Research Brief

Extra-curricular Inequality

1: September 2014

Summary

More advantaged children are substantially more likely to receive extra private tuition

- 23% of young people report receiving private tuition, but there is a 12 percentage point gap between the most and least affluent families
- YouGov polling shows parents in social group A are two to three times more likely than those in groups C2-E to employ private tutors
- They are also three to four times more likely than all other social groups to use private tutors specifically to gain a place for children at selective schools

A large proportion of parents involve children in regular extra-curricular activities. However, there is still substantial social inequality

- The ONS Living Costs and Food Survey shows top earners are almost four times more likely than bottom earners to have paid for out of school enrichment classes

UK society is marked by high levels of educational inequality. Children from poorer families (as measured by eligibility for free school meals) are 40% less likely to achieve the government benchmark of five A*-C grades (including English and Maths) at GCSE; those from the most disadvantaged postcodes are three times less likely to go to university than those from the most advantaged areas, and are ten times less likely to go to the most selective universities. This is a significant impediment to social mobility and to broader prosperity in the economy as a whole.

Part of this story lies within schools themselves. Children from poorer backgrounds are more likely to attend struggling schools – schools which may be facing a multitude of challenges including poor discipline and difficulty in attracting high quality teachers. However, a significant source of inequality lies outside the classroom, with the additional support better-off families are able to provide for their children. This may be direct help with schoolwork through the use of private tutors, or broader enrichment activities like music lessons, museum visits, or trips to the theatre. Private tuition has obvious benefits, but previous research has also shown that 'softer' cultural experience (cultural capital) and participation in extra-curricular activities like music, dance, and sports can have a positive effect on both educational attainment and career outcomes.[1]

In this Research Brief we address the question of social inequality in both the use of private tuition, and in the involvement of children in extra-curricular activities. We draw on new and previous Sutton Trust research along with data from the UK Living Costs and Food Survey (LCFS).

Private tuition

Every year since 2005, the Sutton Trust has commissioned Ipsos MORI to survey around 2,700 young people (between the ages of 11-16) in England and Wales on their experience of education.[2] In 2005, and from 2009-2014, these young people were asked whether they had ever received private or home tuition. Figure 1 shows that, from 2009 to 2014, the proportion receiving private or home tuition has increased from 20% to 23% (the figure in 2005 was 18%). The graph also shows the extent of the gap between the most and least affluent families from 2011 (the earliest these data are available by family affluence) to 2014.[3] These figures show a persistent gap between the proportions of young people from the most and least affluent backgrounds receiving private tuition, with a consistent gap of at least 10 percentage points over this period.

References

[1] See Blasko (2002), Dimaggio (1982), Dumais (2002), and Kaufman and Gabler (2004).

[2] This forms part of MORI's Young People Omnibus surveys. Questionnaires are self-completed by students in sessions at schools.

[3] Family affluence was classified using the family affluence scale, which uses a set of questions about family resources – such as computer and car ownership, and frequency of taking holidays – to group respondents into low, medium or high affluence groups. More detail can be found here.

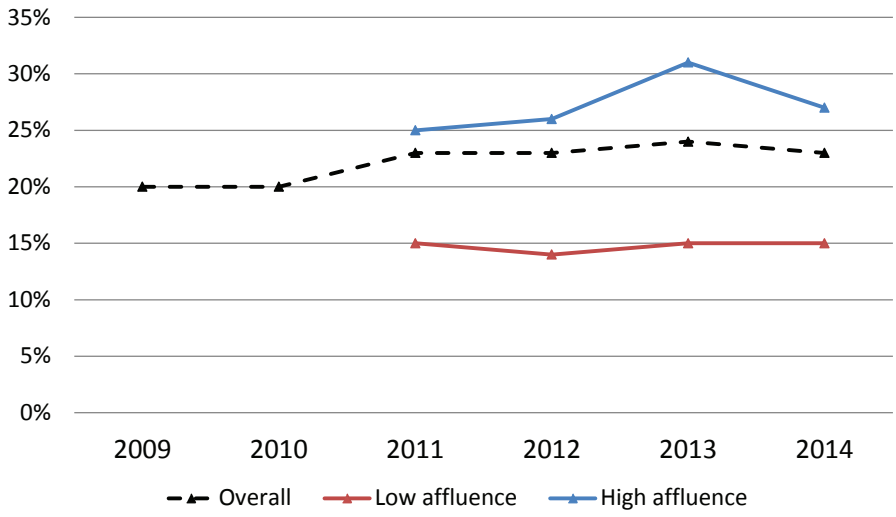
As well as a gap between more and less affluent families, this survey also highlights the gulf between London and the rest of the country. In 2009, 40% of young people in London reported having received private tuition, compared with an average of 17% in the rest of the country. In 2014, this gap has narrowed slightly but remains large (37% vs. 20%).

