

Propelling potential and growing opportunities:

Insights and inspiration from the 2024
Social Mobility Employer Index



S _ C I A L
M O B I L I T Y
F _ U N D A T I O N ®

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Top 75 Employers

1 Browne Jacobson	26 RPC	51 Dentsu
1 PwC UK	27 DLA Piper	52 BlackRock
3 Grant Thornton UK LLP	28 Stephenson Harwood LLP	53 Bank of England
4 KPMG UK	29 Auto Trader UK	54 Citypress
5 Slaughter and May	30 Weightmans LLP	55 Simmons & Simmons LLP
6 Linklaters LLP	31 Schroders	56 Irwin Mitchell
7 Lewis Silkin LLP	32 Mishcon de Reya LLP	57 Fidelity International
8 Norton Rose Fulbright LLP	33 Pinsent Masons LLP	58 City of London Corporation
9 Severn Trent	34 Co-op	59 Clyde & Co
10 Freshfields	35 Hymans Robertson	60 Direct Line Group
11 Addleshaw Goddard LLP	36 Julius Baer International Ltd	61 OC&C Strategy Consultants
12 AMS	37 HSBC UK	62 Lloyd's
13 Macfarlanes LLP	38 Radcliffe Chambers	63 Colliers
14 Clifford Chance LLP	39 TLT LLP	64 Stewarts Law LLP
15 Aviva	40 Sharpe Pritchard LLP	65 BBC
16 bp plc	41 FDM Group	66 Jacobs UK Ltd
17 CMS	42 National Grid	67 Mayer Brown International LLP
18 Phoenix Group	43 Mace	68 Crown Commercial Service
19 Mears Group PLC	44 The British Land Company plc	69 Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)
20 Ashurst LLP	45 Shepherd and Wedderburn LLP	70 Coca Cola Europacific Partners
21 Squire Patton Boggs	46 Hogan Lovells	71 Charles Russell Speechlys
22 Savills (UK) Limited	47 Amazon	72 Sodexo
23 Santander	48 Farrer & Co	73 Moore Kingston Smith
24 Phonographic Performance LTD	49 Ampa Holdings LLP	74 Chemonics UK
25 Shoosmiths	50 EY Foundation	75 Tata Consultancy Services Ltd

The value of employer-led social mobility

It's time for change – in politics, society, and business, too.

The 150 organisations joining the Index this year are trailblazers for this change. They know that the barriers facing those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are measurable and fixable with the Index's guidance. They recognise the business benefits: diverse workplaces and more equitable progression to leadership roles lead to better decision-making and customer understanding. The proof is in the profits: those of organisations focusing on social mobility are 1.4x higher than their competitors, according to research by Accenture.

It is encouraging to see more employers than ever publish their class pay gaps.

[Our research has shown](#) that professionals from working-class backgrounds are paid £6,291 less on average annually than their more privileged peers. By collecting and publishing this data, employers are demonstrating leadership and accountability.

Each of the employers here deserves congratulations. They are leading the way in meeting new public expectations that employers should contribute not just economically, but socially too - helping to make our country fairer. The Index entrants drive a wider movement for change as the cost of low social mobility becomes clearer. In fact, raising the UK's social mobility to the western European average could increase GDP by 2% - the kind of boost our country needs.

The new government is committed to economic growth, to breaking the class ceiling that holds too many people back. It has pledged to enact the socioeconomic duty in the Equality Act, requiring local and public authorities to consider socioeconomic inequalities when making decisions. Collecting socioeconomic background data is a crucial first step.

These are positive steps, but work remains to be done. Many industries remain unrepresentative of the public they serve — only 26%* of creative sector workers, 24%** in engineering, and 9% in tech come from working-class backgrounds, compared to 39% of the UK workforce. This year these sectors have a growing presence in the Index — a positive sign.

The movement for change is underway, and is, of course, open to all employers.

Rt. Hon. Alan Milburn, Chair,
Social Mobility Foundation



* <https://pec.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PEC-report-Social-mobility-in-the-Creative-Economy-Sept-2021.pdf>
** <https://www.engineeringuk.com/media/1762/social-mobility-in-engineering.pdf>

“At JD Sports we embrace people who have built their career by taking opportunities, often by non-traditional routes. We know that focusing on social mobility will diversify our workforce, bring fresh perspectives, and allow us to be more representative of our customers, ultimately driving our success.

