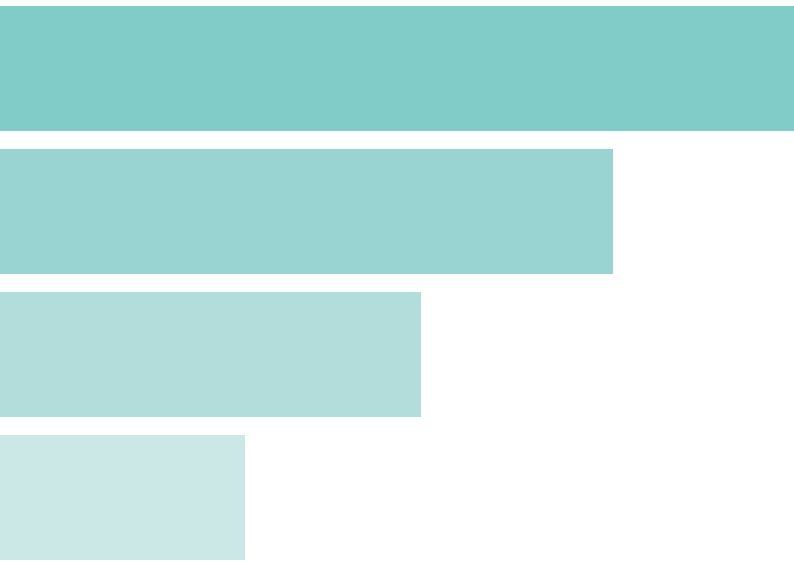


# LEADING PEOPLE 2016

## The educational backgrounds of the UK professional elite

Dr. Philip Kirby  
February 2016



Improving social mobility  
through education



## FOREWORD

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The Sutton Trust pioneered research into the educational backgrounds of those at the top of the UK's professions. Our first report, on the legal profession, was published a decade ago. Since then, we've studied a variety of fields: from members of the House of Commons, to leading news journalists, to those most prominent in the arts. Our research has consistently shown that the UK's professional elite is disproportionately educated at private schools and Oxbridge.

This report consolidates and updates this previous work. It shows that the pattern remains. About 7% of students attend private schools, but almost a third of MPs in the 2015 intake were independently educated. Of all High Court and Appeals Court judges, nearly three quarters attended private schools. In the media, over half of the top 100 news journalists in the country went to fee-paying schools. And the pattern is repeated, to varying degrees, across a host of other professions.

There has, though, been some progress. In the legal profession, the Solicitors Regulation Authority now summarises where the UK's legal professionals were educated and the Judicial Appointments Commission has been founded to foster greater diversity. The legal profession has been working with us through its Legal Education Foundation to support our Pathways to Law programme. We also have Pathways programmes in medicine, property and STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics).

Over recent years, we've seen a greater focus on diversity in the professions. There has been improvement in the number of women appointed to boards at FTSE 100 companies, for example, and a growing number of MPs are from BME (black or minority ethnic) backgrounds. These developments are to be welcomed. However, work to improve the social mix of leading professions still has a long way to go.

Central to this is a greater understanding of why those with particular educational backgrounds remain at the top. While private school and Oxbridge students often have higher academic achievement, it is not just grades that determine future career success. These students often have the social skills and advantages – from higher aspiration and greater extra-curricular opportunities, to easier access to professional networks – that precipitate career success.

Our Pathways and summer school programmes continue to play their part in lifting the socio-economic 'glass ceiling' that remains such a feature of our professional elites. Opening up private day schools on the basis of merit not money, as is the case with our Open Access scheme, would also greatly help efforts to foster social mobility at the top.

**SIR PETER LAMPL**

Chairman of the Sutton Trust and of the Education Endowment Foundation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The UK's top professions remain disproportionately populated by alumni of private schools and Oxbridge, despite these educating only a small minority of the population (estimates suggest about 7% attended private schools, less than 1% Oxbridge):

- In the military, nearly three quarters (71%) of the top officers in the country attended independent schools. With grammar schools included, too, nine out of 10 (88%) senior officers attended a selective school.
- In medicine, nearly two thirds (61%) of top doctors were educated at independent schools, nearly one quarter at grammar schools (22%) and the remainder (16%) comprehensives. Of the same group, 40% were educated at Oxbridge and 60% at one of the top thirty universities in the country.
- In politics, nearly a third (32%) of MPs were privately educated and over a quarter (26%) attended Oxbridge. Half (50%) of the cabinet was privately educated, compared with 13% of the shadow cabinet. Of the cabinet, just under half (47%) attended Oxbridge; of the shadow cabinet, just under a third (32%) attended Oxbridge.
- In the senior civil service, about half (48%) attended private school, nearly a third a grammar school (29%) and the remainder comprehensives (23%). At university, about half had attended Oxbridge (51%), over a third UK top thirty institutions (38%) and a small minority other UK universities (7%).
- In journalism, about half (51%) of the country's leading journalists were educated privately, less than one in five (19%) went to comprehensives. Over half (54%) went to Oxbridge.
- In business, a high proportion of FTSE 100 chief executives attended schools overseas. Of those who were UK educated, over a third (34%) of CEOs were educated at private schools and nearly a third (31%) at Oxbridge.
- In law, nearly three quarters (74%) of the top judiciary were educated at independent schools and the same proportion (74%) went to Oxbridge. Barristers and solicitors disproportionately herald from the same schools and universities.
- In music, about four fifths (81%) of British solo BRIT winners were state educated, just under one fifth (19%) attended independent schools. In classical music, the pattern is reversed: three quarters (75%) of top British Classic BRIT winners attended private schools.
- In film, over two thirds (67%) of British winners of the main Oscars attended independent schools, over a quarter (27%) grammar schools and the remainder (7%) comprehensives. Looking only at the last 25 years, these proportions have remained remarkably stable (60%, 27%, 13%, respectively) despite the growth of comprehensives.
- In film, under half (42%) of British winners of the main BAFTAs attended independent schools, over a third (35%) grammar schools and less than a quarter (23%) comprehensives. Looking only at the last 25 years, these proportions have again remained remarkably stable (42%, 33%, 25%, respectively).
- In the international sphere, nearly two thirds (63%) of British Nobel Prize winners were educated privately, one quarter (28%) at grammars and 8% at comprehensives; 63% attended Oxbridge, nearly a third (31%) UK top thirty institutions and the remainder other universities or none (7%).

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There are small signs that this may be slowly changing in certain fields, but these still exhibit stability. For example:

- In law, 76% of top judges had attended private schools in the late 1980s, 75% by the mid-2000s and 74% today. There are now a number of social mobility programmes supported by leading law firms, including Pathways to Law and Prime, and the Solicitors Regulation Authority collects data on solicitors' educational backgrounds.
- In journalism, over 90% of leading editors had attended either private or grammar schools in the mid-1980s. Today, for those in the same positions, this figure is just under 80%.
- In business, partly due to the internationalisation of top posts, the proportion of FTSE 100 chief executives educated at independent schools has fallen from 70% in the late 1980s, to 54% in the late 2000s, to 34% today.
- The current cabinet has fewer privately educated members than the 2010 coalition cabinet (which had 62%), but the proportion (50%) is slightly higher than Tony Blair's cabinet (44%) immediately after the 2005 general election.
- In film, British winners of the major Oscar and BAFTA awards over the last 25 years are slightly more representative of the UK population, in terms of education, than all-time Oscar and BAFTA award winners.

The mechanism by which certain groups reproduce at the top of professions is complex. While the average higher academic grades of private school students are, of course, of great importance, this is not the only contributing factor. Wider research has found that:

- There is a recognised, often subconscious tendency of people to employ others like themselves, which helps to ensure that similar groups remain in power.
- Increasing importance is being attributed by recruiters to 'soft skills', including certain social skills, which are not always as accessible to those from less privileged backgrounds.
- Similarly, those from more privileged backgrounds often have broader professional social networks, which can be used to expedite recruitment into top jobs.
- While educational background is a key concern of recruiters, it is also a proxy for socio-economic class. 'Education blind' and 'name blind' recruitment strategies may ameliorate the former, but they are less effective at masking other deeper inequalities.
- Research has shown that recruiters increasingly value costly extracurricular accomplishments and high quality internships, which are disproportionately available to those from more privileged backgrounds.
- A high proportion of the jobs discussed in this report are based in London. Recent research for the Sutton Trust has found that, given the high cost of rental and property prices in the capital, those from less advantaged backgrounds struggle to move to London to work.

For more details on how 'elite' has been defined in this report, and how analysis groups have been selected, please see the methodology section below. Broadly, where a clear hierarchy exists, such as in the military, judiciary and civil service, this has been followed. Where not, such as in medicine, selections have been made on a case-by-case basis, with the logic behind these explained in detail below.

UK-educated top professionals by school/ university attended, summary

	Profession	School		Profession	University	
		Independent	State		Oxbridge	Other/None
	[UK Population]	7%	93%	[UK Population]	<1%	>99%
Today	Law (Judiciary)	74%	26%	Law (Barristers)	78%	22%
	Law (Barristers)	71%	29%	Law (Judiciary)	74%	26%
	Military	71%	29%	Law (Solicitors)	55%	45%
	Medicine	61%	39%	Journalism	54%	46%
	Journalism	51%	49%	Civil Service	51%	49%
	Law (Solicitors)	51%	49%	Politics (Cabinet)	47%	53%
	Politics (Cabinet)	50%	50%	Medicine	40%	60%
	Civil Service	48%	52%	Business	31%	69%
	Business	34%	66%	Military	14%	86%
All Time	Film (Oscars)	67%	33%	Nobel Prizes	63%	37%
	Nobel Prizes	63%	37%	Film (Oscars)	(Majority of sample did not attend)	
	Film (BAFTAs)	42%	58%	Film (BAFTAs)		
	Pop Music (BRITs)	19%	81%	Pop Music (BRITs)		

Table notes: For further details of sample selection, please see relevant section below. In the military and acting, specialist colleges are often attended after secondary school. Figures for the UK population are author’s calculations based on official government statistics.<sup>1</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Good careers education is essential for young people from all backgrounds. We welcome the establishment of the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) and its development of Careers and Enterprise Coordinators to join-up careers education between schools and businesses in local areas. The CEC should also be resourced and encouraged to trial and identify what works in careers advice for disadvantaged pupils.
2. Good internships are rated highly by top employers, but many are unpaid and so difficult for disadvantaged young people to afford. After four weeks, all interns should be paid the National Living Wage to ensure that disadvantaged young people are not excluded from gaining valuable work experience.
3. The Sutton Trust has pioneered the Open Access scheme, where entry is on the basis of merit not money, which provides low and middle income students access to top independent day schools. This programme should be supported nationally to widen access to leading universities and improve social mobility at the top of the professions.
4. The greater the amount of diversity information that employers publish, the more they can be effectively encouraged to widen access to people from disadvantaged backgrounds. More companies should be encouraged to sign up to the Government's Social Mobility Business Compact, launched in 2011, which should be strengthened to require greater transparency about diversity data – including gender and private/ state education pay gaps – and their recruitment practices.
5. 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 for pupils, such as extra-curricular tuition and innovative learning interventions, which are linked to career development.
6. Highly able pupil premium pupils achieve half a GCSE grade lower, on average, than other highly able pupils, with significant knock-on effects for access to both higher education and leading professions. To address this, the government should develop an effective national programme for highly able state school pupils, with ring-fenced funding to support evidence-based activities and tracking of pupils' progress.
7. Widening participation strategies need to do more than just improve academic achievement; they also need to provide knowledge and experience of possible careers for disadvantaged young people. The Sutton Trust runs a series of 'Pathways' programmes, which increase the participation of disadvantaged young people in law and medicine, amongst other sectors. Employers, universities and third sector partners should be encouraged to work together to develop similar access programmes.

# INTRODUCTION

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Over a decade ago, the Sutton Trust published its first report on the educational backgrounds of the UK's professional elite, looking at the schools and universities attended by top solicitors, barristers and judges.<sup>2</sup> Since then, we have published over ten updates on the educational backgrounds of people at the top of the professions, across a range of sectors. These include members of the House of Commons and House of Lords, leading news journalists, top medical professionals, FTSE 100 chief executives, university vice-chancellors, leading scientists and scholars and a selection of the most famous people in the arts.<sup>3</sup> Across the years, these reports have shown the staying-power of the privately-educated at the top of the UK's professional hierarchy. Even when those with such backgrounds retire from the top of their field, they are frequently replaced by those with a similar educational past. In this report, these results are updated.

