

SOCIOLOGY OPTIONAL

Picking an Optional Subject out of the myriad of choices available, is the biggest dilemma faced by most fresh Civil Service aspirants. You come across an infinite amount of insights on different subjects, their pros, cons and testimonials from successful candidates. However, there are a host of factors to be taken into account while making this crucial choice:

- Your interest towards the subject - Since you would be allotting a considerable fraction of your preparation time to the Optional subject, its wiser to pick a paper that you are interested in.
- Scoring potential of the paper - Choosing papers that are high scoring lets you offset the uncertainty in the GS papers and increases your likelihood of getting a better rank.
- Size and nature of syllabus
- Availability of good coaching/guidance
- Abundance of study material and Test series

This is where Sociology comes in as a smart choice. Simply put, Sociology is the scientific study of the society around us. It deconstructs the society and its elements from an analytical standpoint. From contemporary issues such as women's rights, communalism and caste violence, to theoretical questions like Marxism and Feminism, Sociology discusses broad and relevant aspects of the world that we live in.

Its generalist nature makes it very easy to be picked up by aspirants from any academic background – be it engineering, humanities or pure sciences, making it one of the most popular Optional papers. Sociology has been a high-scoring paper in the Mains Examination – consistently scoring 300+ marks over the last three years – making it a risk-free, yet rewarding Optional. Moreover, the syllabus for Sociology is brief and concise, with more questions repeating from the same topics every year – thereby facilitating a focused preparation strategy. This allows for the completion of syllabus in a short span of 3-4 months with great clarity.

In addition to these advantages, Sociology also has a significant overlap with GS-I, GS-IV and Essay papers – covering a major chunk of your GS preparation as part of it. Further, it becomes a great asset in the Personality Test, since a large number of interview questions have a direct linkage with social issues. A base in Sociology not only lets you view the society through a new lens, but also makes your career ahead as a civil servant, well informed and more interesting.

Paper - I: Sociology Syllabus

FUNDAMENTALS OF SOCIOLOGY

1. Sociology - The Discipline:

- (a) Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology.
- (b) Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences.
- (c) Sociology and common sense.

2. Sociology as Science:

- (a) Science, scientific method and critique.
- (b) Major theoretical strands of research methodology.
- (c) Positivism and its critique.
- (d) Fact value and objectivity.
- (e) Non- positivist methodologies.

3. Research Methods and Analysis:

- (a) Qualitative and quantitative methods.
- (b) Techniques of data collection.
- (c) Variables, sampling, hypothesis, reliability and validity.

4. Sociological Thinkers:

- (a) Karl Marx- Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle.
- (b) Emile Durkheim- Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society.
- (c) Max Weber- Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism.
- (d) Talcott Parsons- Social system, pattern variables.
- (e) Robert K. Merton- Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups.
- (f) Mead - Self and identity.

5. Stratification and Mobility:

- (a) Concepts- equality, inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, poverty and deprivation.
- (b) Theories of social stratification- Structural functionalist theory, Marxist theory, Weberian theory.
- (c) Dimensions – Social stratification of class, status groups, gender, ethnicity and race.
- (d) Social mobility- open and closed systems, types of mobility, sources and causes of mobility.

6. Works and Economic Life:

- (a) Social organization of work in different types of society- slave society, feudal society, industrial /capitalist society.
- (b) Formal and informal organization of work.
- (c) Labour and society.

7. Politics and Society:

- (a) Sociological theories of power.
- (b) Power elite, bureaucracy, pressure groups, and political parties.
- (c) Nation, state, citizenship, democracy, civil society, ideology.
- (d) Protest, agitation, social movements, collective action, revolution.

8. Religion and Society:

- (a) Sociological theories of religion.
- (b) Types of religious practices: animism, monism, pluralism, sects, cults.
- (c) Religion in modern society: religion and science, secularization, religious revivalism, fundamentalism.

9. Systems of Kinship:

- (a) Family, household, marriage.
- (b) Types and forms of family.
- (c) Lineage and descent.
- (d) Patriarchy and sexual division of labour.
- (e) Contemporary trends.

10. Social Change in Modern Society:

- (a) Sociological theories of social change.
- (b) Development and dependency.
- (c) Agents of social change.
- (d) Education and social change.
- (e) Science, technology and social change.

Paper - II: Sociology Syllabus

INDIAN SOCIETY: STRUCTURE AND CHANGE

A. Introducing Indian Society:

(i) Perspectives on the study of Indian society:

- (a) Indology (GS. Ghurye).
- (b) Structural functionalism (M N Srinivas).
- (c) Marxist sociology (A R Desai).

(ii) Impact of colonial rule on Indian society:

- (a) Social background of Indian nationalism.
- (b) Modernization of Indian tradition.

- (c) Protests and movements during the colonial period.
- (d) Social reforms.

B. Social Structure:

(i) Rural and Agrarian Social Structure:

- (a) The idea of Indian village and village studies.
- (b) Agrarian social structure - evolution of land tenure system, land reforms.

(ii) Caste System:

- (a) Perspectives on the study of caste systems: GS Ghurye, M N Srinivas, Louis Dumont, Andre Beteille.
- (b) Features of caste system.
- (c) Untouchability - forms and perspectives.

(iii) Tribal communities in India:

- (a) Definitional problems.
- (b) Geographical spread.
- (c) Colonial policies and tribes.
- (d) Issues of integration and autonomy.

(iv) Social Classes in India:

- (a) Agrarian class structure.
- (b) Industrial class structure.
- (c) Middle classes in India.

(v) Systems of Kinship in India:

- (a) Lineage and descent in India.
- (b) Types of kinship systems.
- (c) Family and marriage in India.
- (d) Household dimensions of the family.
- (e) Patriarchy, entitlements and sexual division of labour.

(vi) Religion and Society:

- (a) Religious communities in India.
- (b) Problems of religious minorities.

C. Social Changes in India:

(i) Visions of Social Change in India:

- (a) Idea of development planning and mixed economy.
- (b) Constitution, law and social change.
- (c) Education and social change.

(ii) Rural and Agrarian transformation in India:

- (a) Programmes of rural development, Community Development Programme,

- cooperatives, poverty alleviation schemes.
- (b) Green revolution and social change.
 - (c) Changing modes of production in Indian agriculture.
 - (d) Problems of rural labour, bondage, migration.

(iii) Industrialization and Urbanisation in India:

- (a) Evolution of modern industry in India.
- (b) Growth of urban settlements in India.
- (c) Working class: structure, growth, class mobilization.
- (d) Informal sector, child labour.
- (e) Slums and deprivation in urban areas.

(iv) Politics and Society:

- (a) Nation, democracy and citizenship.
- (b) Political parties, pressure groups, social and political elite.
- (c) Regionalism and decentralization of power.
- (d) Secularization

(v) Social Movements in Modern India:

- (a) Peasants and farmers movements.
- (b) Women's movement.
- (c) Backward classes & Dalit movement.
- (d) Environmental movements.
- (e) Ethnicity and Identity movements.

(vi) Population Dynamics:

- (a) Population size, growth, composition and distribution.
- (b) Components of population growth: birth, death, migration.
- (c) Population policy and family planning.
- (d) Emerging issues: ageing, sex ratios, child and infant mortality, reproductive health.

(vii) Challenges of Social Transformation:

- (a) Crisis of development: displacement, environmental problems and sustainability.
- (b) Poverty, deprivation and inequalities.
- (c) Violence against women.
- (d) Caste conflicts.
- (e) Ethnic conflicts, communalism, religious revivalism.
- (f) Illiteracy and disparities in education.