“The Index will give us the tools to collect and measure socioeconomic background data, and a greater direction of how to use that data within our strategic priorities.”

Claire Lindley, Group Head of Social Impact, JD Sports, First Time Entrant

“We saw the Index as a real opportunity to be leaders in improving our own organisation while advocating for wider change.

“We would encourage anyone who is thinking about joining the Index to take the leap. Together, we can create workplaces where everyone can thrive.”

Fiona Vines, Chief Inclusion Equity and Diversity Officer, BT Group, First Time Entrant

“We believe that success and scale bring broad responsibility, and we are committed to playing our part in creating a fairer society for everyone.

“In our operations division, over half of our new hires arrive straight from education or having previously been unemployed. Our apprenticeships programme has offered more than 5,000 apprentice roles across more than 50 schemes, and today there are 1,692 people taking part in the programme – making it one of the largest apprenticeship schemes in the UK.

“To support career progression, Amazon’s Career Choice programme provides 95% of pre-paid tuition for nationally recognised courses and celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2024. Looking forward, Amazon has announced it will provide £23 million of further investment in skills training for Amazon employees across the UK.

“We urge all businesses to consider how they too can play a role in supporting social mobility, and help build a fairer society for everyone.”

Catherine Hearn, HR Lead, Amazon

Young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are significantly **more likely** to look for employers that are committed to social mobility when looking for jobs.

Unheard Voices, 2024



Executive summary

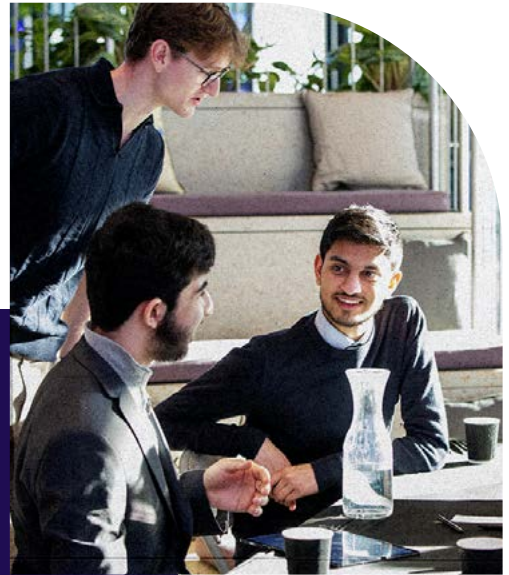
The Social Mobility Index celebrates organisations taking action to become more inclusive and accessible for individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

We emphasise the importance of a holistic approach to ensure that employers are looking at who gets into their organisation, who gets on and who belongs. Employers taking this approach will benefit by attracting and retaining the most talented people.

In our eighth Index we are pleased to see more new entrants than ever before and to see greater representation in tech and the creative industries. We were disappointed to see a significant decline in the public sector and will be working to reverse this in 2025.

150

entrants to the Index in 2024



In numbers

51

new entrants

Just under
one million
employees

26

sectors
represented

Almost
50%

of young people say they **would be put off a job or career** if an employer doesn't enter the Social Mobility Employer Index

Unheard Voices, 2024

As a collective employers **performed worse** in **"who gets on"**

72%

of entrants collect three or four of the Social Mobility Commission's **recommended socioeconomic data points** for current employees

26

organisations measuring their **class pay gap**

As a collective employers **performed best** in **"who gets in"**



Spotlight on sectors

The most common barrier young people identify to getting into their chosen sector is **knowing the right people**. (Unheard Voices, 2024)



Public relations, like most of the creative sector, does pretty poorly on socioeconomic diversity. A quarter of practitioners went to private school - compared to 7% of the general population - and twice as many have parents with a degree. And yet original, creative thinking - the critical ingredient of any high-performing campaign - requires a diverse team in the room, especially when you're trying to connect with a diverse audience.

Martin Currie, Chief Executive, Citypress, First Time Entrant



Technology

+60% increase since 2023



eight entrants

Public sector

-56% decrease since 2023



eight entrants

Creative industries

+43% increase since 2023



ten entrants



The Civil Service is committed to improving social mobility both within Government Departments and across the UK. While this year we have been taking stock of our own progress, we look forward to returning in 2025.

Dame Bernadette Kelly, Permanent Secretary for the Department for Transport and Civil Service Social Mobility Champion

Who gets in

Talent is everywhere but opportunity is not. In the wake of COVID-disrupted education and the sustained high cost of living, young people with the fewest resources face more barriers to realise their potential.