Specifically, the report outlines the educational backgrounds of elites within the following areas:

1. [Military](#)
2. [Medicine](#)
3. [Politics](#)
4. [Civil Service](#)
5. [Journalism](#)
6. [Business](#)
7. [Law](#)
8. [Music](#)
9. [Film](#)
10. [Nobel Prizes](#)

These groups have been selected for four reasons: first, they provide a representative overview of the nation's most prestigious jobs; second, many of these areas are funded by the public purse, meaning that there is a particular necessity for the demographics of their senior workforce to be available to the general public; third, many of these have previously been considered by the Trust, meaning that comparison can be made across time; and fourth, since the Trust first published on this topic, there have been frequent requests from the media and general public for research into these particular sectors.

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Broadly, groups 1-4 work in the public sector, groups 5-7 work in the private sector and groups 8-10 are prize winners. There are exceptions, including the BBC in journalism and the judiciary in law, but these groupings explain the report's order.

In addition to presenting the results of this research, the report also offers a select overview of the secondary literature on the educational backgrounds of UK elites. Again, since the Sutton Trust first looked at this area, many other organisations, including the media and government bodies, have contributed to the debate, and an overview of their findings is presented in this section, along with the Sutton Trust's own previous work.

In the same section, the latest research on the mechanism by which those who possess elite educations progress into elite jobs is discussed. The main finding of this literature is that there are qualities instilled by an elite education, apart from academic skills, which appear to be highly valued by employers. It is these factors that, in part, explain why students from a select group of schools and universities continue to be disproportionately represented amongst the UK's top jobs and which often hinder efforts at more diverse recruitment. Elite jobs are not secured solely through academic achievement or 'old boys' or girls' networks'. It is the complex interplay between these factors, amongst others, including what have been called 'soft skills' (such as confidence and aspiration) and social capital (the quantity and quality of social networks and opportunities that one has access to), which means that from generation to generation the nation's top jobs have been disproportionately populated by those who attended independent schools and Oxbridge; often in tandem.<sup>4</sup>

Why is this a problem? The over-representation in many of these fields of those with particular backgrounds shows that there are limits to the scope of social mobility in the UK. It is the nation's highest-ranked military officers who conduct the country's wars; the nation's judiciary who form the basis for the country's legal development and governance; the nation's journalists who affect what the population is told, in what form and when. It is demonstrably inequitable that one's chances of acquiring such posts should be affected by factors that are beyond individual and familial influence, especially when, in some cases, they cannot be ameliorated by academic achievement alone. In other words, this report shows that hard work, at least in the UK workplace, can only get one so far. Educational background is certainly not the only determinant of a person's views and perspective, but it is an element of this and the homogeneity of socio-



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demographic backgrounds exhibited in many of the sectors discussed here suggests that some groups are being afforded prominence over others.

Political leaders and other policymakers have recognised this challenge. In response to former prime minister John Major's statement in 2013 that, "In every single sphere of British influence, the upper echelons of power... are held overwhelmingly by the privately educated or the affluent middle class", current prime minister David Cameron concurred: "Look at the make-up of Parliament, the judiciary, the army, the media... there's not as much social mobility as there needs to be... Just opening the door and saying we're in favour of equality of opportunity – that's not enough."<sup>5</sup> Both Labour and Conservative-led governments have given increasing prominence to social mobility, notably with the support of former health secretary Alan Milburn, initially as the social mobility tsar and more recently as head of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. Milburn was originally appointed by former Labour PM, Gordon Brown, as part of the former prime minister's pledge to "unleash a wave of social mobility" to directly challenge elitism in the professions.<sup>6</sup>

### Elite education, elite career: The educational background of UK elites

In the UK, there are about 8.4 million school students, of whom a little under 600,000 (approximately 7%) attend private schools.<sup>7</sup> This figure rises to about 14% when looking solely at sixth form students.<sup>8</sup> Of the 1.4 million full-time undergraduates, about 23,000 (less than 2%) attend either Oxford or Cambridge universities.<sup>9</sup> They represent a small, even tiny minority of the national student population. The preponderance of former private school and Oxbridge students in the UK's top jobs, however, is far greater than these proportions. While we would obviously expect our best universities to produce many of our leading professionals, access to Oxbridge and other leading Russell Group universities is linked to an independent or grammar school education, inaccessible to many.<sup>10</sup> Drawing attention to the high number of Oxbridge alumni amongst the top ranks of UK professions is not intended as a criticism of these excellent universities; one of the challenges that these universities face in tackling under-representation is academic achievement at school level.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the Sutton Trust runs programmes with both universities to improve access, and the universities themselves spend nearly £16m a year on such programmes. But the equally high proportions of alumni educated at UK private schools does suggest that, despite such programmes, the pathway to these top professions, which often incorporates Oxbridge, is still disproportionately accessible to some young people rather than others, which is why university background has been highlighted here.<sup>12</sup>

*Who's Who*, "the essential directory of the noteworthy and influential in every area of public life", provides some illustrative examples.<sup>13</sup> Of those listed in the directory, about 3% attended Eton College; an extraordinary figure for a school that educates about 0.04% of the UK's secondary student population as a whole. And the most recent figures from Eton suggest that 30% of their students go on to study at Oxbridge.<sup>14</sup> Ten private schools combined (Eton, Charterhouse, Harrow, Rugby, Marlborough, Westminster, St Paul's, Wellington, Ampleforth, Stowe) account for 8% of the secondary educations of those listed on *Who's Who*, but combined they educate less than 0.3% of secondary school students. Other research by the Sutton Trust has found that, "100 elite schools composed of 87 independent schools [including the majority of those above] and 13 grammar schools – just 3% of schools with sixth forms and sixth form colleges in the UK – accounted for over a tenth (11.2%) of admissions to highly selective universities", and that, "100 elite schools – making up 3% of schools with sixth forms and sixth form colleges in the UK – accounted for just under a third (31.9%) of admissions to Oxbridge".<sup>15</sup> Of all the educational qualifications recorded for all the entrants listed in *Who's Who*, about one quarter were awarded

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by either Oxford or Cambridge universities, with the most represented colleges from each being Balliol and Trinity, respectively.

The statistical overrepresentation in the major professions of private school and Oxbridge alumni, though, is not restricted to the pages of elite directories; it spans British political, legal, civil, cultural, sporting and even spiritual life. The Sutton Trust's previous research has found that amongst a host of professions, a disproportionate number of those at the very top attended private schools and Oxbridge.<sup>16</sup> The top of the judiciary, the legal profession, and civil and diplomatic services, are amongst the most heavily populated by students who attended Oxbridge; the top of medicine, law and the military by those that attended private schools. In business and the military, a relatively high proportion of elites did not attend university, so it is possible that, for these groups, secondary school assumes a greater importance. At the other end of the spectrum, the Sutton Trust's research has shown that the police and pop musicians are much less likely than these other groups to have attended private school, and that a relatively small proportion attended university.<sup>17</sup> The reasons for these differences are complex, and discussed later in this report, in the context of its updated figures.

Outside of the sectors discussed later in this report, how do other areas of the UK's political and cultural life fare? This section briefly examines fields that are not analysed later. While attendance at the Church of England is diminishing, it remains an institution of considerable cultural and political import.<sup>18</sup> In the House of Lords, 26 Lords Spiritual (bishops of the Church of England) sit unelected.<sup>19</sup> And last year, the *Church Times* published a list of the educational backgrounds of serving Anglican bishops. The Archbishop of Canterbury himself attended Eton and of the remaining bishops half (50%) attended private schools, over a third (36%) attended a grammar school and 13% went to a comprehensive school.<sup>20</sup> Nearly half studied at Oxbridge.<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere, "Privately educated people dominate the top echelons of the honours system as much as they did 60 years ago", recent research by *The Times* has found.<sup>22</sup> "Nearly half of the recipients of knighthoods and above in 2015 attended public school... The figure – 46 per cent – has hardly changed since 1955, when it was 50 per cent... People who attended either Oxford or Cambridge also feature strongly on the list of those given top honours. This year, in the Queen's birthday and new year lists, 27 per cent of the people who received knighthoods or damehoods, or were appointed Companion of Honour or Order of Merit, went to the universities. That is higher than the 18 per cent of 1955 and almost as high as the 29 per cent of 1965."<sup>23</sup>

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In sport, the picture appears more mixed, albeit it should be noted that, with sample sizes being so small, trends are difficult to identify. Of the 31 man squad that contested the 2015 rugby union world cup for England, 20 were educated at private schools, 10 at state and one abroad. By contrast, the 2003 rugby union world cup winning side possessed 11 players who had attended fee-paying schools, 18 state schools and two foreign schools.<sup>24</sup> As of April 2015, 73% of England's test cricket team had attended private schools.<sup>25</sup> During the 2005 Ashes series, "it was the other way around: nine of the 12 players used in that series went to state schools."<sup>26</sup> Of the UK medallists at the 2012 Olympic Games in London, 41% were educated privately.<sup>27</sup>

As you might expect, given the traditional class distinctions in British sport, figures for the England national football team are quite different. Of the 2014 world cup squad, 13% attended private school.<sup>28</sup> Of the starting XI who contested England's most recent competitive match at the time of writing, 10 attended state schools and only one (Calum Chambers of Arsenal, who attended Churcher's College in Hampshire), independent school.<sup>29</sup> The disproportion across sport in other spheres, though, led Ofsted to state in 2014 that, "The government should ensure that the national strategy for improving competitive sport in maintained secondary schools and academies has a specific focus on improving the proportions of athletes reaching elite levels from state schools."<sup>30</sup>

It is not only at the very top and most visible of professions that the privately educated are statistically over-represented when compared to the proportions of students nationally. Research by the Centre for Market and Public Organisation, based on data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, has shown that privately-educated students are more likely to enter top occupations more generally than their state school peers; with 'top occupation' defined through the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) system.<sup>31</sup> "Even when accounting for differences in how well the graduates have done in terms of attainment there is still a sizeable difference in entry to top occupations by the type of school attended", the report stated.<sup>32</sup> "Comparing a like-for-like privately educated graduate to a state school graduate with the same prior attainment from the same institution and the same post-graduate qualifications, the private school graduate is 2.5 percentage points... more likely to work in a top NS-SEC occupation 3.5 years after graduation than the state school graduate."<sup>33</sup> Thus, "attending a private school has an additional advantage, over and above, demographic differences, the prior attainment of graduates, their choice of institution and selection into post-graduate education."<sup>34</sup>

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## Reproducing privilege: Challenges for social mobility

By what mechanism do those from more advantaged backgrounds disproportionately come to work in the nation's most prestigious and well remunerated professions? As mentioned, the higher academic achievement of private school students, on average, is an important factor. In addition, the aforementioned Centre for Market and Public Organisation suggests that, "possible explanations may include differences in unmeasured human capital (non-cognitive skills), differences in cultural capital (conversation topics in interviews) and differences in financial capital allowing the privately educated graduate a longer period of job search."<sup>35</sup> The importance of these 'intangible' qualities (especially the first two), more often associated with private than state education for several reasons, situated within the wider inequalities of UK society, is remarked upon elsewhere in the literature.<sup>36</sup> While the average exam results of independent school pupils are higher than the average of state school students, and Oxford and Cambridge almost always top UK university league tables, it is not simply that higher academic achievement is being rewarded in the workplace.<sup>37</sup> Nor, as the other common argument goes, does an 'old boys' or girls' network' (social capital) ensure that students from the same institutions always rise to the top of the career ladder. Both of these factors are contributory, of course, but the latest research suggests that there are other factors at play, with non-academic skills and extra-curricular achievements being important. As Ashley et al. have found, "elite firms define 'talent' according to a number of factors such as drive, resilience, strong communication skills and above all confidence and 'polish', which... can be mapped on to middle-class status and socialisation."<sup>38</sup>

In a similar vein in the US context, Lauren Rivera has found that amongst candidates for positions at top-tier investment banks, law firms and management consultancy firms, several characteristics are particularly sought by recruiters.<sup>39</sup> These include the prestige of university attended (with actual degree grade of less importance) and the kinds of extra-curricular activities undertaken. Students from particular universities are given precedence over others, even if the latter have higher grades in the same subject. And extra-curricular activities are also ranked by social prestige, with sports that require high participation costs (squash, polo, rowing, etc.) usually being favoured by recruiters over others. In one case, Rivera notes how a candidate who expressed an extra-curricular interest in karaoke was ignored because of this, but not before their CV had been circulated amongst recruiters for its 'comedic value'. It has been found that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds often focus on their academic work at

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university, rather than other pursuits. Ironically, as Rivera states, this may disadvantage them in terms of career potential, because they acquire fewer 'soft skills'.<sup>40</sup>

In this way, it is suggested that there exists an employment premium attached to elite schools and universities above and beyond the curricular education that they provide. This prestige means that their students, even if they acquire lower or comparable academic grades, are frequently preferred to higher-achieving candidates from other universities of lesser prestige. As mentioned, this is not to say that Oxbridge does not provide some of the highest quality undergraduate courses in the country, but that the advantages accrued to their graduates go beyond this high quality teaching.

