GradeMax

CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

SOCIOLOGY **9699/42**

Paper 4 Globalisation, Media, Religion **February/March 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 70

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the February/March 2026 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **20** printed pages.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

[Turn over

GradeMax

Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Social Science-Specific Marking Principles (for point-based marking)

1 Components using point-based marking:

- Point marking is often used to reward knowledge, understanding and application of skills. We give credit where the candidate's answer shows relevant knowledge, understanding and application of skills in answering the question. We do not give credit where the answer shows confusion.

From this it follows that we:

a DO credit answers which are worded differently from the mark scheme if they clearly convey the same meaning (unless the mark scheme requires a specific term)

b DO credit alternative answers/examples which are not written in the mark scheme if they are correct

c DO credit answers where candidates give more than one correct answer in one prompt/numbered/scaffolded space where extended writing is required rather than list-type answers. For example, questions that require *n* reasons (e.g. State two reasons …).

d DO NOT credit answers simply for using a 'key term' unless that is all that is required. (Check for evidence it is understood and not used wrongly.)

e DO NOT credit answers which are obviously self-contradicting or trying to cover all possibilities

f DO NOT give further credit for what is effectively repetition of a correct point already credited unless the language itself is being tested. This applies equally to 'mirror statements' (i.e. polluted/not polluted).

g DO NOT require spellings to be correct, unless this is part of the test. However spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. Corrasion/Corrosion)

2 Presentation of mark scheme:

- Slashes (/) or the word 'or' separate alternative ways of making the same point.
- Semi colons (;) bullet points (•) or figures in brackets (1) separate different points.
- Content in the answer column in brackets is for examiner information/context to clarify the marking but is not required to earn the mark (except Accounting syllabuses where they indicate negative numbers).

3 Calculation questions:

- The mark scheme will show the steps in the most likely correct method(s), the mark for each step, the correct answer(s) and the mark for each answer
- If working/explanation is considered essential for full credit, this will be indicated in the question paper and in the mark scheme. In all other instances, the correct answer to a calculation should be given full credit, even if no supporting working is shown.
- Where the candidate uses a valid method which is not covered by the mark scheme, award equivalent marks for reaching equivalent stages.
- Where an answer makes use of a candidate's own incorrect figure from previous working, the 'own figure rule' applies: full marks will be given if a correct and complete method is used. Further guidance will be included in the mark scheme where necessary and any exceptions to this general principle will be noted.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

4 Annotation:

- For point marking, ticks can be used to indicate correct answers and crosses can be used to indicate wrong answers. There is no direct relationship between ticks and marks. Ticks have no defined meaning for levels of response marking.
- For levels of response marking, the level awarded should be annotated on the script.
- Other annotations will be used by examiners as agreed during standardisation, and the meaning will be understood by all examiners who marked that paper.

Using the mark scheme

The questions are marked using a generic analytic mark scheme, which separates the marks for the different assessment objectives (AO). The work is marked for each AO using generic levels of response mark schemes. The marks awarded are usually based on a judgement of the overall quality of the response for that AO, rather than on awarding marks for specific points and accumulating a total mark by adding points.

Indicative content is provided as a guide. Inevitably, the mark scheme cannot cover all responses that candidates may make for all of the questions. In some cases candidates may make some responses which the mark scheme has not predicted. These answers should nevertheless be credited according to their quality.

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
BOD	Benefit of the doubt given / the point is just about worthy of credit
EXP	Development / description of the point.
EVAL	Evaluation point
DEV	Developed point
GEN	General point using sociological material but not applied to the question
IR	Point is irrelevant to the question
J	Juxtaposition of point
M	Material used to support the point
NAQ	Not answered question
REP	Repetition
SEEN	This material receives no credit, additional points not required
TV	Too vague
	Point that has been credited
	Incorrect response
	Irrelevant material
On page comment	On page comment