Employers have a duty to ensure that young people have access to the information and opportunities they need to achieve their career goals. This results in an increased talent pool and a workplace with a greater breadth of skills and experience, leading to better decision making.



At Coca Cola Europacific Partners, we want to make sure we are a place where anyone can 'get in and get on', regardless of where they grew up, the school they went to, or any other factor.

Maree Moore, Associate Director Organisational Learning, Talent & Inclusion, Coca Cola Europacific Partners

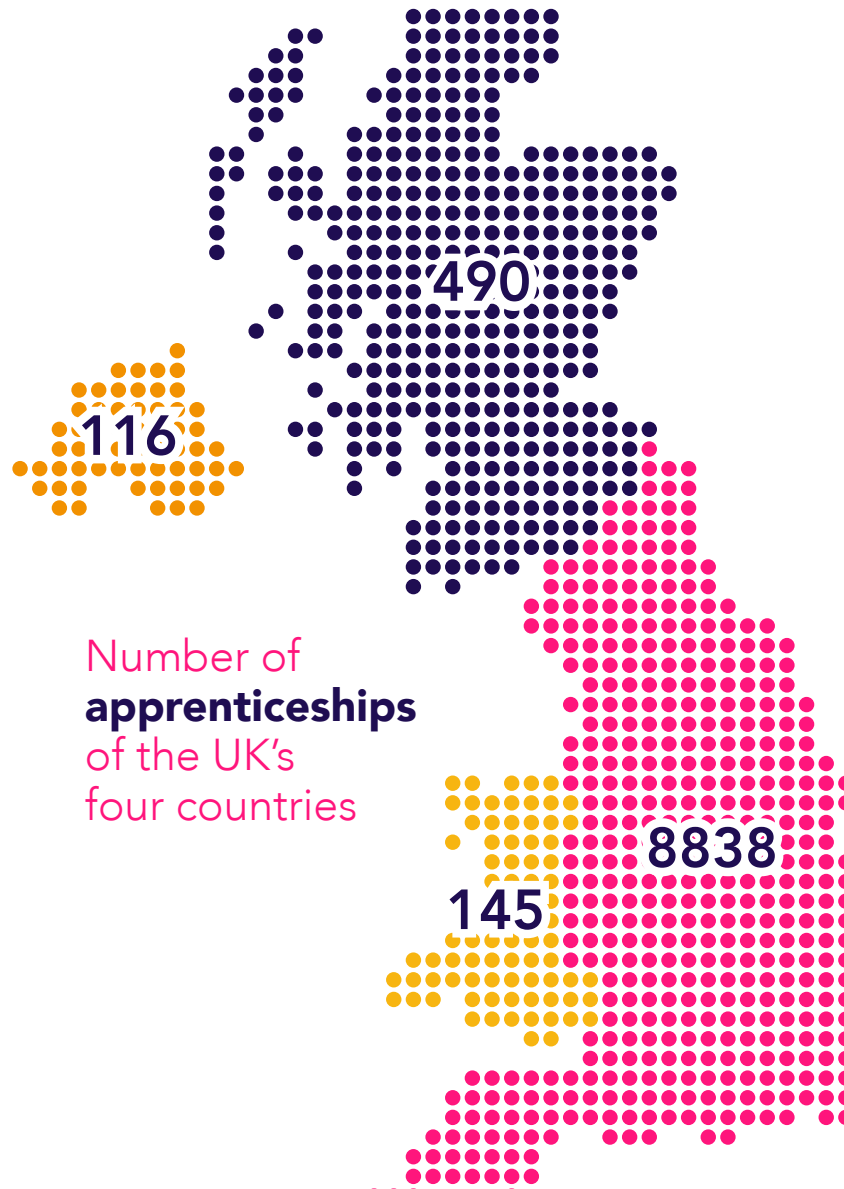


Employers seeking to attract talent from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds must consider their outreach in schools and universities, recruitment pathways, and the diversity of routes into their organisation.

Outreach and recruitment must be intentionally targeted, sustained and evaluated to ensure they reach those most in need and improve over time. Pathways into the organisation should be varied and equitable, taking into account for different circumstances.