Findings regarding extra-curricular activities also suggest that those from higher socio-economic backgrounds have other advantages; again, irrespective of their academic credentials. Scholarships are awarded to attend private schools and the nation's best universities, but there are very few available to undertake internships or participate in prestigious sports with high entry costs.<sup>41</sup> Recent research in the UK, including by the Sutton Trust, has also suggested that non-cognitive skills, including confidence, aspiration and ambition, are more likely to be possessed by those who come from higher socio-economic groups and by those who attend private schools.<sup>42</sup> And that these, too, are often highly prized by employers. Again, these raise broader questions of inequality in UK society, beyond the immediate remit of this report, but are important to consider in any discussion of access.

The importance of these non-cognitive skills is highlighted in non-academic commentaries on private school privilege, too. Why are Old Etonians, for example, so over-represented amongst the most influential people in Britain? A student at Eton suggests that, "It might be to do with the fabled quality of Etonian charm – or as it's sometimes called, the ability to 'oil'. And no, it's not on the curriculum [...] With the support of your tutor, your housemaster and your 'dame' [a matron responsible for students' physical wellbeing]... you gradually develop correct etiquette – what to write on a thank-you letter, how to shine in a university interview and, most significantly, how to socialise."<sup>43</sup> Of course, such statements are anecdotal, and must be aligned with the other qualities of social privilege that are engendered by an Eton education – Eton students do not disproportionately end-up in the nation's top jobs simply because they are articulate – but they undoubtedly form part of a complex picture of inequality in the UK.

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Ashley et al. have also noted that there are 'demand-side', as well as 'supply-side' factors in the perpetuation of privilege. This includes how employers understand the notion of 'talent'. In their words, "Unless elite firms further interrogate their own notions of talent, it is likely that those who participate in access schemes will continue to face barriers to entry and progression. Even greater progress would be made if firms reflected further on those characteristics which represent 'talent', and minimised those aspects of their current recruitment and selection strategies which tend to reproduce their existing work forces."<sup>44</sup>

What does this all mean for social mobility? It suggests that there are limitations to the efficacy of 'name blind' and 'education blind' recruitment policies, which have recently come to prominence, although these are an important first step.<sup>45</sup> And in this sense, Bathmaker et al. have explained well how some social mobility policies may need to be revisited in the years ahead:

*Whilst previously the arguments on social reproduction through education have focused on differential educational outcomes it is our argument that with shifts in access to education, when the playing field appears to have been levelled for some people (i.e. even when working-class young people make it to higher education) advantage is maintained through a shift in the rules of the game. The game is no longer just about educational advantage based on quality of degree... This has implications for HE policy and widening participation strategies and suggests a need for universities to address maximising the experience of university and actively providing opportunities to have 'more than just a degree' in order to begin to address the equity challenges currently facing working-class young people.<sup>46</sup>*

### Selecting and tracing the UK's professional elite

One of the most important questions for research of this kind is: whom to select? For many of the professions outlined here, there is a recognised and preeminent hierarchy, which has been used to select individuals for analysis (the military, for example, possesses an obvious rank and structure). Where this has not been possible, the report defers to experts in the field or transparent approaches, so that the reader is informed about how the selections have been made, the research is replicable whenever possible and comparison can be made in the future. Methodological choices are explained in further detail in each section.

As an overview, the following groups have been considered in this report: for the military, two-star generals and above (n=100); for medical professionals, working-age fellows of the Royal College of Physicians (the largest and oldest of its type) listed in *Who's Who* (n=98); for journalists, a selection of leading professionals in the field, based upon deliberation by experts with professional experience (n=100); for chief executives, those at FTSE 100 companies (n=100); for civil servants, those listed as senior civil servants by the directory, *Dods People* (n=149); for legal professionals, judges who sit on the Appeals and High Courts (n=147), Chambers 2015's list of their top 100 QCs (n=100), and top partners at 'magic circle' firms (n=128); and for those in the arts, prize winners who were born in the UK (BRITs, n=48; Classic BRITs, n=33; BAFTAs, n=81; Oscars, n=41; Nobel Prizes, n=79). Research for this report has profiled over 1,200 individuals, which has been supplemented with diversity publications from various organisations and previous work by the Sutton Trust. These provide summary data for employment sectors that has been used to corroborate and extend the report's original analysis.

With respect to data acquisition, the internet provides a valuable if unwieldy resource for tracing the educational qualifications of those on the lists above. Where possible, data has been collected through the *Who's Who*, *Debrett's* and *Dods People* directories, the collections of which have been invaluable to this research and are duly noted. For those people not listed within these directories, news media, personal websites and social networking websites have enabled the further population of lists. Personal email enquiry has also been used, where appropriate.

Of course, it has not been possible to acquire 100% coverage of those identified for this research, but 75% coverage of schooling has been achieved for the vast majority of samples and at least 90% coverage of university attendance.<sup>47</sup> The remainder either could not be located or



information has been withheld from the public domain. At this point, it should be noted that some of those profiled here will have been scholarship students, whose attendance at some of the nation’s elite educational institutions was not necessarily dependent on a privileged background. It is important to bear in mind, therefore, that as with any work of this nature there are limits to what can be achieved. These limits are applied by the availability and accessibility of information that, except in those cases where openness is stipulated by legislation or regulation, has no mandatory requirement to be published. Certainly, for those professions funded by the public purse, it is hoped that greater transparency will be provided in the future; improving the quantity and quality of data. Indeed, while it cannot be evidenced fully, anecdotal findings suggest that the majority of those who do not disclose their educational background online choose not to do so because it would identify them as privately-educated; a characteristic that often sits uneasily with the kinds of diversity agenda discussed in this report. It is possible, therefore, that the proportions of those educated at fee-paying schools are higher than this report can confidently claim.<sup>48</sup>

In the report’s figures, the following abbreviations are used:

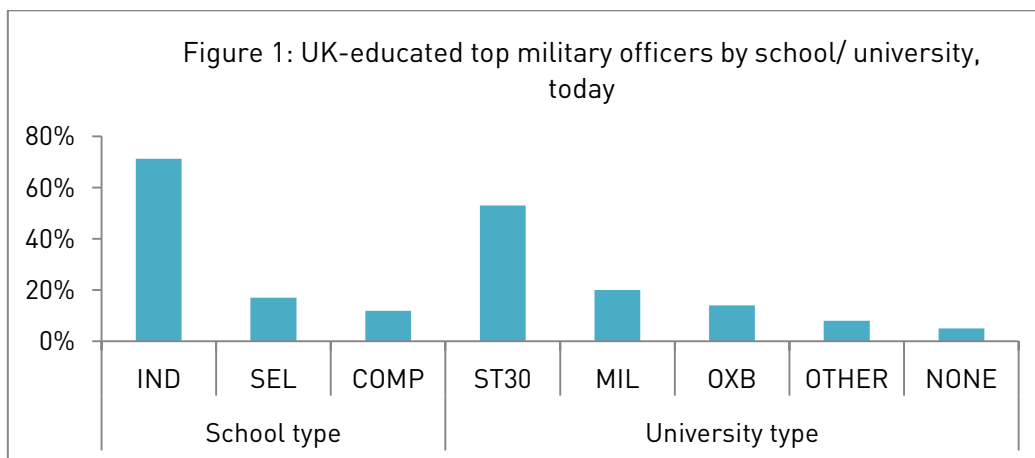
Secondary education		Higher education	
IND	Independent	OXB	Oxbridge
SEL	Selective (grammars, direct grant grammars to 1976)	ST30	Sutton Trust’s 30 highest-ranked universities <sup>49</sup>
COMP	Comprehensive	OTHER	Other UK universities
		MIL	Military colleges

## The educational backgrounds of the UK's professional elite

### 1. Military

Historically, the officer class in the British armed forces has been the preserve of the aristocracy, populated by those of “high social position, holding large possessions”.<sup>50</sup> Amongst other reasons, this reflected the vested interests of political elites, the logic being that if the military was controlled by the powerful and landed, “then there was little danger of the officers coming to constitute a political challenge to the *status quo*.”<sup>51</sup>

While the relevance of such political reasoning has obviously receded, the legacy of this arrangement, in terms of the constitution of the military at the highest levels, has remained remarkably stable: military officers, especially of the highest-rank, still herald disproportionately from the social ‘elite’. Looking at generals of two-star standing and above (derived from the MoD’s annual transparency data on the roles and salaries of their senior officers), there is a statistical over-representation of the privately educated.<sup>52</sup> Some 71% of top military officers attended independent schools, 17% grammar schools and 12% comprehensive schools.



With regard to higher education, about one in seven (14%) of the UK’s top officers attended Oxbridge. It should be noted, though, that post-18 education routes in the military are different from the other professions discussed here and plural. The proportion provided for those that attended military colleges refers to officers for whom this appeared to be their only form of post-18 education. Some of those that studied at civilian universities, though, then went on to military colleges. As the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst has stated, “More than 80 percent of officer cadets are university graduates, but some arrive with A-levels or equivalents. Others are serving soldiers who have been selected for officer training”.<sup>53</sup> In addition, some of the officers in this

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sample joined the military immediately after secondary school, served for several years, before becoming officers and undertaking further study.

Given that officers of the highest rank have generally been in the service for some time, might it be that the balance observed for the current officer elite changes with newer recruits to the forces? The evidence suggests not. According to the most recent figures on the intake of officer cadets to Sandhurst, nearly half (47%) were educated at independent schools.<sup>54</sup> And this is the entire officer class, not only those at the top of the military hierarchy.

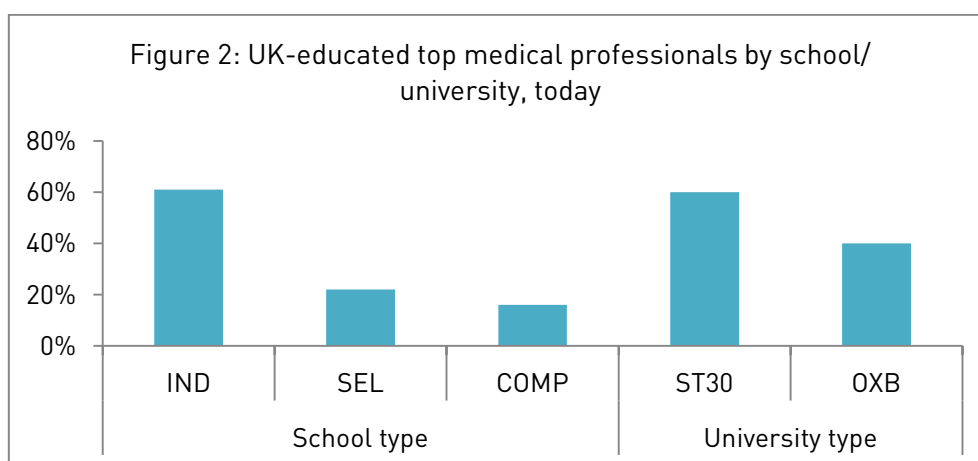
These figures are placed into even starker relief when they are compared to the socio-economic backgrounds of regular soldiers. The Ministry of Defence does not publish data regularly on this topic, but the House of Commons Defence Select Committee has previously stated that, "While roughly 45% of all young people leave school with 5 GCSE subjects graded A-C only, 17% of all Army recruits... had English at A-C level".<sup>55</sup> Of a sample analysis of the same group, nearly 70% were found to have come from a broken home, over 60% had left school with no qualifications and half were described as coming from a deprived background.<sup>56</sup> Using education as a proxy, the disparity in the socio-economic backgrounds of military personnel between the highest and lowest ranks is significant.

In 2014, a freedom of information request was made to the Ministry of Defence, asking for: "A list of Senior Officers of the British Armed forces, including... their current post... their socio-economic background... whether they attended a fee-paying school... whether they attended university and whether they were the first in their family to attend University... whether they attended Oxford or Cambridge University."<sup>57</sup> In response, the MoD claimed that, "the Department does not hold information about socio-economic background or education."<sup>58</sup> Given such disparities, it is to be hoped that ministry will begin to collect such information in the future.