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
1	**'Globalisation benefits some groups more than others.' Evaluate this view.** **Key focus of the question** The question invites candidates to demonstrate knowledge of what is meant by globalisation and whether it benefits some groups more than others. Candidates might distinguish between different aspects of globalisation, including economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. However, it would be equally acceptable to focus on one form of globalisation, such as the spread of global capitalism. Marxist sociologists claim that globalisation is a form of neo-colonialism that benefits the rich and powerful in developed countries at the expense of poorer people in less developed parts of the world. Globalisation might also be seen as a form of creeping westernisation that promotes the interests and values of the better off groups in developed countries. By contrast, modernisation theorists and neoliberals feature among those who view globalisation as beneficial for a range of groups, including both the rich and the poor in different areas of the world. Gender and ethnicity are other factors that may influence who benefits from globalisation. Also reward references to disparities between countries in terms where the benefits of where globalisation rest. **Indicative content** For: • Globalisation is seen by Marxist sociologists as a form of neo-colonialism; as such, it benefits western capitalist elites at the expense of underprivileged groups in less economically developed countries which effectively become satellite states for western multi-national corporations to exploit. • The western model of capitalism that is promoted through globalisation is not necessarily appropriate for meeting the economic and social needs of the less economically developed countries in other parts of the world. While the western model suits the interest of capitalist owners of productive property, this is often achieved at the expense of marginalised groups in developing countries. • It is not clear that globalisation has led to a spread of democracy and liberal values in developing societies; in many countries, there has been a backlash against globalisation by some social movements, in some cases, has strengthened the hand of oppressive regimes and led to violent clashes and abuse of human rights. • Wallerstein argues that globalisation is an extension of the capitalist system organised around an international division of labour, with poorer countries locked into exploitative ties with wealthier, industrialised countries and unable to develop economically in ways that would free their populations from poverty and inequality.	**35**

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
1	• Global migration has contributed to the spread of globalisation, but it is not clear that migrants from less economically developed countries necessarily benefit from opportunities to work in the more economically developed countries. These workers may be exploited and exposed to dangerous working conditions for very little financial reward. In some cases, their conditions of life in the country of destination are harsher than they were in their country of origin, and it is the rich and powerful in developed countries who benefit most from the exploitation of migrant workers. • Arguments that some migrants may benefit more than others depending on their gender and ethnicity. • Arguments about the ecological impacts of globalisation, affecting some groups/countries more than others. • It has been argued that multinational organisations like the IMF and World Bank work in favour of the richer western countries by encouraging poorer countries to adopt policies that are favourable to the development of global capitalism. These policies, it is argued, leave the poorer countries vulnerable to exploitation by developed countries and by transnational corporations. • Arguments that globalisation has strengthened the position of privileged and powerful groups in developing countries, without benefitting other groups in those countries. Against: • Neoliberals argue that free markets and global trade contribute to economic growth in all countries and from which everyone benefits. • Globalisation has been associated with the spread of democracy and liberal values, helping to free people from oppressive political regimes and exploitative social practices; it gives hope to others that liberation from intolerable social and political circumstances is possible. • Increasing contact and exchange between people in different countries is helping to break down barriers that in the past might have led to conflict and wars; a cosmopolitan society of global citizens is viewed by some as the best antidote to the inward- looking nationalism that has so often led to bloody conflicts in the past, particularly in less developed countries. • Political change, in part driven by global social movements, may be helping to alter who benefits from globalisation. For example increasing protests around the world against exploitation of vulnerable groups in developing countries. • Modernisation theorists argue that globalisation helps spread the cultural values that they believe are essential for successful economic development, including the values of democracy, entrepreneurship, individual freedom, and meritocracy. • Income from migrant workers is often used to support family and communities in the country of origin. • Globalisation has helped to raise awareness of the poverty and inequality experienced by people in developing countries, and this in turn has led to increased efforts to help the poor through initiatives such as international aid and political intervention to check oppressive and exploitative practices in many developing countries. This process has been aided by the spread of global media and digital forms of communication.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
2	**'National governments are unable to prevent rising global crime.' Evaluate this view.** **Key focus of the question** The question invites consideration of global crime and why it may be difficult to police and prosecute. Examples of different types of global crime may be used to illustrate the problems that national governments face in detecting and deterring law breaking that extends beyond national frontiers. Marxist arguments that global crime is encouraged by the criminogenic conditions and values of capitalism might be used to explain the difficulties that governments face in dealing with criminality on a global scale. Marxists would argue that the nation state is controlled by, or subordinate to, capitalist interests and that is why some global crimes (corporate crime, for example) are rarely punished. The view that measures to prevent the growth of global crime have been unsuccessful may be challenged, however, by considering examples of successful policing and prosecution. Internationally coordinated efforts between governments to combat global crime might also be discussed as a way of extending the evaluative content of the answer. **Indicative content** For: • Global crimes are crimes that occur across the borders of two or more countries, making it harder for individual nation-states to police and prosecute. • Organised criminal groups can run their illegal operations from countries where they are least likely to be detected/prosecuted. They can also switch between countries to avoid arrest. • Some global crime is organised with the same efficiency and methods as that which characterises the modern capitalist corporation; this makes global crime highly profitable and leads to the creation of powerful networks that wealthy criminals can use to evade detection. • Castells argues that globalisation has led to the development of physical, digital and financial networks that cut across national borders and which allow knowledge, goods and people to move quickly, easily and cheaply across the world. This has made possible the development of a global criminal or 'shadow' economy in which there exist complex interconnections between a range of criminal networks in a variety of countries, • Global crime is often organised along national or ethnic lines, assisted by the process of global migration. For example, there are close links between triads based in China and the Chinese diaspora. The national/ethnic dimension makes it harder for law enforcement agencies to penetrate these groups and detect their illegal activities. • Global crime in developed countries is often linked to poverty in developing countries. The desperation of poor people in developing countries to earn a living means they are especially vulnerable to exploitation by criminals. People trafficking has become a lucrative activity for criminals against this background of poverty; and many poor farmers can readily be persuaded to grow drugs to supply the global trade in illicit substances.	**35**