Where entrants are **performing well**

- **42%** of entrants offer both virtual and in-person work experience. Offering both and ensuring they are equally high-quality means that those who can't attend in-person for any reason – caring responsibilities or living too far away, for example – can still benefit'.
- **78%** that offer in-person work experience pay for travel costs so that young people who don't live locally can access opportunities.
- **52%** that offer internships ringfence them for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Young people from these backgrounds often face barriers in applying for competitive internships. Ringfencing some or all internships and ensuring they're paid can help overcome these challenges, providing valuable career experience that might otherwise be inaccessible.
- **83%** of employers offer apprenticeships, with 71% of those offering degree apprenticeships.



Where entrants **perform less well**



Many of my peers have been able to secure placement years at top companies because they or their parents have contacts there, and those of us who don't get rejected.

20-year-old, Unheard Voices, 2024

- **35%** still don't target school outreach based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals, even though this is the best indication of low income on an individual level.
- **Only 23%** currently commission external evaluation of their outreach. Bringing in expertise can help shed light on where you could improve.
- **7%** said they use AI when sifting applications. These tools will only lead to equitable outcomes if employers analyse their impact on social mobility.

Who gets in: Top tips for employers

1

Put academic grades in the context of applicants' backgrounds during your recruitment process and remove minimum grade requirements

2

Operate a 'second-look' system for candidates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who are rejected in the initial sift

4

Offer a variety of routes into an organisation, such as apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and graduate schemes

3

Target outreach to young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds using metrics such as free school meals eligibility

5

Ensure all internships are paid

Who gets on

Ensuring that top talent is retained, rewarded, and promoted appropriately is critical in any organisation.

But studies show that those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are paid less and often progress at a slower rate than their peers, despite no difference in performance. That's not only unfair, but it's also harmful to maintaining a productive workforce.

The best employers start by collecting data on social mobility, act to address the imbalances they find and publish their data to hold themselves accountable. This must be done across the employment pipeline, including new hires, unsuccessful applicants and existing employees.

Many sectors have made collecting and reporting socioeconomic background data part of their standards.

Data collection in sectors:

- The Solicitors Regulation Authority mandates reporting of workforce diversity data, including socioeconomic diversity statistics.
- Arts Council England ask funding applicants mandatory socioeconomic questions on leadership.
- Progress Together, which represents over 30% of the UK financial services workforce, requires its members to collect socioeconomic background data.



Where entrants are performing well

- **72%** collect 3 or 4 of the Social Mobility Commission's recommended socioeconomic data points for current employees.
- **68%** present data on the socioeconomic profile of their workforce to their UK Board or management committee. Driving social mobility requires senior buy-in because it requires action at many levels.
- **17%** are measuring their class pay gap, with 62% of these also publishing their data.
- **42%** are targeting buddying/mentoring/sponsorship schemes to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to offer support according to need.



of young people felt that employers should have a social mobility network, diversity action plan and publish their class pay gap.

Unheard Voices, 2024

Where entrants perform less well

- **Only 35%** publish data on the socioeconomic profile of their workforce. 51% of employers who answered the section on data collection say they are reviewing data on the socioeconomic profile of their workforce against national benchmarks and against peer organisations where applicable.
- **Just 16%** who conduct exit interviews analyse this feedback by socioeconomic background. Departing employees offer unique insights into a workplace's culture, and any barriers they experienced, allowing you to break them down.
- **29%** don't clearly state the pay range for every role in all job adverts.



Advice for **getting started**

Measuring an issue is the first step to understanding and addressing it. It might seem that socioeconomic background is complex and therefore hard to measure, but the simplest way to start doing this is by asking the question:

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

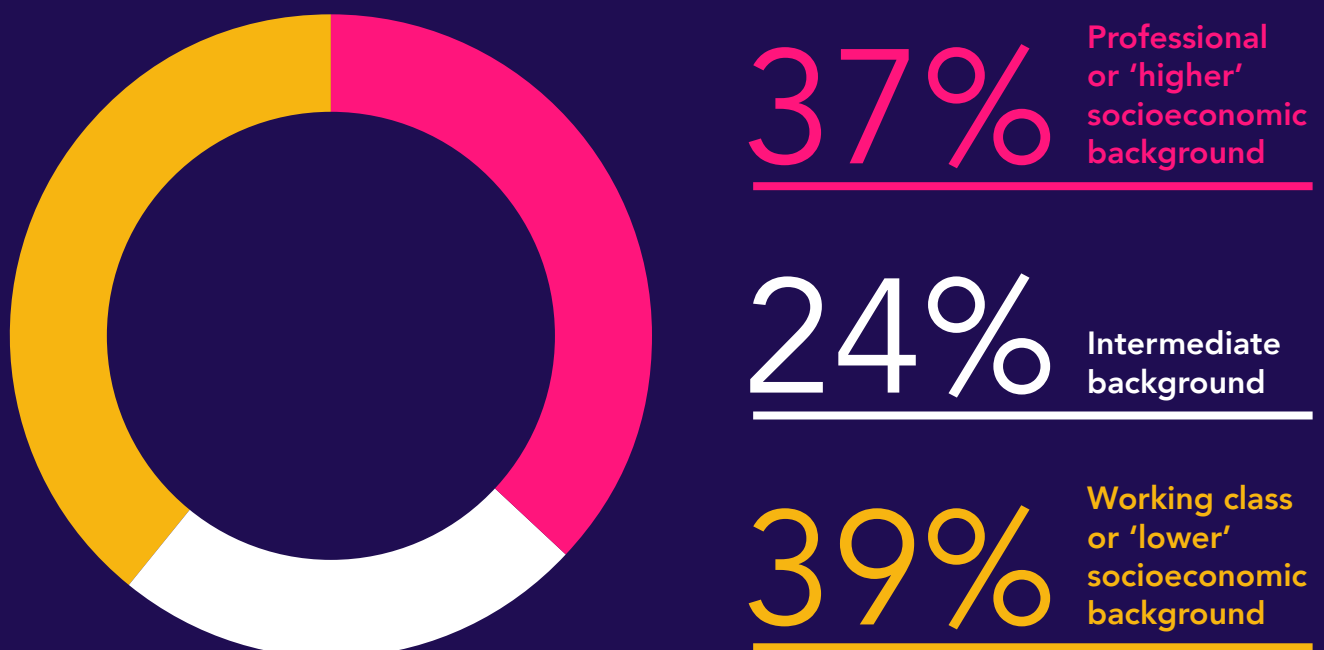
It’s easy to understand, it gets the highest response rates in testing, and it’s applicable to those of all ages and from all countries. This can be supplemented with additional questions. For more guidance, see the [Social Mobility Commission’s toolkit](#).

Publishing this data promotes accountability and advocates for stronger action on socioeconomic diversity both among other employers and the public. It should also be reported to Board level, where it can be used to inform and improve organisational policy.

National benchmarks

The graphic shows what percentages of each of the socioeconomic background categories (professional, intermediate, and working-class background) are found in the working population (age 16+). Employers can use these benchmarks to see how the makeup of their workforce by socioeconomic background data compares.

Occupational category of main wage earner – UK workforce*



*<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-a-workforces-socio-economic-background-for-change/simplifying-how-employers-measure-socio-economic-background-an-accompanying-report-to-new-guidance>

Who gets on: Top tips for employers

1

Collect socioeconomic background data on new hires, current employees and unsuccessful applicants using the [Social Mobility Commission's best practice guidance](#)

2

Analyse this data to understand where people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are experiencing barriers in the workplace

3

Publish data that demonstrates the need for improvement and advocate for other employers to do the same

4

Measure, publish and set targets for your class pay gap. [Use our pay gap guide here](#)

5

Evaluate the impact of your interventions



At Co-op, we were incredibly proud to publish our socioeconomic pay gap report for the first time this year, becoming the first retailer to do so. By holding ourselves accountable and outlining the steps we will take to address inequality within our business, we hope to inspire long-lasting change at a societal level, so that everyone can thrive no matter their background.

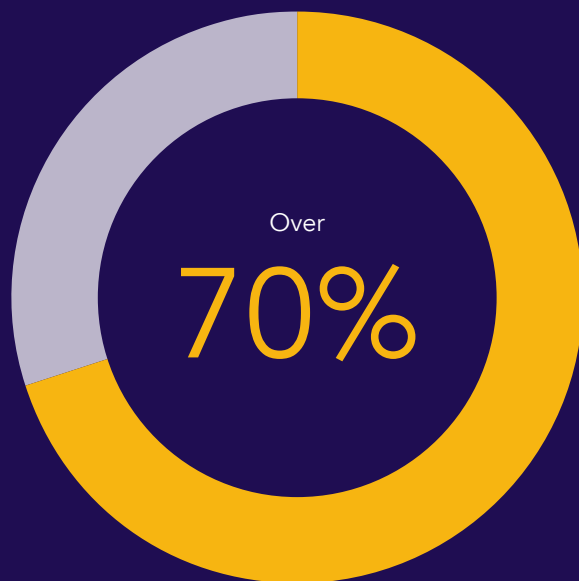
Shirine Khoury-Haq, CEO, Co-op

Who belongs

If workplace culture isn't inclusive for all backgrounds, employees won't feel supported to participate fully and make the most of opportunities to progress.