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## 2. Medicine

In 2009, the Sutton Trust analysed a sample of 100 medical professionals, all of whom held positions on the councils of royal medical colleges and other representative bodies of the medical profession. Of this sample, over half (51%) had attended independent schools, nearly one third (32%) grammar schools and the remainder comprehensives (17%); the same constitution as data from 1987. It should be noted that these are samples, so while they are representative of the years in question, direct comparison between the two years provides an approximation of change only. The samples suggest, though, that a disproportionate number of top medical professionals attended private schools.



This year, the methodology has been adjusted and derived from the directory, *Who's Who*. This considers working-age professionals listed in the directory, with fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians; the largest and oldest of the medical colleges.<sup>59</sup> Fellowships are conferred only on leading doctors, where it can be demonstrated that, "The candidate has made significant impact on the service in the field of their appointment".<sup>60</sup> Of the sample educated in the UK, nearly two thirds (61%) attended independent schools, 22% were educated at grammar schools and 16% attended comprehensives. Of those that studied at UK universities, 40% attended Oxbridge and 60% went to ST30 universities. None of the sample educated at UK universities (approximately 95% of the total) attended universities other than those that the Sutton Trust ranks as being in the top thirty nationally, of which most are in the Russell Group. Again, methodological differences mean that precise comparison across time cannot be made to figures in the previous paragraph.

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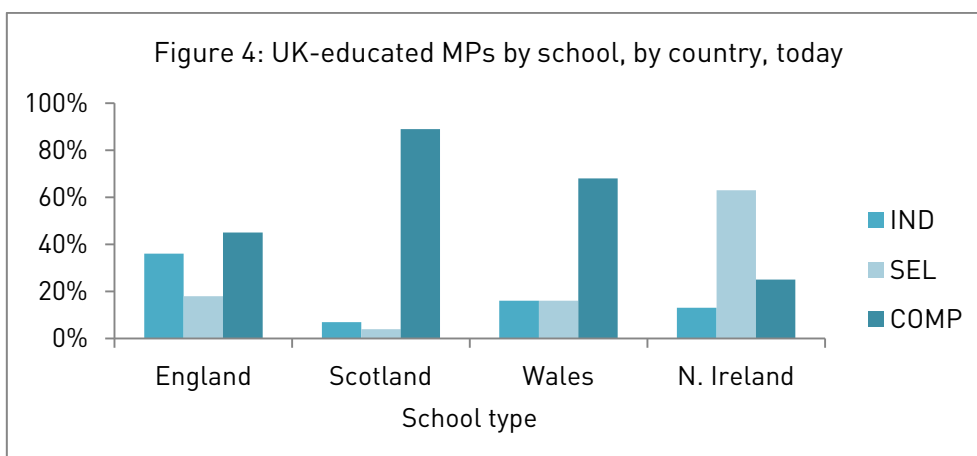
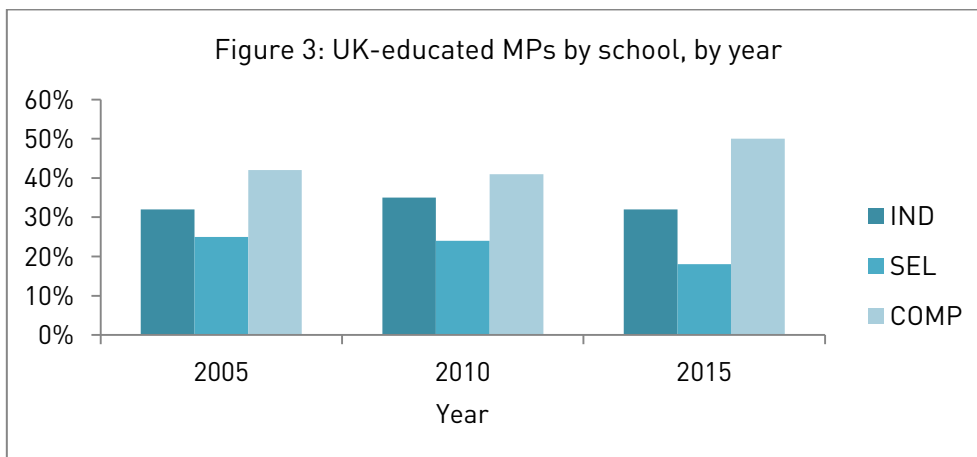
Again, it needs to be mentioned that we would, of course, expect (and desire) the nation's doctors to train at the best universities, with the highest-performing medical departments; nor are these trends any reflection on the individuals that have acquired these positions. What is more significant here is that a private school education seems to be one of the most useful prerequisites for attending these universities and then rising to the top of the medical profession and that this, as mentioned, is only available to a small minority of the UK population.

With reference to the current data, is there likely to be change in the future? In 2013, the General Medical Council published a series of findings regarding the socio-economic and educational backgrounds of all doctors in postgraduate training in the UK. Of those that had completed their secondary and tertiary education in the UK, it found that nearly 40% had attended a non-selective state school and over one third independent schools. Nearly a quarter attended a state school that was selective on the basis of academic credentials, faith or other grounds. Nearly 85% did not receive free school meals when studying and nearly 80% came from households that had never received income support. While the university attended by each was not published, nearly two thirds had a parent or guardian who had completed a university degree or the equivalent.<sup>61</sup> Given that these are findings from across the medical profession, not only those at the very top, it appears that the prominence of the privately-educated is set to continue over the coming years.<sup>62</sup>

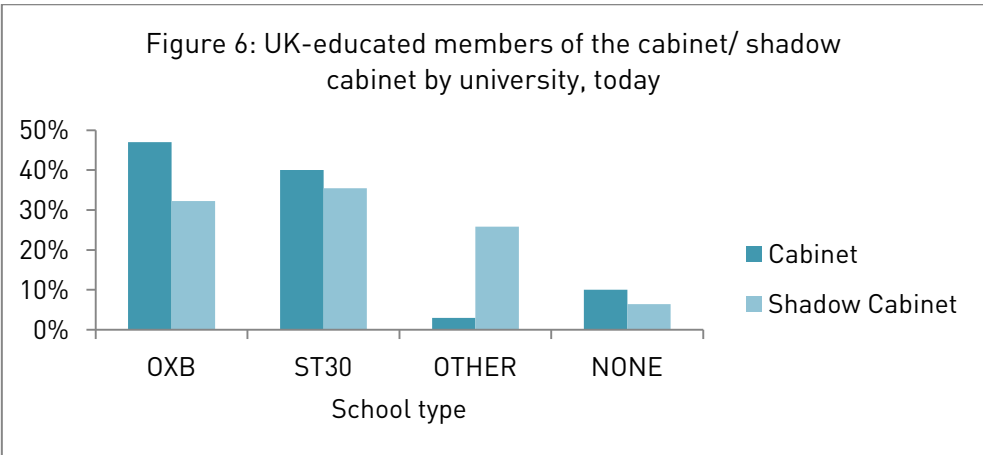
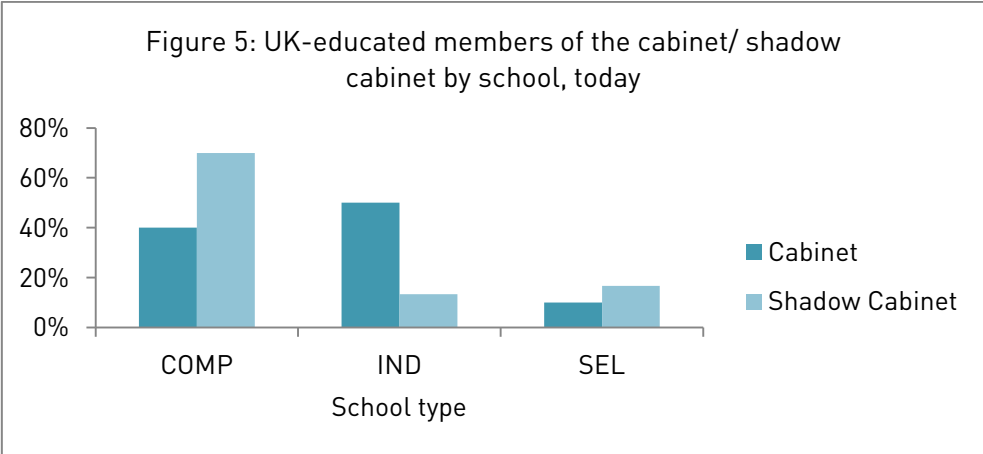
The Sutton Trust is working to change this through its Pathways to Medicine programme, in partnership with Imperial College London, Health Education England and the Medical Schools Council. "Aimed at non-privileged students in state schools and colleges, the programme offers support from year 11 throughout the two sixth form years. The Pathways to Medicine activities support both academic work, so that students achieve the grades needed for highly competitive medical school places, as well as providing other support – such as work placement, a mentor in the profession, and soft skills sessions – which will help young people to make a strong and informed application to study medicine."<sup>63</sup>

### 3. Politics<sup>64</sup>

Prior to the 2015 general election, the Sutton Trust analysed the educational backgrounds of prospective parliamentary candidates. It found that, “31% of parliamentary candidates have attended private school – compared with 7% of the UK population”, “19% of candidates graduated from Oxford or Cambridge universities – compared with less than 1% of the general population”, and “55% of candidates attended Russell Group universities – compared with around 10% of the general population”.<sup>65</sup> As with previous research by the Sutton Trust in this area, “the chances of being in a position to be elected to government are much higher for those few people fortunate enough to have attended fee-paying independent schools [...] the selection of the public’s future representatives in government is strongly tilted toward a narrow slice of privately educated elite university graduates.”<sup>66</sup>



The same analysis has been undertaken for elected members of the House of Commons after the 2015 general election. Almost a third (32%) of MPs in the new parliament were privately educated, a slight improvement on 2010 when 35% of MPs had been to a fee-paying school; 50% attended comprehensives and 18% grammar schools.<sup>67</sup> Of all UK-educated MPs, 26% attended Oxbridge. When disaggregated by political party, nearly half (48%) of Conservative MPs are alumni of independent schools, compared to 16% of Labour MPs and 8% of SNP MPs.<sup>68</sup> There has been change since 1979, when nearly three quarters of Conservative MPs attended private schools, but the House is still disproportionately served by those from some of the most privileged educational backgrounds.<sup>69</sup> It might also be noted that the proportion of Labour MPs who were educated at private schools has actually increased over the last five years from 14% to 16%.<sup>70</sup>



Of the current cabinet, a little under half (47%) attended Oxbridge and the proportion who were privately educated (50%) was lower than in the first coalition cabinet of 2010 (62%).<sup>71</sup> How does the shadow cabinet compare? There have been claims that new leader of the opposition, Jeremy

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Corbyn, has 'purged' the Oxbridge set from his shadow cabinet.<sup>72</sup> But of the shadow cabinet, 32% attended Oxbridge, 35% attended ST30 universities, a little more than one quarter (26%) went to other UK universities and 6%, including the leader of the opposition himself, did not graduate from university. In terms of secondary schooling, 13% attended independent schools, 17% grammars and 70% comprehensives. While the schools attended by Jeremy Corbyn's shadow cabinet are more representative of the nation than MPs as a whole (and especially the actual cabinet), the proportion that attended Oxbridge is slightly higher than the average for the House of Commons. Again, with cabinets and shadow cabinets sample sizes are small, and proportions can change significantly, even with relatively minor reshuffles.

