

Study Guide for the Australian Collaboration Fact and Issue Sheet

A FAIR AUSTRALIA

FOR REVIEW

1. Definitions of fairness

1a. Why might fairness be an important measure of a good society?

1b. Name four different ways in which fairness might be expressed within a society.

1c. Does the principle of fairness exclude the right of individuals to be rewarded for their particular efforts and/or talents?

1d. Name three ways in which social policy might be used to promote or ensure fairness.

2. Fairness and equality in Australia

2a. Is the idea of the 'fair go' important to Australians? (Provide evidence for your answer.)

2b. Based on the information provided, which of the following four statements would seem to be the most accurate? (Provide a brief explanation with your answer.)

- Australia is a wealthy country with a high standard of living but is not always fair.
- Australia is a wealthy country with a high standard of living and is very fair.
- Australia is a moderately wealthy country with a medium to high standard of living and is often unfair.
- Australia is a moderately wealthy country with a medium to high standard of living and is reasonably fair.

2c. At last count, what percentage of the Australian population was living in poverty and how does this compare with the figures for previous years?

2d. What percentage of Australian children are currently living in poverty?

2e. What percentage of Danish children are currently living in poverty?

2f. Has the share of wealth owned by the richest 200 people in Australia been increasing or decreasing in recent years? (Provide evidence for your answer.)

2g. What percentage of Australia's Gross Domestic Product is spent on education?

2h. How does this compare with the spending of other countries in the OECD?

2i. Does Australia currently have any legal provisions for paid maternity leave? How does this compare with other countries in the OECD?

2j. How does Australian's dental health compare with that of other wealthy countries?

2k. According to recent figures, how many homeless people are there in Australia?

2l. What is the average net worth of the wealthiest 20 per cent of households in Australia?

2m. What is the difference in life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians?

3. Tackling unfairness in Australia

3a. Name one of the recommendations made by ACOSS for reducing poverty and inequality in Australia.

3b. Does Australia currently have any set targets for the reduction or elimination of poverty?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Work in pairs to decide which of the alternative models of fairness used in the analogy of the Monopoly game is the one you favour. Share these conclusions with the class.

2. Work in pairs or as a class to decide whether each of the following might be an indicator of unfairness in a society, and to explain why or why not:

- low levels of public investment in education
- a large difference in wealth between the richest and the poorest people in the society, with a significant portion of the population living in poverty
- low levels of access to free or affordable legal advice and/or representation
- low levels of law enforcement
- government censorship of the media
- low levels for protection for wage entitlements and employment conditions
- low levels of access to free or affordable healthcare
- low levels of access to affordable housing

3. Is unfairness given sufficient attention by governments and other influential groups in Australian society? If not, what do you think might be the reasons? Use this question for a class debate.

FOR RESEARCH

1. Use the list provided under Useful Sources at the end of the Fact and Issue Sheet to investigate further Australia's performance on various indicators of fairness, as compared to other OECD countries.

- Which indicators does Australia perform best on, and which indicators does it perform worst on?
- Are there any countries which consistently outperform Australia across the range of indicators, and, if so, which countries are they?
- Are there any countries which consistently perform worse than Australia across the range of indicators, and, if so, which countries are they?
- Are there any countries which seem to be the most like Australia in terms of their performance(s) across the range of indicators, and, if so, which countries are they?

2. For advanced students. Research one of the best performing countries to examine in what way its social policy appears to differ from the Australian Government's social policy.