

# What is Social Stratification?

## Worksheet

Social stratification is the hierarchical arrangement of individuals and groups in society based on unequal access to wealth, power and prestige, which shapes life chances and mobility.

## Questions

1. Which of these best defines social stratification?

- A) Random distribution of wealth in a society
- B) The hierarchical ranking of people based on wealth, power and prestige
- C) A government policy for taxation
- D) A type of religious ritual

2. A status assigned at birth, such as caste, is called:

- A) Achieved status
- B) Ascribed status
- C) Master status
- D) Role status

3. Which stratification system allows the MOST social mobility?

- A) Caste system
- B) Slavery
- C) Class system
- D) Estate system

4. Max Weber added which two dimensions to Karl Marx's focus on economic class?

- A) Race and gender
- B) Status and power
- C) Religion and language
- D) Education and age

5. In a society, a person born to a wealthy family attends elite schools and inherits a business, while a person born poor has limited access to education. What system does this best illustrate and why?

6. In traditional India, a person born into a specific caste could not, historically, marry outside that caste or change occupation regardless of ability. What type of stratification system is this?

7. A CEO's child starts their career already owning company stock and having professional connections that a first-generation employee lacks. Identify the stratification-related concept.

8. Define: What is social stratification?

9. Define: What is the difference between ascribed and achieved status?

10. Define: What is social mobility?

## Answer Key

1. B) The hierarchical ranking of people based on wealth, power and prestige - Social stratification is the structured ranking of individuals and groups by unequal access to resources like wealth, power, and prestige.
2. B) Ascribed status - Ascribed status is given at birth or involuntarily, unlike achieved status which is earned.
3. C) Class system - Class systems are relatively open, allowing individuals to move between strata through education, income, or occupation.
4. B) Status and power - Weber argued stratification involves three dimensions: class (economic), status (prestige), and power (political influence).
5. This illustrates class-based stratification with strong intergenerational transmission of advantage. Wealth provides access to elite education (a resource). Education and inherited assets translate into higher future income and status. This shows how stratification perpetuates inequality across generations even within a technically 'open' class system.
6. This is a caste system. Status is ascribed at birth, not achieved through effort. Occupation, marriage partners, and social contact were traditionally restricted within the caste. Mobility between castes was essentially closed, unlike a class system.
7. This illustrates cultural and economic capital transmission (related to Pierre Bourdieu's theory). The CEO's child inherits both financial capital (stock) and social capital (connections). This gives a structural advantage unrelated to individual merit. It shows how stratification can persist even in systems that claim to reward only talent and effort.
8. The hierarchical ranking of people in society based on unequal access to wealth, power, and prestige.
9. Ascribed status is assigned at birth (e.g., caste, race); achieved status is earned through effort (e.g., education, career).
10. The movement of individuals or groups between different social strata, either upward or downward.

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