In addition to educational backgrounds, the professional backgrounds of MPs have changed markedly over recent decades. "Since 1979 the number of MPs who were former manual workers decreased from around 16% of all MPs in 1979 to 3% in 2015. The proportion of MPs with a background in one of the 'traditional' professions has also fallen, from 45% in 1979 to 31% in 2015. Within this category the proportion of former school teachers and former barristers has declined while the proportion of former solicitors has risen."<sup>73</sup> There has also been an increase in MPs solely with political experience. "As the established professions have declined they have been replaced by MPs from other non-manual occupations. Particularly notable is the growth in the number of MPs who come to Westminster already with previous political experience. In 1979 3% of MPs from the main parties were previously politicians/ political organisers, compared to 17% in 2015."<sup>74</sup>



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#### 4. Civil Service

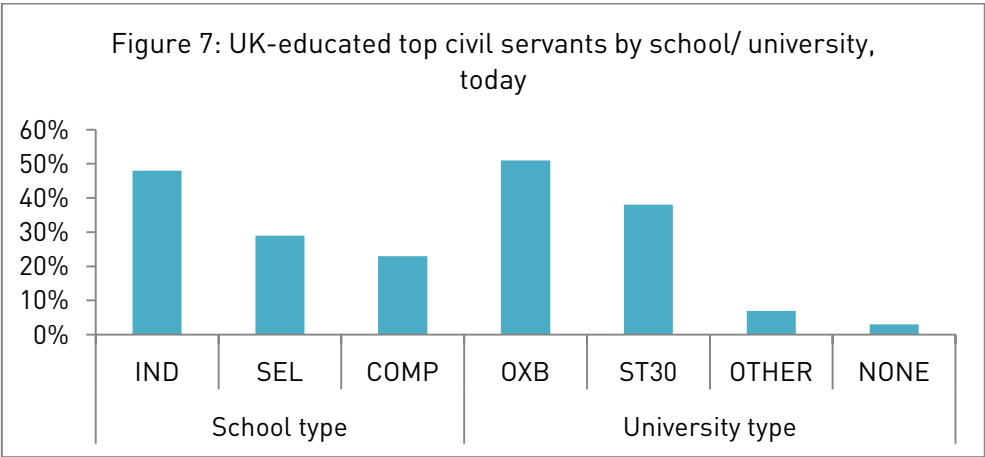
In recent years, Whitehall has started publishing data on the socio-economic background of those within the senior civil service. The Cabinet Office survey states that, “54% of respondents attended a non-selective state school and 19% a selective state school”, “10% of respondents attended an independent school and had assistance with fees, and 13% attended an independent school and did not receive assistance with their fees.”<sup>75</sup> According to the report, “a core and longstanding principle of the Civil Service is that recruitment must be based on merit, regardless of background... we must ensure that every talented, committed and hard-working person has the opportunity to rise to the top, whatever their background and whoever they are.”<sup>76</sup> This is the first in a planned series of reports, so time comparison is not possible as yet. That such reports are planned, though, will enable comparison in the future and is a promising sign of commitment to diversity.

As part of the civil service’s annual report on Fast Stream, its graduate development programme, data on the educational background of recruits has also been published. The most recent iteration of this report states that, “65 per cent of successful applicants were educated in state schools. A total of 22 per cent were educated in independent schools, the same as the previous year [2013]. The remainder were educated abroad or declined to provide information.”<sup>77</sup> As one might expect, this is similar to data for those within the senior civil service and provides an indication of the educational backgrounds of future leaders of the civil service. According to both the survey of the senior civil service above, and this survey of the Fast Stream, about three times as many respondents attended independent schools as in the general student population.

Unsurprisingly, given these figures, the recent (February, 2016) Bridge Group report on socio-economic diversity in the civil service Fast Stream, found that, “in relation to socio-economic diversity, the Fast Stream is unrepresentative of the population at large. To put this in context, the profile of the intake is less diverse than the student population at the University of Oxford.”<sup>78</sup> Only 4.4% of successful applicants to the Fast Stream are from the poorest backgrounds.<sup>79</sup> In response to the report, the cabinet office announced that new measures to improve social mobility would include, “rolling out name-blind recruitment across the public sector to make sure that jobs are awarded on merit alone”, “publishing the pay ratio of the salaries between the median and highest paid employees”, “taking graduate recruitment outside of London by

establishing regional assessment centres” and “urging Britain’s major employers to take a similar approach to inequality.”<sup>80</sup>

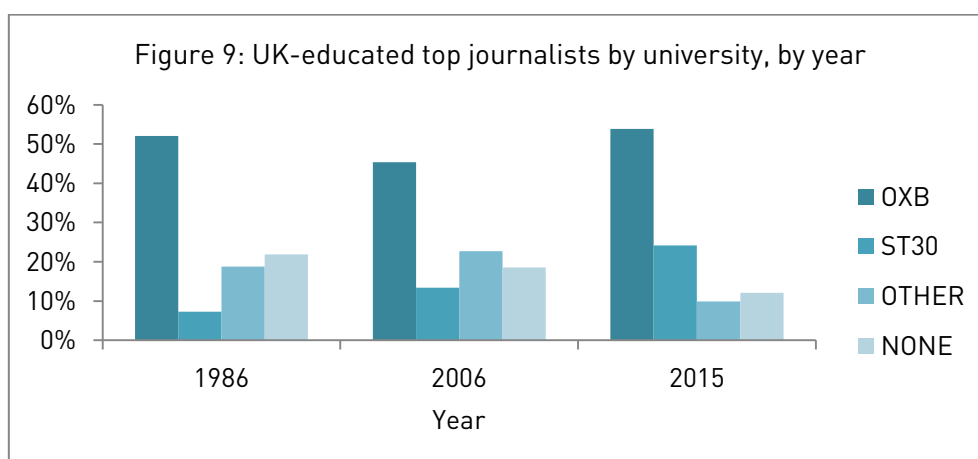
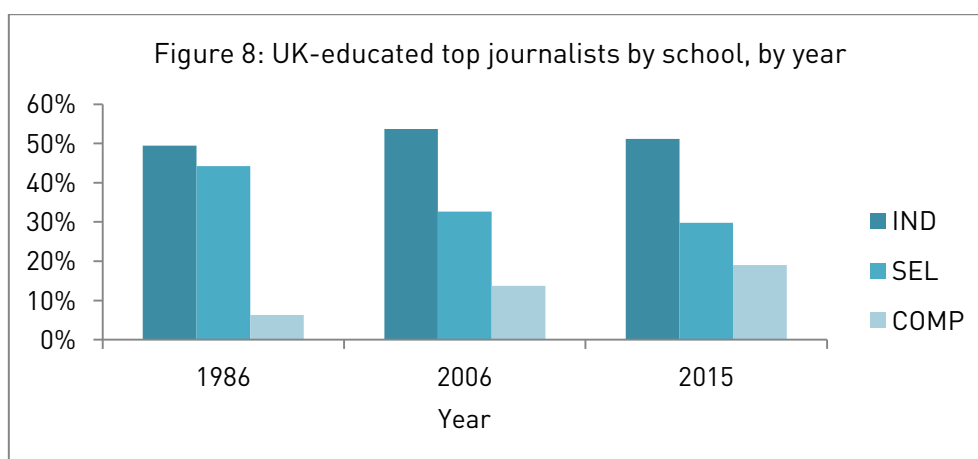
Outside of the Fast Stream, how do things stand at the very highest levels of the civil service? Last year, an analysis was made of the UK’s permanent secretaries (the most senior civil servants of government departments) and top diplomats (heads of UK missions abroad, including embassies and high commissions). The analysis found that 55% of permanent secretaries had attended private schools and 57% had graduated from Oxbridge; for senior diplomats, 53% and 50% respectively.<sup>81</sup> The proportions at the very top of the civil service, therefore, appear quite different from the senior civil service as a whole, with a higher percentage having attended private schools.



This year, considering those listed as top senior civil servants (n=149) on the political directory, *Dods People*, the results suggest that just under half (48%) of those educated in the UK had attended private school, nearly a third a grammar school (29%) and the remainder comprehensives (23%). With regard to higher education, over half had attended Oxbridge (51%), over a third ST30 institutions (38%) and a small minority other UK universities (7%) or no university at all (3%). As with the report mentioned in the previous paragraph, at the very top of the civil service about half of civil servants have attended private schools.

## 5. Journalism

In 2006, the Sutton Trust first analysed the educational backgrounds of a list of the UK's top 100 journalists. Of the sample, it was found that, "Over half (54%) of the country's leading news journalists were educated in private schools".<sup>82</sup> This was similar to a sample of 20 years earlier, which found that 49% of top journalists had had a fee-paying education.<sup>83</sup> With respect to university attended, "Overall 45% of the leading journalists in 2006 – or 56% of those who went to university – attended Oxbridge. This is slightly lower than in 1986, when the equivalent figures were 52% of the total, and 67% of university graduates."<sup>84</sup> This year, of the Sutton Trust's top 100 journalists that were educated in the UK, 51% attended private schools, 30% grammars and 19% comprehensives. Of the same sample, 54% attended Oxbridge, just under a quarter (24%) ST30 universities, 10% other UK universities and the remainder (12%) did not attend university.<sup>85</sup>



It is important to note that this is a subjective top 100 that should not be used to make an exact comparison across time, although indicative trends can be provided, as per above. The challenge

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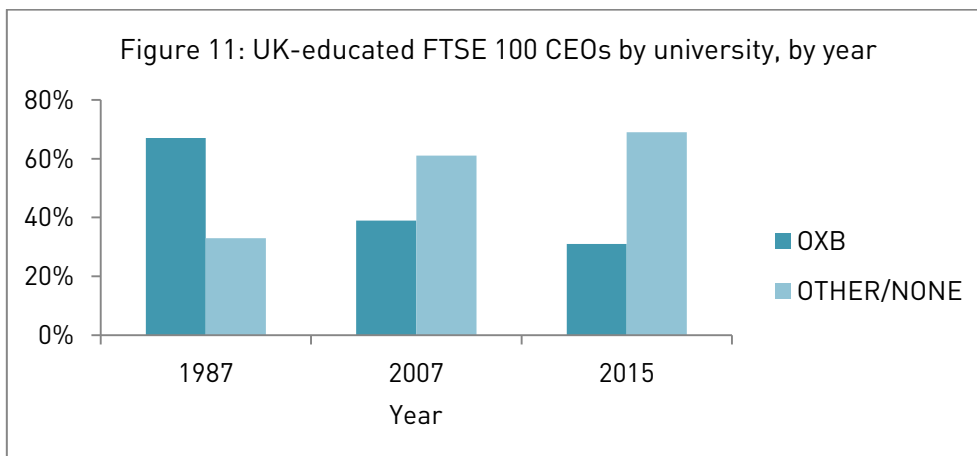
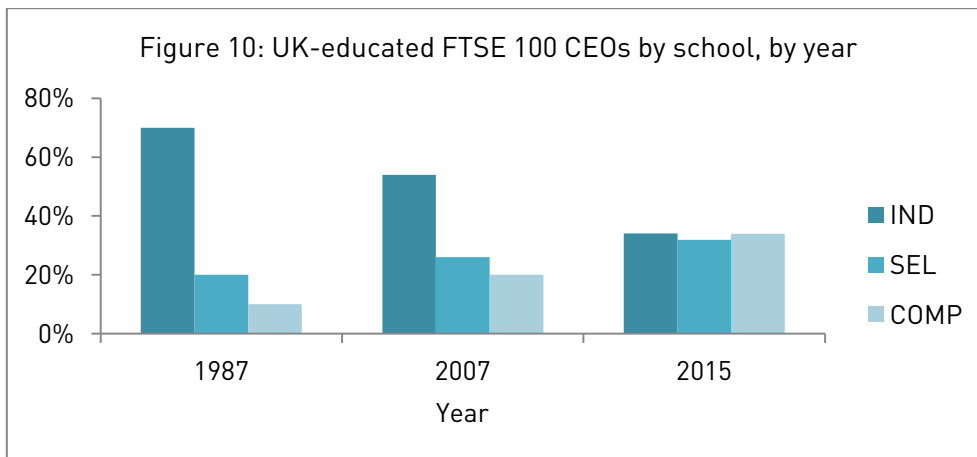
with surveying journalism is that, unlike the judiciary for example, it is a changing landscape: the educational background of the persons in particular roles cannot be directly compared across time, because roles (sometimes publications) appear and disappear. The top 100 list presented here should be seen more as a demonstration of the continuing disproportion of the privately-educated at the top of the profession. The 100 journalists chosen were picked for their perceived influence on the public debate, so are weighted towards the 'commentariat' in national newspapers, as well as newspaper editors.<sup>86</sup>

To offer some comparison across time, though, the report has considered editors at 22 of the country's leading national newspapers, periodicals and press agencies, all of which have been in continuous circulation across the last 30 years.<sup>87</sup> In 1986, 41% of those in these posts had been educated at independent schools, 50% at grammar schools and 9% at comprehensives; in 2006, 67% had been educated at independent schools, 24% at grammar schools and 10% at comprehensives; and in 2015, 58% had been educated at independent schools, 21% at grammar schools and 21% at comprehensives. In this small sample, to which the normal caveats apply, the preponderance of former private school and comprehensive school students has increased, while the proportion of grammar school alumni has decreased. Over 90% of leading editors had attended either private or grammar schools in the mid-1980s. Today, for those in the same positions, this figure is just under 80%.

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## 6. Business

The Sutton Trust's previous analysis of those at the top of UK companies found that, "70% of the chief executives of the FTSE 100 companies in 1987 [who were educated in the UK] went to independent schools, compared to 54% of those in the same positions in 2007."<sup>88</sup> This year's analysis shows that another significant drop has occurred. Of those chief executives that were educated in the UK (a little under two thirds), 34% attended private school, 32% grammar schools and 34% comprehensive schools. There has also been a decrease in the percentage of those FTSE 100 chief executives educated at Oxbridge. In 2007, 39% of CEOs who were educated in the UK had attended Oxbridge; in 2015, this had lowered to 31%. Across this same period, the proportion of FTSE 100 chief executives that were educated abroad has significantly increased to 39%, who are not included in the figures below.



