

Social problems and issues
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Session one: Quiz

Based on the reading and the video clip you have watched, now answer the following five multiple choice questions – choose one answer per question:

Q1 How can social problems be distinguished from economic problems?

- Because they involve government decisions
- Because they involve judgments about social values and norms
- Because individuals need to take responsibility for their own circumstances

Q2 How can we identify social problems?

- By getting together facts about social issues and seeing which ones affect most people
- Undertaking social research and making moral arguments about the importance of an issue, regardless of how many people it affects
- Understanding the historical and cultural origins of social problems

Q3 How does the way social scientists understand social groups differ from other public commentators?

- They understand that by grouping individuals together not everyone in the group might be the same, but that this needs to be done in order to say something meaningful about the social world
- They believe that social science can completely and accurately reflect what happens in the real world through social research
- That with the right kind of research and analysis government can perfect social policies to solve all social problems

Q4 What assumptions might social policy researchers want to test that are often discussed in relation to the poor?

- That the poor choose not to work but to live a life of luxury on benefits
- That poor people have read tabloid newspapers not the quality press
- That the poor tend to use social media less than most other people

Q5 In what way does social research undertaken by social policy commentators seek to influence society?

- To show that the best subject to take at university is social policy
- To convince individuals that their problems aren't of their own making but 'society's fault'
- To put pressure on government to make or change policies to help improve social problems

Answers

Q1 How can social problems be distinguished from economic problems?

Because they involve judgments about social values and norms

Social problems need to have resources in order to be addressed, but we need to have an idea of what we believe in too, such as equal life chances for all.

Q2 How can we identify social problems?

Undertaking social research and making moral arguments about the importance of an issue, regardless of how many people it affects

The number of people affected by a social problem is not important. It's the moral urgency. So addressing the issue of rough sleepers is ethically important, even though compared to the rest of the population they are a small number.

Q3 How does the way social scientists understand social groups differ from other public commentators?

They understand that by grouping individuals together not everyone in the group might be the same, but that this needs to be done in order to say something meaningful about the social world

Social research reveals patterns of similar circumstances, or prejudice or inequality for a particular social group. But we mustn't think that when we talk of these groups everyone who might be categorised in this way are the same. Think of when we think of 'women', half the population!

Q4 What assumptions might social policy researchers want to test that are often discussed in relation to the poor?

That the poor choose not to work but to live a life of luxury on benefits

The other two answers are peripheral to social policy research which deals specifically with social problems and issues to do with peoples' welfare.

Q5 In what way does social research undertaken by social policy commentators seek to influence society?

To put pressure on government to make or change policies to help improve social problems

The whole purpose of social policy and the study of social problems is to make a difference to peoples' lives.