



Social Mobility
Commission

Socio-economic inclusion - Data and progression

Paula Kemp, Head of Employers' Programme, SMC



@SMCommission



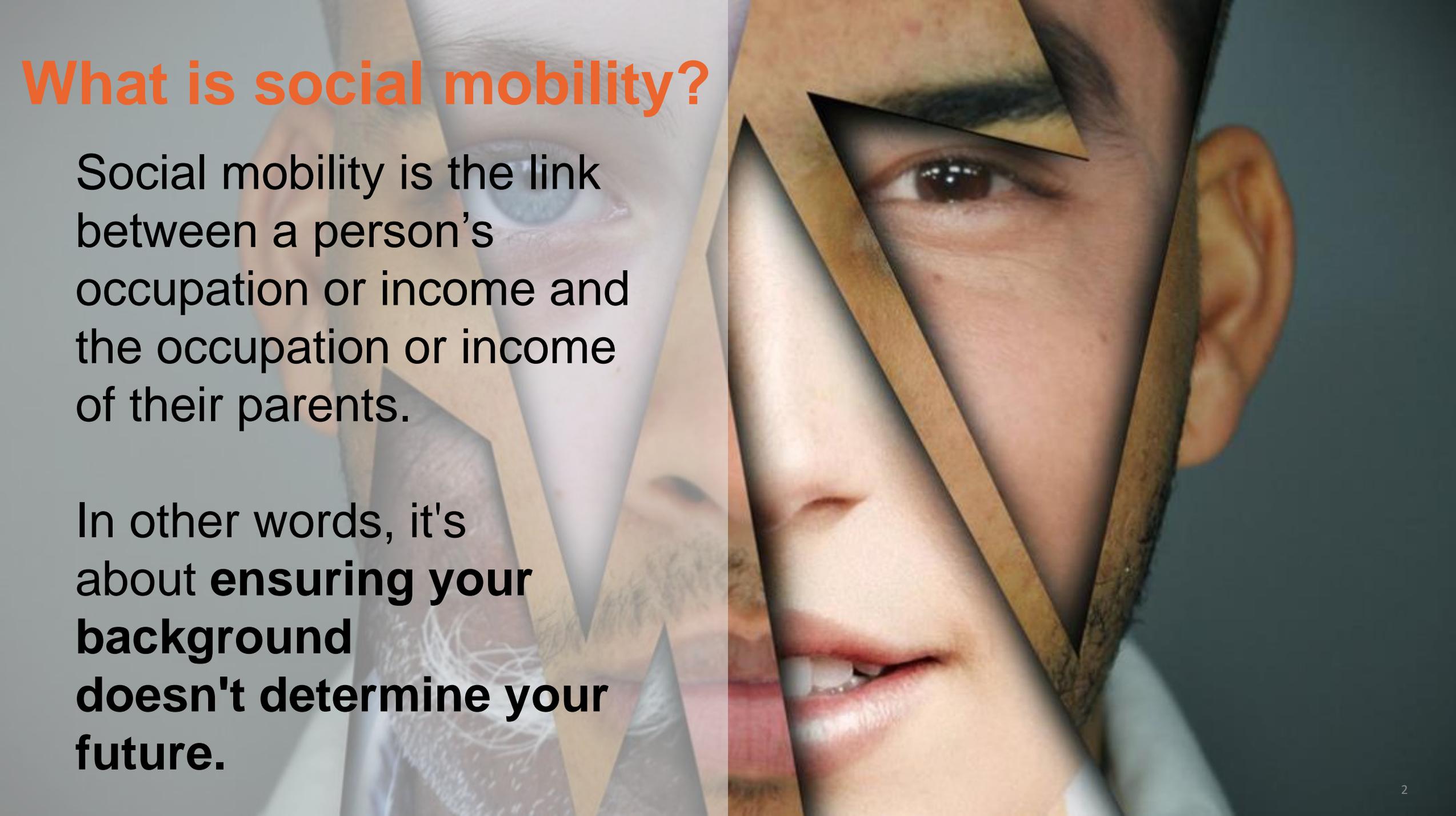
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@socialmobilitystories

#socialmobility #askthequestion www.socialmobilityworks.org

What is social mobility?