As with the military and the judiciary, the very top of the business world is also dominated by men. Of FTSE 100 chief executives at the time of writing, 95 were men and just five were women.

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While the number of women is increasing among the rank and file, a glass ceiling appears to preclude women from rising to the very top.<sup>89</sup> In late 2015, the Davies Review found that, “There are more women on FTSE 350 boards than ever before, with representation of women more than doubling since 2011 – now at 26.1% on FTSE 100 boards and 19.6% on FTSE 250 boards.”<sup>90</sup> This is progress. But as the analysis of FTSE 100 chief executives here shows, the proportion of women in the top executive roles at these companies is far lower. Thus, as the Davies Review continues, “Businesses need to continue efforts to increase women’s representation further and more women should now be progressing to Chair and Senior Independent Director appointments, with increasing numbers of women appointed to Executive Director positions.”<sup>91</sup> A new target has been endorsed by the government that aims to increase the proportion of female board members at FTSE 350 companies to 33% by 2020.<sup>92</sup>

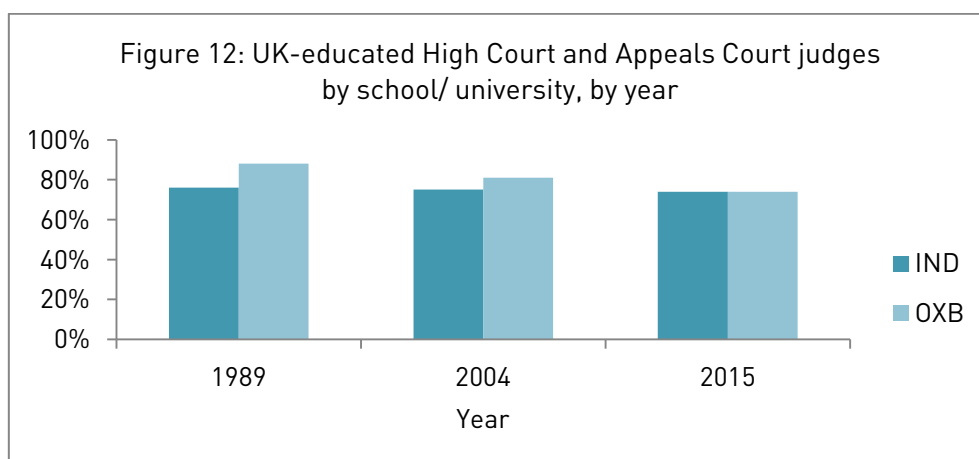
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## 7. Law

This section considers three groups: the judiciary, consisting of judges who preside over the High Court and Court of Appeals (and in a small separate analysis, the Supreme Court); barristers, consisting of the top 100 QCs, as ranked by Chambers UK, the UK's leading legal directory; and lawyers, consisting of partners at the UK's 'magic circle' legal firms that are rated as band 1 (the top band) by Chambers UK. For lawyers, it is supported by secondary analysis of workforce diversity undertaken by the five 'magic circle' firms themselves and the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).<sup>93</sup>

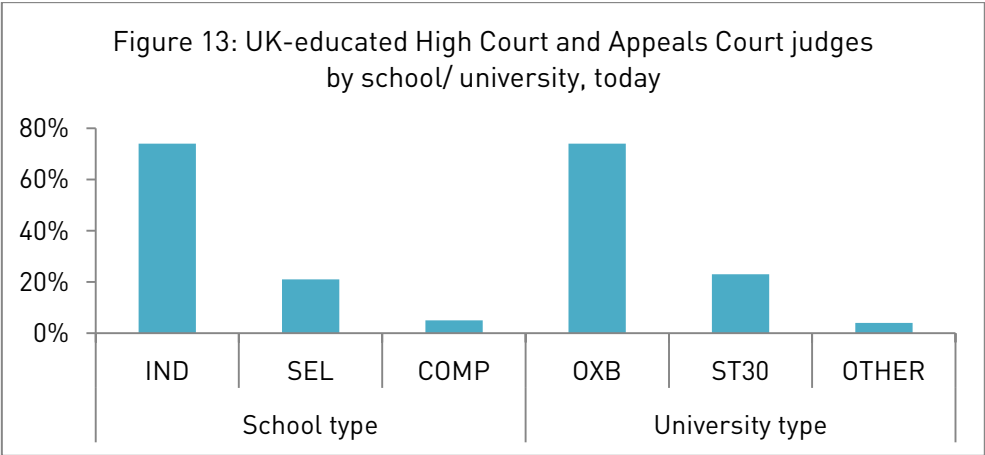
### 7.1 Judiciary

The judiciary has long been recognised as one of the most elitist professional careers, especially when the educational background of judges is considered.<sup>94</sup> Of High Court and Appeals Court judges, some 76% went to private schools in 1989, 75% in 2004 and 74% in 2015; for 25 years, the proportion of judges who have attended fee-paying schools has remained remarkably stable. There has been a greater decrease, however, in the proportion of judges who attended Oxbridge, with the judiciary still mainly populated by graduates from these two universities: 88% of judges had attended Oxbridge in 1989, 81% in 2004 and 74% in 2015. The vast majority of the remainder attended ST30 universities, but there is some indication that the traditional dominance of Oxbridge is slowly lessening.<sup>95</sup>



It is to be hoped that such progress will be furthered by the Judicial Appointments Commission. Founded in 2006, the commission has the statutory responsibility "to select candidates solely on merit; to select only people of good character; and to have regard to the need to encourage

diversity in the range of persons available for judicial selection.”<sup>96</sup> Prior to the commission, judges were appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor; an anachronistic mechanism, with little transparency. The commission is intended to ensure that an independent body is responsible for judicial appointments. Given this, how do the statistics alter if only those judges appointed since the commission’s inception are considered? Of this sub-group, 72% attended independent schools and 68% attended Oxbridge. These figures are slightly lower than the average for judges overall, with two percentage points fewer having attended independent schools and six percentage points fewer having attended Oxbridge. The commission appears to be gradually changing the judiciary’s constitution, although over two thirds of the judiciary still attended fee-paying schools.



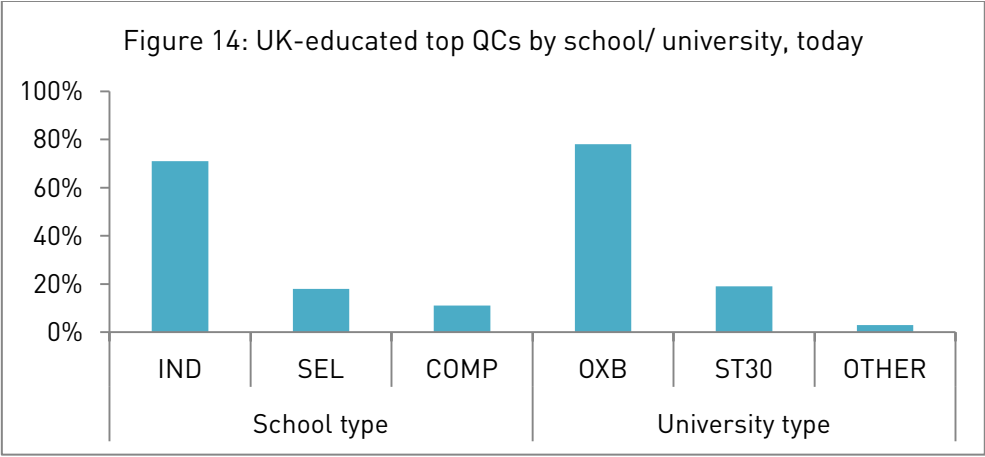
**7.2 Barristers**

Annually, Chambers UK publishes a list of the top 100 QCs in the UK, as determined by experts in representative sections of the legal field. In 2015, of those educated in the UK, nearly 71% of these QCs had attended a private school and nearly 80% had attended Oxbridge. Previous analysis by the Sutton Trust of leading barristers (not restricted to QCs) found similar trends, with 73% of a 1989 sample having attended an independent school and 89% having attended Oxbridge; 68% of a 2004 sample having attended independent school, 82% having attended Oxbridge. While differences in methodology mean that these three sets of figures are not fully comparable, they do suggest that there is broad and remarkable stability in the proportion of top barristers who attended these institutions.

As with the judiciary, the Lord Chancellor has recently been divested of the power to appoint QCs, with their appointment now falling under the jurisdiction of the independent Queen’s Counsel



Selection Panel, which stipulates diversity as a key selection criterion.<sup>97</sup> As with the judiciary, however, the staying power of those with private and Oxbridge educations within the ranks of the country’s most eminent barristers suggests that the panel can go further in expediting its mandate.



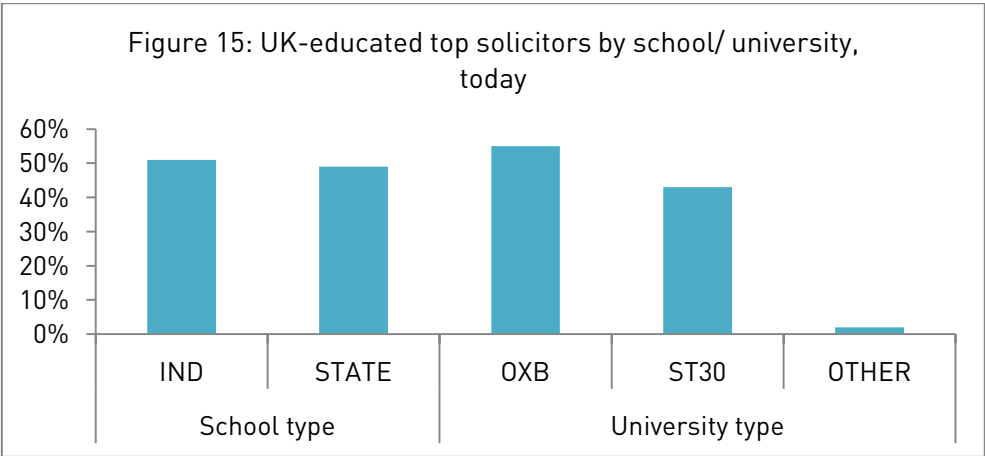
**7.3 Solicitors**

Under the guidance of the SRA, law firms provide the most public data on diversity of the three legal sub-sectors examined here. According to the SRA, across England and Wales 68% of UK-educated solicitors at partner level or equivalent attended state schools, 32% attended independent schools.<sup>98</sup> These figures differ, though, when London firms are considered exclusively, with 59% of UK-educated London-based partners or equivalent having attended state schools, 41% independent schools.<sup>99</sup> The figures are even closer when only the UK’s largest law firms (consisting of 50 partners or more, which includes all the ‘magic circle’) are considered. With this filter applied, 52% of UK-educated partners or equivalent attended state schools, only marginally more than attended independent schools (48%).<sup>100</sup> By contrast, when Wales alone is considered, over 82% of UK-educated partners or equivalent attended state schools and 18% attended independent schools.<sup>101</sup> Such figures suggest that privately-educated partners are more concentrated in London than elsewhere in the UK and even more likely to be represented within the UK’s largest (and so usually most successful) law firms.

The five ‘magic circle’ law firms – Allen & Overy, Clifford Chance, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Linklaters, Slaughter and May – are traditionally regarded as the most prestigious in the country. Each publishes an annual report on the diversity of their workforce, including the type of secondary school attended, disaggregated by employee level (partners, associates, junior

associates, business services).<sup>102</sup> For partners educated in the UK, the unweighted average across the firms finds that about 51% attended independent schools in the UK, the remainder having been educated at state schools. As yet, not all firms provide data of sufficient granularity to determine grammar/ comprehensive attendance or possess a full response rate.

Currently, the diversity data stipulated by the SRA for publication by law firms does not include university attended. As a result, the samples used in the accompanying figure for school and university attendance are not the same, although both are representative of the top of the profession. For this report, band 1 (top band) solicitors at magic circle firms, as defined by Chambers UK, have been profiled for the universities that they attended. Of those educated in the UK, 55% were educated at Oxbridge, 43% at ST30 universities and the remainder (2%) at other UK universities.