A separate piece of research, carried out for the Sutton Trust in 2013 by Professors Becky Francis and Merryn Hutchings, produced similar figures from interviews with parents. The report, *Parent Power,* was based on a YouGov survey of 1,173 parents of children aged 5-16. Figure 1 shows the proportion of parents who reported that their child had received private tuition in the last year, and the proportion of parents of state school children (N=1,090) who reported that they had employed a tutor specifically to facilitate their child's entry into a particular selective school.

The figures show a pronounced social gradient for both questions. Parents in social group A[4] were 70% more likely than those in social groups B and C1 to report that their children had received private tuition, and around two to three times more likely to do so than parents in social groups C2, D, and E. Differences in the use of private tutors to help with entrance exams were even more stark, with parents in social group A around three to four times more likely to have used a private tuition in this way than parents in the other five social groups.

A further notable finding from this study was that children who were already receiving a private school education were substantially more likely to additionally receive private tuition outside school (27% vs. 14%).

Figure 1. Percentage of young people reporting ever receiving private tuition, overall and by family affluence (Data: Ipsos MORI Young People Omnibus surveys. Base: c.2,700 young people aged 11-16 per year)



Extra-curricular activities

This year the Trust commissioned an additional online poll among parents in England to investigate rates of participation in extra-curricular activities. Ipsos MORI surveyed 309 parents of children aged 5-16,[5] asking whether a particular child (the child with the most recent birthday) had regularly participated in any of a number of extra-curricular social activities outside of school in the last 12 months. The list of activities included Sports/exercise, Scouts/Guiding, Dance/Drama, Music, Social club, Arts and crafts, Science, Languages, and 'other'.

Overall, a strong majority of 76% of parents reported that their child regularly participated in some form of extra-curricular activity in the last 12 months. The most popular activity was sport/exercise (52%), followed by Scouts/Guiding (16%), dance/drama (15%) and music (14%). Although the majority of all parents report some participation, there remains a gap between social groups, with rates of participation around 15 percentage points higher among parents in social groups A, B, or C1 (84%) than among parents in social groups C2, D, or E (69%).

The survey also showed some differences by parents' level of education, with 83% of parents with a degree level education or higher reporting that their child participated in extra-curricular activities, compared with 72% of respondents without a degree.

The Ipsos MORI poll also asked parents who reported that their child participated in extra-curricular activities how much they had paid for these over the last 12 months. Figure 3 shows the proportion of parents ineach social group spending less than

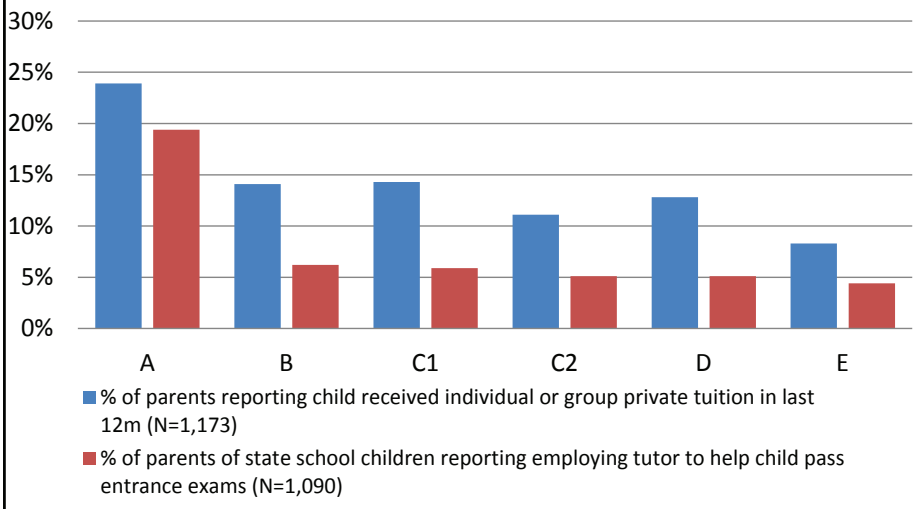
References

[4] Social groups based on occupation of main income earner. A: higher managers, administrators or professionals; B: intermediate managers etc.; C1: supervisors, clerical workers, and junior manager and administrators; C2:skilled manual workers; D: semi and unskilled manual workers; E:casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed people, and state pensioners