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
2	• Digital technology has created new opportunities for criminals to operate globally without detection. For example, criminal organisations and terrorist groups are evading security services and intelligence agencies by hiding in the shadows of the dark web, using encrypted messaging services to communicate and anonymous cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin to generate funds. • Crimes committed by transnational corporations are difficult to police. In developing countries, TNCs can threaten to withdraw their much-needed investment if the authorities threaten them with prosecution. TNCs and wealthy individuals can avoid detection/prosecution by using bribes to corrupt local officials in the police and government. • Deregulation of the world's financial system, which in part was designed to facilitate growth in international trade and commerce, has facilitated a range of financial crimes, from tax evasion and insider trading to defrauding transnational organisations such as the EU out of grant and subsidy money. These cross-border crimes which are often 'victimless' are especially difficult to detect and prosecute. • Global crime may have links to the exercise of government power, in authoritarian regimes especially. Example allegations about Russian involvement in US election fraud. Against: • Franco argues that although organised crime groups may operate on a global scale, they are still heavily embedded in local contexts and are therefore subject to effective local policing and justice. • Individual nation states are increasingly working together to combat global crime; for example, UK police forces have worked with their counterparts in Eastern Europe in efforts to control the migration associated with sex trafficking. • Some supranational organisations have been established to coordinate the fight against global crime, with examples including Interpol and Europol. • Law enforcement agencies in many countries have been strengthened (given more powers and resources) because of the perceived threat from global crime. • Growth in global crime has led governments to increase efforts to control the financial networks through which criminals operate. For example, there has been some success in closing loopholes that allow money laundering through identity fraud and the use of offshore bank accounts. • Governments potentially could do more to combat global crime, but for various reasons some governments choose not to intervene. The Russian and Chinese governments have been reluctant to cooperate with some international proposals for fighting global crime, for example. The US government has allowed banks in the US to maintain secrecy in a way that makes international money laundering investigations difficult. • The problem of combatting global crime, it has been argued, is greatly exacerbated by the weakness of the legal and political systems in many poorer countries and by the failure of governments in developed countries to clamp down on the corporate crimes committed by transnational organisations in less developed countries. In this view, there is much that governments could do to improve their performance in combatting global crime.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
2	• National governments may be supported by global social movements in exposing and campaigning against certain global crimes, e.g. protests against people smuggling, Greenpeace's campaign against the illegal dumping of toxic waste in poorer countries.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