The Legal Services Board (LSB), the independent body that oversees the regulation of lawyers in England and Wales, is correct in saying that, “there has been a large increase in the information available on the socio-economic background of members of the legal services workforce, which is of great importance in understanding and tackling social mobility challenges in both the legal sector and the wider economy.”<sup>103</sup> The work of the LSB and the SRA is to be commended, with its commitment to publishing the socio-economic backgrounds of its members amongst the best across the professions discussed in this report. And, as seen, major law firms have published demographic data about their employees. To date, though, the publication of such data has, in part, served to reinforce the received knowledge that there are substantial inequalities of background within law firms, especially at the level of partner. The next step will be to use this information to continue to better target recruitment policies that change this.

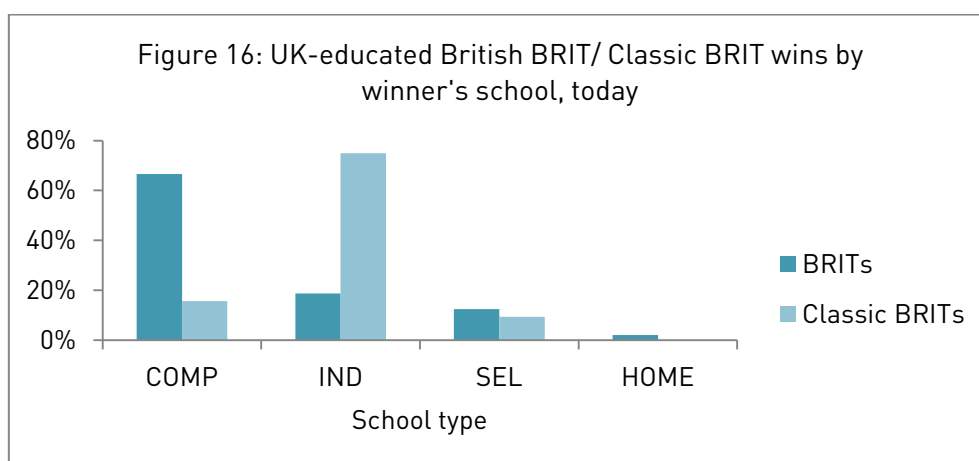
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Again, the Sutton Trust is working with legal firms to increase the representation of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the legal profession, through its Pathways to Law programme. “The Pathways to Law programme was set up in 2006 by The Sutton Trust and The Legal Education Foundation, with support from major law firms, to inspire and support academically-able students in year 12 and 13 from non-privileged backgrounds interested in a career in law [...] It followed research by the Trust which showed that the top echelons of the profession were drawn from a narrow range of social backgrounds – and law firms were not making full use of the talents of students from non-privileged homes [...] 2,000 students have already benefitted from the programme, which is the largest access initiative of its type.”<sup>104</sup>

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## 8. Music

Launched in 1977, the BRITs are the British Phonographic Industry's annual popular music awards.<sup>105</sup> Each year, awards are distributed for best female and male British solo artists. Of all such awards (some of which have been won by the same artist in more than one year), two thirds (67%) were won by musicians who attended comprehensive schools, 19% independent schools, 13% grammar schools and the remainder were educated at home. Of all awards issued to those educated in the UK, 91% were won by artists who did not attend university, 4% ST30 universities and 4% other universities in the UK. This reflects the fact that popular musicians generally find success young, devoting themselves to their craft during the period when other young people are attending university.



Of the groups analysed here, these figures suggest that pop music is one of the more accessible to those from state school backgrounds. Major UK news outlets routinely reference a 2010 survey stating that the majority (60%) of today's UK chart pop acts were privately educated, compared to just 1% two decades earlier.<sup>106</sup> Actually, the survey states that, of all members of British acts in the official UK top 40, one individual (out of 21 acts, some of which consist of more than one member) attended private school in 1990, four individuals (out of 17 acts) in 2010.<sup>107</sup> (The author of the original research has subsequently described how his article has been consistently misrepresented).<sup>108</sup> In a more detailed analysis of chart acts across the same period, the writer Johnny Sharp suggests that, "in fact, in 1990 there were an uncannily similar number of privately-educated people in the charts than there were in 2010."<sup>109</sup> And that when corrected for other omissions, about 23% of UK-educated individuals at the top of the charts attended private school in 2010, a figure similar to that found in this report, albeit using a different sample.<sup>110</sup>

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It is perhaps remarkable that even in a field such as popular music the proportion of awards won by those who attended private school, in both analyses, remains about three times the number of independent students as a proportion of the national student population. But the figures are not necessarily as disproportionate as have often been reported. Of those educated by the state sector, a high proportion of today's most popular musicians attended the BRIT school in Croydon, including Adele, Imogen Heap, Jessie J, Leona Lewis, Katie Melua and Kate Nash.<sup>111</sup> The BRIT school is a unique institution: "an independent City College dedicated to education and vocational training for performing arts, media, art and design", which is state-funded.<sup>112</sup> High-profile musicians educated at private schools include Dido, James Blunt (who has spoken about his education, suggesting that it hindered, rather than expedited, his musical career), Florence Welch, Chris Martin, Marcus Mumford and Thom Yorke.<sup>113</sup>

How does this compare to other kinds of music? The Classic BRIT awards were inaugurated in 2000 and do not have a special award for Britons as with the main BRITs. They are also famous for favouring populist classical music, including film soundtracks and high-grossing albums, rather than more formal classical albums (which is no reflection on the artists themselves). Despite this, of all those awards presented to British solo musicians (n=32), three quarters (75%) were awarded to musicians who attended independent schools, 16% to those who attended comprehensives and 9% to those who attended grammar schools. Famous winners of Classic BRITs include the conductor Simon Rattle, the violinist Nigel Kennedy and the singer Charlotte Church.

Why the difference from popular music? Generally, success in classical music requires several years, even decades of training, with professional examinations and ultimately recognition. Pop music, on the other hand, is more accessible to both listener and performer, with lower levels of technical competency generally required. Criticism has been made in recent years of government proposals for cuts in local authority music spending, meaning that access to classical training would require significant financial resources.<sup>114</sup> Music, it might be noted, is compulsory on the national curriculum only until the age of 14.<sup>115</sup>

BBC Music Magazine, one of the leading voices on classical music in the UK, recently noted that the National Schools Symphony Orchestra, which provides intensive orchestral summer schools, ran its courses from July 13-20: "That's term time for all state schools in England and Wales. So this is aimed only at the 7% of children attending private schools."<sup>116</sup> As the report continued,

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“Leafing through the Proms Guide, we are confronted by alluring adverts for private schools, tempting parents with music scholarships. Most of these scholarships barely cover the cost of lessons, let alone make those schools ‘accessible’, however musical your child [...] Remove the state’s core commitment to music, and instrumental and singing lessons could become – like learning to ski or play polo – the preserve of professional insiders and the wealthy.”<sup>117</sup>

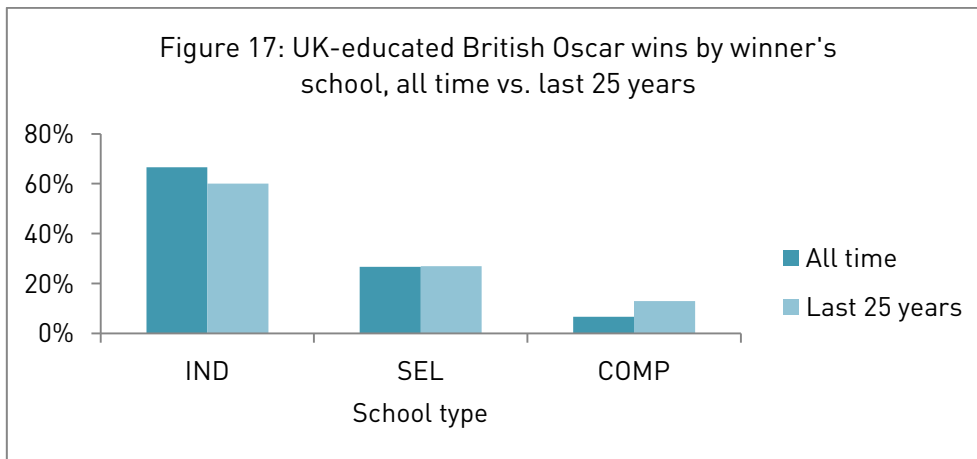
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## 9. Film

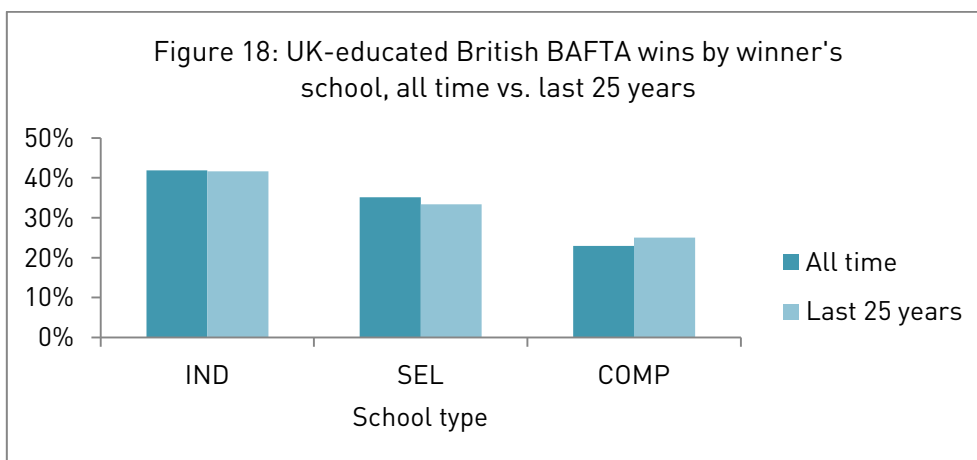
Recent years have seen the emergence to prominence of several British actors with private school backgrounds, with Tom Hiddleston, Eddie Redmayne, Benedict Cumberbatch, Damian Lewis and Dominic West amongst the most famous and frequently cited. Hiddleston, Redmayne, Lewis and West attended Eton; Cumberbatch, Harrow. Hiddleston and Redmayne went on to study at Cambridge. All are fine actors, deservedly successful. For the purposes of this report, the question is whether the same opportunities to enter acting are available to all, especially given that the first years of most acting careers are fallow financially. Eton, for example, “has a professional-standard 400-seat theatre with a fly tower – the Farrer – and two studio theatres. Between these it’s capable of mounting 30 productions a year.”<sup>118</sup> Dame Helen Mirren has recently stated that, “Only kids who have got wealthy parents can go into the acting profession. It’s very difficult for working class kids to get into the theatre”.<sup>119</sup> There are, of course, many notable exceptions – Michael Caine, Bob Hoskins, Patrick Stewart, Julie Walters, Idris Elba, amongst others – but a recent analysis of data from the Great British Class Survey broadly supports Mirren’s assertion, stating that, “The majority of British actors have come from what might be termed middle-class backgrounds, with 73% having parents who did professional or managerial jobs and only 10% from manual working-class backgrounds.”<sup>120</sup>

But has the acting profession always been like this? Is the situation more or less equitable today? This is, of course, very difficult to gauge, but one way to offer an indication is to consider British Oscar winners since the inception of those awards, looking specifically at winners of Best Actor, Best Actress and Best Director.<sup>121</sup>

Of all British wins in these three categories (n=48), two thirds (67%) were won by actors, actresses and directors who attended independent school, 27% attended grammar schools and 7% attended comprehensive schools. Independent school alumni who were awarded these top Oscars read as a who’s who of some of Britain’s finest and most celebrated actors/ directors across the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Laurence Olivier, Jeremy Irons, David Niven, David Lean, Alec Guinness, Daniel Day-Lewis, Julie Andrews and Julie Christie. The next largest group, those who attended grammar schools, includes Glenda Jackson, Ben Kingsley, Helen Mirren, Emma Thompson, Richard Attenborough and Anthony Hopkins. And the smallest group, those who attended state comprehensive schools, includes Colin Firth for his role as George VI in *The King’s Speech*.



Do these proportions differ if we consider only the last 25 years? The sample size is, of course, greatly reduced, so such trends can be indicative only, but there remain 15 Oscar wins during this period that fulfil the requisite criteria. And the proportions appear remarkably stable. Of these 15 Oscar wins, 60% were presented to actors, actresses and directors who attended private schools in the UK, 27% were awarded to former grammar school pupils and just 13% attended state schools.