A collage of faces with a large white arrow pointing downwards, symbolizing social mobility. The faces are partially obscured by the arrow, which is a large, white, downward-pointing chevron shape. The faces include a woman with blue eyes, a man with dark eyes, and a man with a beard. The background is a mix of light and dark tones.

Social mobility is the link between a person's occupation or income and the occupation or income of their parents.

In other words, it's about **ensuring your background doesn't determine your future.**



Employers' voice: Their challenges

13%



Felt their organisation understands the importance of measuring socio-economic data across the organisation

3/4



Felt there was a lack of understanding of what to ask to obtain socio-economic diversity data of current employers

80%



Told us that their response rate for diversity data collection is low

83%



Felt there is little or no link between the data they collect and their social mobility interventions

Nearly 1/2



found it challenging knowing how to interpret data gained

Only 17%

Organisations who entered the Social Mobility Employer Index in 2020 ask the best question to gauge socio-economic background

Step 1: Ask the question



What was the occupation of your main household earner when you were aged about 14?

Endorsed by our partners:



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



Championing better
work and working lives



CITY
OF
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What was the occupation of your main household earner when you were aged about 14?

How to group responses from the key question.



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PROFESSIONAL

Modern professional & traditional professional occupations such as: teacher, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer, accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil / mechanical engineer.

Senior, middle or junior managers or administrators such as: finance manager, chief executive, large business owner, office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, warehouse manager.

INTERMEDIATE

Small business owners who employed less than 25 people such as: corner shop owners, small plumbing companies, retail shop owner, single restaurant or cafe owner, taxi owner, garage owner.

Clerical and intermediate occupations such as: secretary, personal assistant, call centre agent, clerical worker, nursery nurse

WORKING CLASS

Routine, semi-routine manual and service occupations such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, sales assistant, HGV driver, cleaner, porter, packer, labourer, waiter/waitress, bar staff.

Technical and craft occupations such as: motor mechanic, plumber, printer, electrician, gardener, train driver.

Long-term unemployed (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for 1yr plus).

EXCLUDE

Other: such as: retired, this question does not apply to me, I don't know, I prefer not to say.

Want to up your game?

Ask these supplementary questions.



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Question 2

- Which type of school did you attend for the most time between the ages of 11 and 16?



Why ask?

This measure shows extreme economic and cultural advantage. Just 7% of people attend independent schools and yet our research with our partners at the Sutton Trust show how over-represented these groups are in top jobs.



Question 3

- If you finished school after 1980, were you eligible for free school meals at any point during your school years?



Why ask?

This is a measure of extreme economic disadvantage. It can help you target outreach programmes.



OPTIONAL - Question 4

(only for new graduate hires).
Did either of your parents attend university and gain a degree (e.g. BA/BSc or equivalent) by the time you were 18?



Why ask?