Question	Answer	Marks
3	**'Owners of the media have complete control over media content.' Evaluate this view.** **Key focus of the question** The question invites consideration of which social actors or agencies control the media. Good answers will provide a clear account of the arguments supporting the view that owners of the media have complete control over media content. Studies that illustrate the power of media owners may be cited and evidence about patterns of ownership across the global media might also be considered. High quality responses will also include an evaluation of the view on which the question is based. This is likely to be delivered through considering the role of other social actors and agencies that might have an influence on media content; for example, editors and journalists play a key role in media production and so are well placed to influence decisions affecting the media. Other social actors and agencies that might be able to influence media content include governments, media regulators, audiences, advertisers, and media pressure groups. Good answers might distinguish between different forms of media ownership and perhaps consider whether owners have as much power in relation to the new media as they do in relation to the traditional media. **Indicative content** For: • Many global media companies are owned by wealthy individuals who appear to exercise complete control over decisions that affect the content of the media they own. • Marxist sociologists argue that control of the media rests in the hands of owners of the media who ruthlessly use their property assets to generate maximum profit. • Editors and journalists are forced to align themselves with the commercial interests of the owners or they will lose their jobs. • Owners are forced to maintain close oversight of media content to ensure that the content satisfies the demands and interests of audiences and thereby helps to generate profit for the owners. • Owners of the traditional media have extended their power by acquiring control of many new media outlets in recent years. • The size and global reach of modern media conglomerates makes them difficult to control by national governments, thereby adding to the power of the owners of those media assets. • Media owners often have the power and influence to prevent scrutiny of, and effective opposition to, the media content they endorse. Against: • Pluralist theory states that power in relation to the media is fragmented with different groups in society each having some influence. Audiences, for example, must have their interests considered by media organisations to some extent or sales of media products will be adversely affected. Advertisers have some influence too, as they provide vital funding for media producers. Government is another social agency competing to exercise control of the media.	**35**

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
3	• Editors and journalists, rather than owners, have close control over the day-to-day running of the media and their specialist knowledge and managerial brief may provide an edge in terms of dominating the decision-making process with the media. • Editors and journalists in particular media outlets are bound by close work ties and this may help form a unity of purpose and mutual support that makes the group formidable in any battles to secure and maintain control of the media. Moreover, editors and journalists across all media outlets have an interest in supporting each other and protecting their professional status and employment position, again making this a powerful group with many levers to pull in terms of controlling the media. • Media production is an increasingly technical process, which may advantage individuals who have specialist skills and knowledge, such as editors and journalists. • Not all media organisations are owned and controlled by powerful individuals; some are owned and controlled by a wider shareholder base that often includes institutional investors such as pension funds who may take less interest in the process of shaping media content. • The new media have handed some control over media production to individual citizens, and this may have lessened the role of owners as gatekeepers of what is published and broadcast.	