[5] This sample of parents was part of a larger survey of 1,728 adults aged 16-75 in England, interviewed by Ipsos MORI from the 13th-17th June 2014 via its Online iOmnibus survey. The data were weighted by age, gender, region, social grade, working status and main shopper to the known profile of the GB population aged 16-75.

£100, £100-249, £250-499, and £500 or more on extra-curricular activities for their child (with the most recent birthday) in the last 12 months. These figures show substantial differences in spending by parents in the different social groups. 22% of parents in social groups A, B, or C1 reported spending £500 and up on extra-curricular activities for a particular child in the last year, compared with 10% of those in social groups C2, D, or E. Conversely, 29% of those in groups C2, D, or E reported spending £0-99, compared with 17% of those in groups A, B, or C1.

Figure 2. Take-up of private tuition among parents of children aged 5-16 (Data: YouGov 2012 poll)



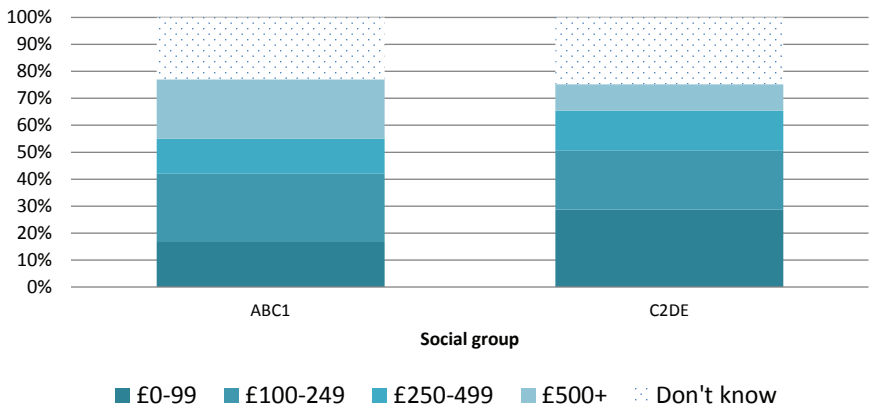
The 2013 *Parent Power* report also showed similar social differences in the proportion of parents paying for "regular weekly classes" for their children in activities such as music, dance, drama or sport. 60-70% of those in social groups A, B, and C1 reported paying for classes, compared with 40-50% of in groups C2 and D, and around 30% in group E. The survey also showed that higher proportions of parents in the top social groups took their children on cultural visits, including to museums, galleries, plays, concerts, and historical sites. These differences were more pronounced for activities like concerts and plays than for visits to museums and galleries which are often low cost or free.

To complement the results of these surveys, we also analysed data from the most recent (2012) Living Costs and Food Survey. This study, conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), is an annual survey which collects information on spending patterns in the UK. It is the most significant consumer survey undertaken in the UK and is used in the construction of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The 2012 survey included 5,593 households, including 1,758 households with dependent children. The household questionnaire asks whether respondents had paid for extra-curricular classes in the previous three months, and if so, who these classes were for.

Figure 4 shows a strong social gradient in the proportion of parents paying for extra-curricular classes for their children.[6] 35% of households in the top fifth of incomes reported paying, compared with only 9% of households in the bottom fifth (all the differences in Figure 4 are statistically significant with the exception of the difference between income groups two and three, and between three and four).