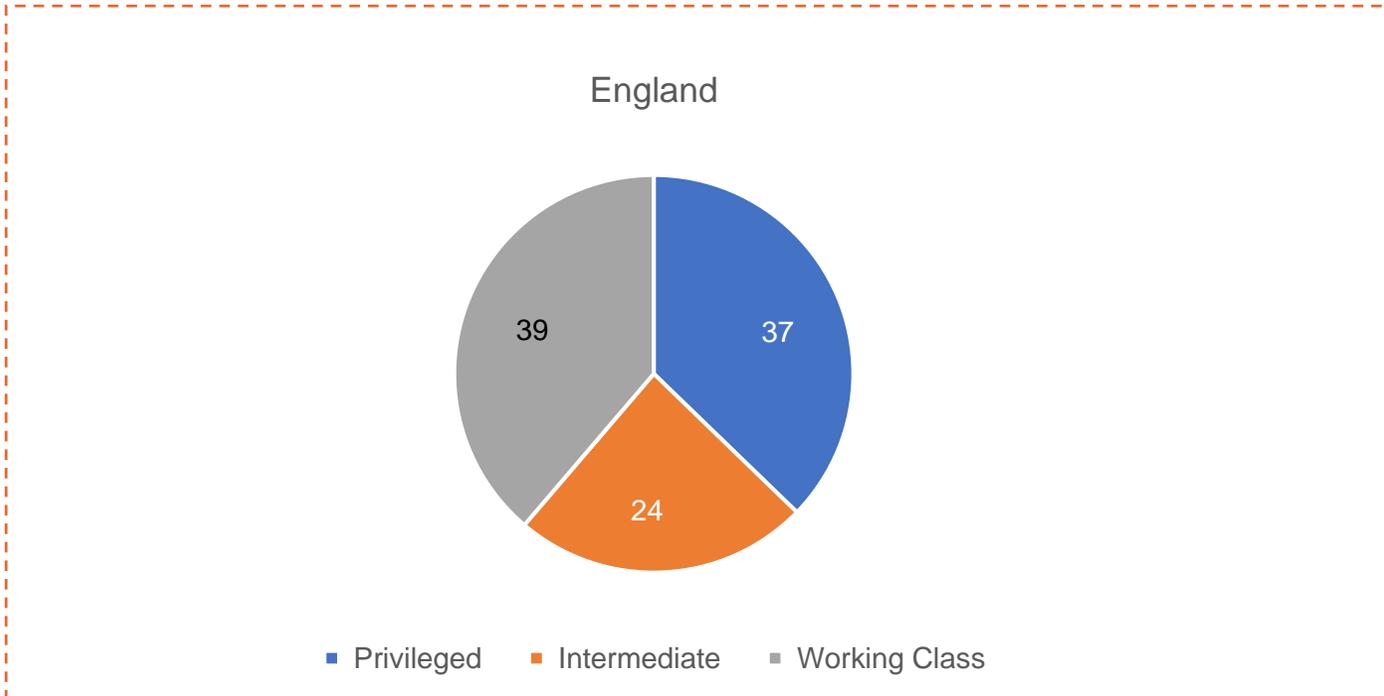
Being the 'first in family' to attend signals a potential lack of support to navigate university and entry into the graduate workforce.



🎯 National benchmarks*



The national benchmark – socio-economic background of the overall workforce in England aged 16+



Type of school attended at age 11–16



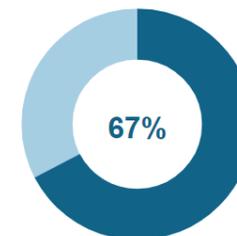
7.5% Independent schools



Free school meal eligibility



15% Pupils at state-funded schools



of graduates are first in family to attend uni

*Some industry benchmarks will also become available on our site as we release industry-specific toolkits

Meritocracy and career performance





Is there evidence of 'getting on'?



Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds take **a year and a half longer** on average to reach partner than their colleagues from higher social groups.¹



Employees from lower socio-economic backgrounds took **25% longer to progress** through grades. This 'progression gap' cannot be explained by performance. There was no statistical evidence to link performance with socio-economic background.²



Real estate firms have a smaller proportion of employees from lower socio-economic backgrounds (27%) than other sectors, with **over half of those in senior positions** from a higher socio-economic background.³



Those from privileged backgrounds are more than twice as likely to land a job in a creative occupation, dominating key creative roles. They are also more likely to experience greater autonomy, have supervisory responsibility and **to progress into managerial positions**.⁴



Many people from low socio-economic backgrounds who enter the Civil Service **don't go on to progress in the same way** as those from more advantaged backgrounds.⁵

1: Bridge group: [Pathways to partnership: challenging the myth of meritocracy](#), 2020

2: Commission by City of London Corporation and authored by the Bridge Group, [Who gets ahead and how? Socio-economic background and career progression in financial services](#), 2020

3: Bridge Group: [Socio-economic diversity in the real estate sector](#), 2020

4: Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, led by Nesta, [Getting in and getting on – Class participation and job quality in the UK Creative Industries](#), 2020

5: Social Mobility Commission, [Navigating the labyrinth: Socio-economic background and career progression within the civil service](#), May 2021

The reality



Progression is often the last thing people tackle. Interventions may be ineffective if the rest of the building blocks aren't in place i.e., the culture, structure, support and opportunities so staff can take your efforts seriously.