To offer comparison, the same analysis has been undertaken for the BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) awards. Until the late 1960s, BAFTA awarded prizes to best British film actress and actor, specifically, so the sample size for the last 25 years is smaller compared to this earlier period (n=31 versus n=81 for all time). Since their inception, a little under half (42%) of UK-educated British BAFTA winners of best actress, actor and director awards attended private schools, just over a quarter (35%) grammar schools and just under a quarter comprehensives (23%). Over the last 25 years, the proportions alter slightly to 42% attendance at independent schools, 33% grammar schools and 25% comprehensives. More BAFTA winners than Oscar



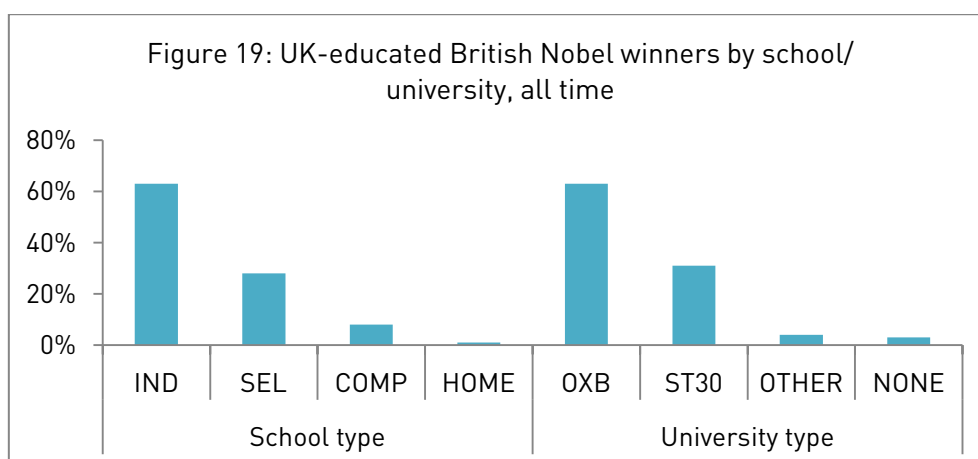
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winner (looking at the three main awards) hailed from disadvantaged backgrounds. Bob Hoskins left school early and worked a series of odd jobs before finding his acting break.<sup>122</sup> Sean Connery dropped out of school to work a milk round, which included deliveries to the famous Edinburgh private school, Fettes College, where Tony Blair (and, appropriately, James Bond) studied.<sup>123</sup>

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## 10. Nobel Prizes

Since the inauguration of the Nobel awards over 100 years ago, 79 winners have been born in the UK. The first was William Randall Cremer, a liberal MP and pacifist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1903; the last was Peter Higgs, who first proposed the existence of the Higgs boson and won the award in physics in 2013.<sup>124</sup> Of all award winners born and attending school in the UK, 63% were educated at independent schools, 28% attended grammar schools and 8% were educated at comprehensives (one, Bertrand Russell, was educated at home by tutors). Of those educated in the UK, the same proportion that went to independent schools attended Oxbridge (63%), with the remainder attending ST30 (31%) universities, other UK universities (4%) or no university (3%). Members of Trinity College, Cambridge, account for a remarkable 32 Nobel Laureates, the majority of whom were born in the UK.<sup>125</sup>



Has this changed across time? Again, in disaggregating these figures the sample sizes become extremely small, but over the last twenty-five years, 19 winners of the Nobel Prize have been born in the UK. Of those educated in the UK, 44% attended independent schools, 50% grammar schools and just over 6% went to comprehensives. Across the same period, 44% of winners attended Oxbridge as students, 44% went to ST30 universities and the remainder were educated at other universities in the UK or none (11%).

The vast majority of these prizes were awarded for achievement in academic fields, so it is important to bear in mind that the previous discussion of the mechanism by which educational elites are reproduced is less applicable here. By several objective metrics, reflected in university league tables mentioned previously, Oxbridge provides the highest quality education in the UK, especially in the sciences, where most of these awards have been won. What is perhaps more

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notable, however, is that of those Nobel Prize winners who attended Oxbridge, more than two thirds (78%) were educated at independent schools first, with 16% educated at grammar schools. In other words, their path to success was set early, at least in part through a fee-paying education inaccessible to most young people.<sup>126</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

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### Educational elites and the top of UK professions

The top of many of the UK's most prestigious professions remain disproportionately constituted by those with elite educational and socio-economic backgrounds. The suggestion that this disproportion stems purely from the higher average grades bestowed by private and Oxbridge educations provides only part of the picture. Of the top 147 judges, over 100 attended Oxbridge and just five graduated from universities outside of the ST30; of the millions who did not attend the nation's most selective universities, can it be true that only five meet the requisite standards for the top of the judiciary? Meritocracy is only part of the explanation, with a combination of other factors, including greater social and cultural capital, being of significant import, as discussed at the head of this report. In many ways, such capital is more difficult for those from disadvantaged backgrounds to acquire than academic qualifications. Student loans can support a disadvantaged student through their studies at the UK's top universities, but they cannot get them through the entrance interview, nor provide the social skills and networks that are often used as proxies by some employers to recruit the same kind of person that they always have.

While it has been the focus of this report, educational background is not the only metric of inequality at the top of UK professions, of course. Women and BME (black and minority ethnic) groups are underrepresented in many areas. Where there have been significant gains, such as in appointing women to the boards of FTSE 100 companies, these gains often stand alongside enduring inequality, given that women in the same field rarely make it to the top executive posts. It should be noted that aggregating black and minority ethnic communities under one label is also potentially problematic; obfuscating both the progress that is being made in better representing certain groups at the top of UK professions and the challenges that remain in better representing others.

Several organisations have also introduced recruitment procedures that attempt to foster greater diversity in their workforces. Deloitte, the world's largest professional services network, recently announced "university blind-recruitment, ensuring that our recruiters do not consciously or unconsciously favour those who attended a certain school or university, so that job offers are made on the basis of present potential, not past personal circumstance."<sup>127</sup> Such policies are to be welcomed and promise much. But it remains for other employers to introduce similar practices and for this to become standard procedure in the professions. In addition, it is important to remain aware that there may be limits to what the occlusion of academic

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background on CVs and job applications can achieve. Those that attend private schools and the kinds of universities discussed here still disproportionately possess the non-cognitive skills, social capitals, internship experience, professional networks and so forth, which make them identifiable in interview situations and appear to be highly valued by recruiters.<sup>128</sup>

What are the solutions? For a problem as complex, systemic and ingrained as this, none are comprehensive and none are easy. Through its summer school programmes, the Sutton Trust has provided students from disadvantaged backgrounds with experience of some of the nation's best universities; universities that might otherwise have been inaccessible to them. Such programmes help to build the kinds of non-academic skills, including professional networks, which enable individuals to access and then rise to the top of their chosen profession. More schemes like this are needed, though, if the playing field is to be levelled further. The Sutton Trust has also pioneered programmes that provide access to professions for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, which have been discussed throughout this report. There are small signs that change has been made over recent decades: it needs to be ensured that this progress is continued, so that those at the top of the nation's professions, many of which are funded by the public purse, are accessible to people from all backgrounds.

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to the professionals that responded to enquiries about their educational background, Laura Weigold and Caroline Kiel Hollo for their contributions to the business section, Jack Phipps for his comments on an earlier draft and Rolant Glyn at Dods for his research support. Naturally, despite the assistance of the previous, any mistakes remain the author's.

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<sup>47</sup> The exceptions are the military, where 59% coverage was achieved for school background and 76% for university, and the civil service, with 64% and 86%, respectively.

<sup>48</sup> Please note that due to rounding to the nearest integer, figures may not always total 100%, and may be a percentage point over or under.

<sup>49</sup> In this report, there are 28, given that Oxford and Cambridge are addressed in a separate category: Bath, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial College, King's College London, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, LSE, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Reading, Royal Holloway College, Sheffield, Southampton, St. Andrews, Strathclyde, Surrey, University College London, Warwick, York. Wherever ST30 is referred to in this report, it is to these 28.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Sutton Trust (2005).

<sup>70</sup> Cowley, P., & Kavanagh, D. (2015). *The British general election of 2015*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>71</sup> Sutton Trust. (2010a).

<sup>72</sup> Mount, H. (2015, October 24). Corbyn's purge of the Oxbridge set. *The Spectator*. Retrieved November 3, 2015, from <http://new.spectator.co.uk/2015/10/labours-purge-of-oxbridge-intellectuals/>.

<sup>73</sup> Audickas, L. (2016, January 25). *Social background of MPs 1979-2015*. London: House of Commons Library, pp. 7-8.

<sup>74</sup> Audickas (2016) p. 8.

<sup>75</sup> Cabinet Office. (2014, September). *The socio-economic backgrounds of recent entrants to the SCS*. London: Cabinet Office, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> Cabinet Office (2014) p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Civil Service. (2015). *Civil Service Fast Stream: Annual report 2014*. London: Civil Service, p. 16.

<sup>78</sup> Bridge Group. (2016). *Socio-economic diversity in the Fast Stream*. London: Bridge Group p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Cabinet Office. (2016, February 2). Plan to end inequality in the public sector. Retrieved February 5, 2016, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plan-to-end-inequality-in-the-public-sector>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014).

<sup>82</sup> Sutton Trust (2006) p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> For another sample of the top 100 personalities in the media, which incorporates individuals based abroad, see: Conlan, T. (2015). Privately educated executives still dominate the media. *The Guardian*. Retrieved December 2, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/30/private-education-mediaguardian-100-media>.

<sup>86</sup> Specifically, the list was compiled by Dr Lee Elliot Major (Chief Executive), Conor Ryan (Director of Research and Communications) and the author. Dr Elliot Major compiled the top journalist lists analysed in previous reports.

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<sup>87</sup> *Daily Express, Daily Mail, Daily Star, Daily Telegraph, Economist, Evening Standard, Financial Times, Guardian, Independent, Mail on Sunday, Mirror, New Statesman, News of the World (Sun on Sunday), Observer, Press Association, Private Eye, Reuters, Spectator, Sun, Sunday Express, Sunday Telegraph, Sunday Times.*

<sup>88</sup> Sutton Trust (2009).

<sup>89</sup> Byfield Consultancy. (2015). *Opening up or shutting out? Social mobility in the legal profession.* London: Byfield Consultancy.

<sup>90</sup> Davies, E. (2015). *Improving the gender balance on British boards: Women on boards Davies review: Five year summary.* London: KPMG, p. 2.

<sup>91</sup> Davies (2015) p. 7.

<sup>92</sup> Department for Education. (2015, October 29). Lord Davies. FTSE 350 boards should be 33% female by 2020. Retrieved December 2, 2015, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-davies-ftse-350-boards-should-be-33-female-by-2020>.

<sup>93</sup> Amongst other duties, the SRA set the standards for qualify as a solicitor, monitor the performance of organisations that provide legal training and provide information to the general public and solicitors and the profession: Solicitors Regulation Authority. (2015a). What we do. Retrieved September 22, 2015, from <https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/what-we-do.page>.

<sup>94</sup> Byfield Consultancy (2015).

<sup>95</sup> Of the UK Supreme Court, given powers in 2009, ten of the 12 Justices were educated at independent schools and ten have a degree from Oxbridge. Only one of the Justices is female, Lady Hale, who recently criticised the lack of diversity in the UK's highest court: Bowcott, O. (2015, November 6). Lady Hale: Supreme court should not be ashamed if diversity does not improve. *The Guardian*. Retrieved November 9, 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/law/2015/nov/06/lady-hale-supreme-court-ashamed-diversity-improve>.

<sup>96</sup> Judicial Appointments Commission. (2015). About us. Retrieved September 18, 2015, from <https://jac.judiciary.gov.uk/about-us>.

<sup>97</sup> Queen's Counsel Appointments. (2015). Background to QC appointments. Retrieved September 30, 2015, from <http://www.qcappointments.org/about-us/introduction/>.

<sup>98</sup> Solicitors Regulation Authority. (2015b). Law firm diversity data. Retrieved September 23, 2015, from <http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/diversity-toolkit/law-firm-diversity-tool.page>.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Allen & Overy. (2015). *Diversity statistics.* London: Allen & Overy; Clifford Chance. (2015). *Diversity statistics – London Office 2015.* London: Clifford Chance; Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer. (2016). *London diversity statistics – 2015.* London: Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer; Linklaters. (2015). *Diversity statistics: 2015.* London: Linklaters; Slaughter and May. (2015). *Diversity – UK statistics 2015.* London: Slaughter and May.

<sup>103</sup> Legal Services Board. (2015). *Diversity data collection and transparency.* London: Legal Services Board, p. 4.

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- <sup>105</sup> British Phonographic Industry. (2015). BRIT awards. Retrieved October 1, 2015, from <http://www.bpi.co.uk/brit-awards.aspx>.
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