It should be noted that the proportions reporting that their children participate in extra-curricular activities differ between the three data sources. These differences are to be expected given differing samples (for example, children of parents

Figure 3. Amount spent on extra-curricular activities of child in last 12m by parents of children engaged in at least one activity (Data: Ipsos MORI parent poll; N=234 ABC1 base: 121. C2DE base: 113)

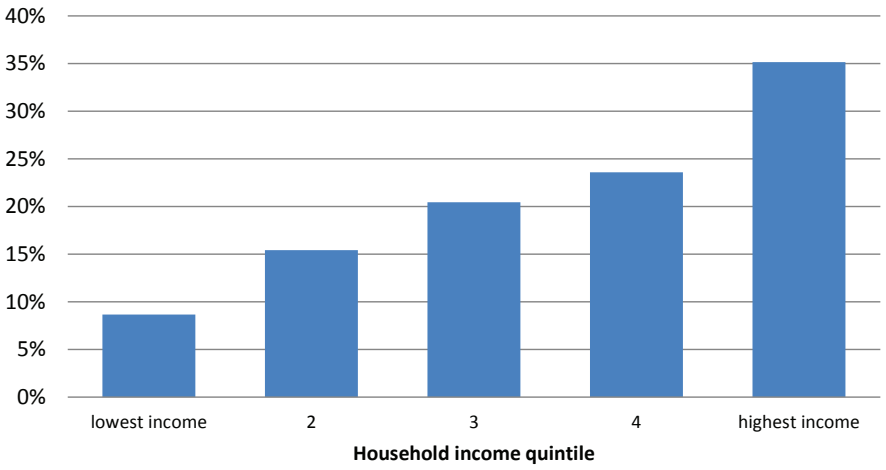


References

[6]Author's calculation – proportions of respondents to the LCFS household questionnaire with resident dependent children (N=1,758) reporting that in the last three months they had paid a fee for courses, classes, or private tuition for a child in their household in: crafts; dancing, music, or drama; photography, painting, or art; sports; aerobics, keep-fit or yoga; DIY or car maintenance; creative writing; or languages. Figures weighted using LCFS quarterly population weights.

aged 5 to 16 in the MORI and YouGov polls, versus parents of dependent children of any age in the LCFS sample), time frames (12 months versus three months), and, particularly, different question wordings (for example referring to "regular extra-curricular social activities" as opposed to "weekly classes"). However, they are consistent in that they show significant inequalities between social classes and income levels in the extent to which parents are able to engage their children in extra-curricular enrichment activities.

Figure 4. Percentage of parents with dependent children reporting paying fee for extra-curricular activity for child in last 3m (Data: LCFS 2012; N=1,758)



Conclusion

These figures illustrate the extent of inequality outside the classroom in the UK. They suggest a pronounced social gradient in both the provision of private tuition, and in participation in extra-curricular cultural and social activities. The richest parents are most able to afford private tuition, either to assist with schoolwork or to help them gain entry to selective schools. It is particularly notable that it is parents whose children *already* attend private school who are the most likely to also provide private extra tuition, illustrating the extent of financial investment some parents are able to make to secure good outcomes for their children.

While it is encouraging that large proportions of parents are engaging their children in extra-curricular activities outside school, substantial inequality between social groups is evident. Unlike with private tuition, there are clear differences between the top, middle, and bottom income brackets and social groups – as opposed to a simple disconnect between the top and the rest.

Inequalities in both of these areas are a cause for concern. By using private tuition both to help with day-to-day schoolwork, and to gain admission to selective schools, richer parents are able to give their children a large academic boost. This will likely make a big difference to their access to the most selective universities, and subsequently to the highest paying careers. Previous research has also shown a positive effect of extra-curricular experience on both education and career outcomes – giving children from richer families another edge.

This adds up to a clear need to make both private tuition and good extra-curricular activities more available to less advantaged children. For details of some promising ways to achieve this goal, see our "Recommendations".

Recommendations

- **The Government should introduce a means tested voucher system as part of the pupil premium through which lower income families could purchase additional educational support**

- **Several promising private and charitable projects also offer the potential of making extra tuition available to less advantaged children, examples include:**
  - **The Tutor Trust:** This education charity based in Manchester, trains undergraduates to provide pupils with individual and small group tuition in English, Maths, and Science. Schools pay for this tuition for their pupils at well below market rates, usually with Pupil Premium money, making the scheme more affordable for disadvantaged schools. The Tutor trust model is currently being evaluated by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), with the results scheduled to be published in 2015.
  - **Tutorfair:** A company that helps parents find and book tutors. As a website they are able to charge less than traditional tutoring agencies. Also, as part of their model, for every student who pays they provide tutoring to a child who can't afford it.