ATTRACTION MYTH

There is a suggestion that the challenge of diversity is concerned mostly with the early career pipeline, i.e. outreach is the solution¹



LONGER PROGRESSION TIMELINE

Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds take a year and a half longer on average to reach senior roles than their more advantaged colleagues¹



FUNDED TRAINING

Employer-funded training is **more likely** to be given to those from higher socio-economic backgrounds in every category of job. When offered, it might not be accessible to all (e.g. delivered digitally, not offered flexibly, or time off not given)²



INCLUSION NOT REALISED

Many organisations still tilt their norms towards those from a privileged background³



RETENTION MINDSET

Fast-paced, customer- and profit-focused industries have a tendency to view frontline staff as disposable and replaceable and therefore organisations did not prioritise investing in staff development⁴



JOBS NOT CAREERS

Frontline staff often don't see their jobs as a career and report having other more important priorities in their life⁴



CONFIDENCE

Individuals often lack confidence in their ability to progress and have low expectations of employers to provide training and access to progression⁴



CAREER PATHS

Individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds often self-select into operational or technical roles, which often don't lead to the C-suite⁴

1: Bridge group: [Pathways to partnership: challenging the myth of meritocracy](#), 2020

2: Social Mobility Commission, [State of the Nation 2018-19](#), 2019

3 Social mobility Training Progression Research (2020)

4. Social mobility; Public sector research (2021)

So where do you start?



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Build a programme of interventions and enablers that do and are seen to shift your organisations culture. Thus placing the importance of training and development to help contribute to progression opportunities for all

ACTIONS

HOT TIP



LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

- Build manager and leadership commitment
- Create an inclusive culture:
 - Actively address behavioural culture codes
 - linked to other building blocks (see workforce and enablers)

Build understanding of long term **business value** of providing in-work training and careers guidance

Engage and **build trust with employees by actively listening** and then responding to their **aspirations and concerns**



WORKFORCE

- Build incremental career pathways into the structure of your workforce
- Ensure monthly performance meetings occur for everyone
- Training and communication
- Use sponsors/mentors
- Create and listen to your social mobility network

Embed **measures** throughout the business that **prioritise and support individuals** to progress at their own pace



ENABLERS

- Use data
- Job roles with clear skills definition and flexibility built in
- Fair performance, promotion and pay
- Rigorous succession planning
- Communication of careers pathways

Review **company structures and ways of working** to create **meaningful career progression opportunities**

Remove ambiguity in progression processes; ambiguity disproportionately helps some over others



WIDER ECOSYSTEM

- Client commitment on inclusion
- Use your supplier chain - contractors

Review **client contracts**; include your commitment towards diverse teams and reflecting society



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Navigating the labyrinth

Socio-economic background and career progression within the Civil Service

Research report
May 2021



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The workforce action plan

1. Establish a cross-departmental workforce strategy to improve socio-economic diversity in the Civil Service

2. Introduce workforce-wide reporting on socio-economic background

3. Use training and 'learning and development' to drive positive change

4. Use apprenticeships to drive your strategy

5. Increase representation of Senior Civil Servants from low socio-economic backgrounds

6. Equalise access to accelerator roles

7. Formalise the informal

8. Think beyond Whitehall

9. Demystify the policy profession

10. Break the taboo around social class

11. Start a conversation about talent

12. Focus on cumulative barriers to progression for women from low socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds



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Our next event:

Masterclass: Leadership & Culture

1 July 2021, 1pm

www.socialmobilityworks.org



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Superdrug 