PapaCambridge papacambridge.com

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
4	**'The influence of the media on human behaviour is best explained by the concept of mass manipulation.' Evaluate this view.** **Key focus of the question** The concept mass manipulation was an early Marxist attempt to describe how the media influences audiences. In this view, the media has a direct and powerful effect on audiences, helping to shape their thoughts and behaviour in a way that is supportive of the status and power of the ruling class. The concept shares some similarities with the hypodermic syringe explanation of media effects and is supported by evidence on, for example, the role of propaganda as an influence on mass mobilisation (during wartime, for instance) and possibly by studies of moral panics. Later Marxist theories (the hegemonic theory, for example) have generally accepted that the media isn't quite so overwhelming in its influence as the concept of mass manipulation suggests. Other concepts/theories of media effects stress that audiences are not passive consumers of the media and, where the media is an influence on thoughts and behaviour, the processes involved are quite subtle and possibly indirect rather than crude manipulation. Good answers are likely to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the concept of mass manipulation by drawing contrasts with other theories that question the power of the media to influence human behaviour, or which suggest that media influence is indirect rather than direct. **Indicative content** For: • The concept of mass manipulation was developed in response to the increasing role of the media in everyday life in affluent societies from the 1930s onwards. • The concept was an early attempt to explain why people's behaviour and thoughts seemed to be influenced, to some extent, by media content. • In the context of mass society where the media is the main source of information for many people, it is plausible to think that the media has a direct and powerful influence on the way people think and behave, even if the influence is not quite as direct and overwhelming as crude versions of the concept of mass manipulation imply. • Confusing media representations with reality has provoked mass panic at times (Orson Welles War of the Worlds radio dramatization, for example). Likewise, the role of the media in creating moral panics that have measurable short-term effects on the way some people think and behave has also been well documented. • The hypodermic syringe model can be seen to lend support to the concept of mass manipulation. • Studies of the influence of government propaganda provide some support for the concept mass manipulation. • It is not easy to prove or disprove whether the media has a powerful, direct influence on behaviour because of the difficulty of separating relevant variables and measuring the precise effects of media exposure. However, there is a large body of anecdotal evidence of some people claiming they have personally experienced, or witnessed in others, a dramatic change of behaviour associated with exposure to certain media content.	**35**

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
4	• Belief that the media can have a powerful and relatively immediate effect in influencing thoughts and behaviour has encouraged companies to spend huge sums on advertising. Likewise, government regulations to restrict access to certain media content, particularly in the case of children, also implies a belief that the media can be an invasive influence. • Examples supporting the idea of media manipulation, such as the role of the new media in influencing recent election results in the US and UK. Also, discussion of the impact of 'fake news', the power of celebrity influence through social media. Any other relevant examples where the new media may be being used as a platform for manipulation of ideas and behaviour. Against: • The concept of mass manipulation wrongly assumes that audiences are passive and that audience members are all affected in the same way. • The concept of mass manipulation also assumes the audience is an 'atomised mass' whose response to media messages is unaffected by the social relations between people. • The concept of mass manipulation underestimates the diversity of media content and the fragmentation in ownership of media assets. In other words, it too readily assumes that the media is a megalithic entity. • The reception analysis model questions how much influence the media has on audiences, because the latter interpret what they see, hear or read according to their pre-existing views, attitudes and opinions. • By contrast with the reception analysis view, the cultural effects model is closer to the concept of mass manipulation in arguing that the media can have significant effects on attitudes and behaviour. But sociologists who support the cultural effects model say that media effects come about indirectly and through long-term exposure to media content; the short-term impact of consuming media content is very limited. The cultural effects model was influenced by Gramsci's concept of hegemony. • The uses and gratification model suggests that individuals may play an active part in choosing how and when media content is consumed. • Arguments that the new media provides a mechanism for challenging the power of the traditional media to manipulate and control the flow of information in society. • Absence of convincing research evidence suggesting that the media has a direct and powerful influence on human behaviour. • Evidence of media campaigns that appear to oppose capitalist interests or to expose wrongdoing by the rich and powerful.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
5	**'Religion serves the interests of men rather than women.' Evaluate this view.** **Key focus of the question** The question invites consideration of the relationship between religion and patriarchy. Feminist sociologists claim to have identified close links between religion and patriarchy as a support for male interests. For example, feminists point to religious teachings representing females in a negative way and emphasising their subordination to male figures, such as fathers and husbands. Moreover, men occupy dominant positions in most religious organisations, while correspondingly there is low involvement of women in positions of authority. Some women report that involvement in religion has damaged their self-esteem and sense of freedom; they feel oppressed by the exercise of male dominated religious authority. The view that religion serves the interests of men can be countered in various ways, including reference to the functionalist view that men and women perform different but equal roles within many religious organisations, and the interactionist view that only detailed study of what men and women actually think and feel about their experience of religion will shed light on whether men benefit more than women from their religious involvement. Good answers might consider how the position of men and women in religious organisations may be changing and how the involvement of men and women differs between religions (gender inequality appears to be less pronounced in some religions than others). Candidates might also consider how male power within religion may link with male power in other areas of society, for example high status within a church may help a man gain higher status employment or important political position. **Indicative content** For: • Feminist theories of religion. • Examples of religious teachings that support a male, patriarchal worldview and represent women in an inferior or prejudicial way. • Evidence to show that women are often lowly represented in positions of authority within religious organisations. • Religious support for conservative values that emphasise traditional gender roles from which men primarily may benefit, e.g. in the home and employment. • Examples of male-led religious support for opposing causes that feminists have campaigned for, such as abortion rights, civil marriage, and freedom from arranged marriages. • The promotion of some women within religious organisations may be a form of tokenism that conceals ongoing underlying patriarchy in these organisations. • Upsurge in support for fundamentalism in religion may in part be a reaction against attempts to liberalise some religious organisations away from patriarchal power structures and ways of thinking.	**35**

