated to blame for society's problems Many people who are on benefits still aspire to have paid employment/better themselves