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
5	Against: • Danger of over-generalising as the position of men and women varies greatly between different religious organisations. • Some religions are responding positively to calls for women to have greater opportunity to access positions of authority, including through ordination. • Women are now the largest worship group in many religions. • The extent of patriarchy in religion can be questioned. For example, many men and women with religious affiliations may oppose gender inequality in all its forms. • Functionalist rejoinders to feminist theories of religion. • Critique of the reductionism and over-generalisation in feminist theories of religion. • Some females with religious affiliations may support some or all the religious values that feminists see as patriarchal. • Some religions have always been further forward than others in supporting gender equality; for example, Sikhism and Quakerism. • Some religions are generally patriarchal, but aspects of them can still provide significant opportunities for women. • Religious organisations have had to adapt to wider social changes, such as the move towards gender equality, to remain relevant and attract members. • The secularisation thesis suggests that religion has little social significance today and so the influence of religion in contributing to patriarchy and the oppression of women may be very limited for much of the female population.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
6	**'All societies are experiencing a revival in religious belief.' Evaluate this view.** **Key focus of the question** Sociologists who claim that a process of religious revival is occurring in all societies cite evidence such as growth of new religious movements, increased support for evangelical and fundamentalist religions, studies suggesting a growing interest in spirituality, and the increased involvement of religion in some aspects of public life such as politics and education. In providing an evaluation, candidates are likely to contrast arguments and evidence for the idea of religious revival with the secularisation thesis which claims that religion has lost its social significance today. Good evaluative responses will assess the strength of the arguments and draw reasoned conclusions about whether we are seeing a decline or a revival in religious belief in **all** societies today. Some candidates may want to argue that religious revival is only occurring in western societies; in other societies, there has never been a decline of religious belief. Questioning what is meant by religiosity and how it might be measured would be another useful angle candidates could explore as part of the evaluation. **Indicative content** For: • Some religious organisations appear to be attracting more followers (the Evangelical movement in the US, for example). New technology is a powerful tool for attracting new followers, as the example of televangelism shows. • Evidence of growth in new religious movements. • Growth in new religious movements can be seen as part of a broader trend that has seen an increase interest in spirituality among people in many societies in recent years; the growth in new age movements and privatised worship provide further examples of this trend. • Increased support for fundamentalist religious beliefs in some societies. • Arguments and evidence disputing the claim associated with the secularisation thesis that interest in religion has declined in western societies. • Evidence of an increase in privatised worship and the use of social media for religious engagement. • The idea of 'believing without belonging' may be used to support the idea that a religious revival is occurring despite falling membership of many established religious organisations. • Increasing use of religious symbols and practices in some areas of public life, such as politics in the US or education in the UK (faith schools, for example). Against: • Interest in spirituality may have picked up in some societies in recent years, but studies suggest it is often driven by individualistic concerns with discovering meaning and personal fulfilment rather than any desire to return to a form of society based on shared religious beliefs and absolute theological certainty.	**35**

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Question	Answer	Marks
6	• Falling membership of religious organisations and competition from other belief systems would indicate a decline in religiosity rather than a revival. Evidence of continuing decline in the number of people participating in religious ceremonies. • There is plenty of evidence of desacralisation rather than the opposite; for example, people in many societies today are likely to challenge the authority of established religions to decide key issues of morality in society. • Some studies suggest people of faith devote less time to religious activities today than in the past and some have become more questioning of their faith. • In some societies and communities, there remain strong pressures on people to participate in religious practice and maintain their faith, at least outwardly. Observance in the case of many of these people may reflect social pressure and a desire to conform rather than a belief in the sacred. • Religiosity is difficult to measure so any empirical evidence about the strength of people's religious belief today must be treated sceptically. • Arguments and evidence warning against over-generalising about the extent of religious revival. Atheism and agnosticism remain stronger long-term trends in some countries than others, for example, in UK. • Some countries have retained a high level of interest in religion over many decades (Italy, Ireland, Finland, for instance), so the idea of a religious revival is much less applicable in these cases.	

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

GradeMax

Generic levels of response

Level	AO1: Knowledge and Understanding	Marks
3	• Good knowledge and understanding of the view on which the question is based. • The response contains a range of detailed points with good use of concepts and theory/research evidence.	7–9
2	• Reasonable knowledge and understanding of the view on which the question is based. • The response contains either a narrow range of detailed points or a wider range of underdeveloped points, with some use of concepts and references to theory or research evidence	4–6
1	• Basic knowledge and understanding of the view on which the question is based. • The response contains a narrow range of underdeveloped points with some references to concepts or theory or research evidence.	1–3
0	• No knowledge and understanding worthy of credit.	0

Level	AO2: Interpretation and Application	Marks
4	• Very good interpretation and application of relevant sociological material. • The material selected will be accurately interpreted and consistently applied to the question in a logical and well-informed way.	10–11
3	• Good interpretation and application of sociological material. • The material selected will be accurate and relevant but not always • consistently applied to the question in a way that is logical and clear	7–9
2	• Reasonable interpretation and application of sociological material. • The material selected will be mainly accurate but its relevance to the question may be confused or unclear at times.	4–6
1	• Limited interpretation and application of sociological material. • The material selected is relevant to the topic but lacks focus on or relevance to the specific question.	1–3
0	• No interpretation and application worthy of credit.	0

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026

Level	AO3: Analysis and Evaluation	Marks
4	• Very good analysis and evaluation. • Clear and sustained analysis of the view on which the question is based, with detailed and explicit evaluation. • There is also likely to be a range of contrasting views and/or evidence discussed, demonstrating good understanding of the complexity of the issues raised by the question.	12–15
3	• Good analysis and evaluation. • The evaluation may be explicit and direct but not sustained, or it will rely on a good outline of contrasting views and/or evidence, clearly focused on evaluating the view in the question. • The response demonstrates some understanding of the complexity of the issues raised by the question.	8–11
2	• Reasonable analysis and evaluation. • There is a description of some relevant contrasting views and/or evidence, but these are only implicitly focused on evaluating the view in the question. • The response demonstrates some awareness of the complexity of the issues raised by the question.	4–7
1	• Limited analysis and evaluation. • There are a few simple points of implicit or tangential evaluation. • The response demonstrates little awareness of the complexity of the issues raised by the question.	1–3
0	• No analysis and evaluation worthy of credit.	0

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2026