Workplaces must help all employees build professional networks and mentoring relationships to create change in their sector and beyond.

Employers that join the Index demonstrate their commitment to change, but we encourage them to look at driving change internally and externally. That means securing senior buy-in within organisations and putting structures in place to build an inclusive culture, like nominating a social mobility lead at Board level. It also means publicly advocating for, and participating in, industry initiatives (or setting them up where they don't already exist) and asking partners to improve social mobility in their workplaces.



of young people would be put off a job or career if they feel like they wouldn't fit in.

Unheard Voices, 2024



Where entrants are **performing well**

- **85%** have a specific member of staff who is responsible for social mobility. This encourages accountability and ensures that someone is driving social mobility initiatives across the organisation.
- **83%** take part in social mobility initiatives across their sector, such as PRIME in the legal sector. The benefits are that industry-specific data and best practice can be gathered and shared, organisations can collaborate on resources and targets can be set at a sector level.
- **65%** have a staff network or employee resource group specifically focused on socioeconomic background. These can support staff to build networks and share stories of success.



At Superdrug & Savers, we respect and value what makes us different, and we know how important it is to belong. That's why we've taken steps to ensure that, wherever our people are in the organisation, they can reach their full potential and feel part of our community.

We first entered the Employer Index in 2019 and have now joined for the third time. It has supported us at Superdrug & Savers to develop a more equitable workplace culture where everyone can thrive.

Kendra Moffatt, Senior Inclusion and Engagement Manager, Superdrug & Savers

Where entrants **perform less well**

- **Only 39%** have targets in place relating to socioeconomic background or diversity. Setting clear targets that are demanding but achievable is key to driving change and keeping everyone on the same page about what is expected.
- **Just 55%** offer diversity training with a focus on social mobility.
- **33%** are not sharing the changes they've made to improve socioeconomic diversity and inclusion with other organisations.



Who belongs: Top tips for employers

1

Gain senior buy-in on the importance of social mobility so that you can make the required changes throughout your organisation

2

Set targets based on socioeconomic background that are realistic but stretching and use them to form part of a wider social mobility strategy

3

Set up initiatives to aid belonging in your workplace, such as a social mobility network

4

Participate in social mobility initiatives to share knowledge and advocate for greater action

5

Influence your networks by asking them to make commitments or sign up for joint initiatives, or by including social mobility in tender documents or contracts

How to enter the Index in 2025

Wherever you are on your social mobility journey, entering the Index will give you tailored advice and recommendations, along with the right to use the Index logo.

To access these benefits and join our community, click [here](#).



1

[Register](#) for updates on our website so you know when applications open

2

Brainstorm initiatives with your colleagues to improve social mobility in your workplace

3

Read the Social Mobility Commission's [toolkit](#) and start taking action to enter the Index in 2025

Annex

The Social Mobility Employer Index is an online survey that employers answer using qualitative and quantitative data. The survey assesses employers' work across eight critical areas:

1. Schools outreach with young people
2. Attraction and university outreach
3. Recruitment and selection
4. Routes into the employer
5. Data collection
6. Pay, Progression and retention
7. Culture and internal advocacy
8. External advocacy

The marking of questions and sections: marking is weighted according to the impact of an action on social mobility. Not all questions are relevant to all employers, which is factored into our marking. Employers are benchmarked against each other.

The Index questions and the marking scheme are based on the latest empirical research from the Social Mobility Commission and leading academics of effective practice. The Index was developed in consultation with: Bridge Group, Stonewall, The Institute of Student Employers, Dr Louise Ashley, Royal Holloway, University of London and Claire Tunley (Head of Employability at City of London Corporation).

Our approach is rigorous and ensures a fair process, recognising that different sectors and organisations do things differently. Responses are marked anonymously so that those marking are not aware of any work the entrant does beyond their submission and no organisations or individuals gain any advantage because of working with the Social Mobility Foundation.

The data in this report is presented either as a percentage of entrants that answered each section, or as a percentage of respondents that were relevant to the question, rather than as a percentage of the total number of entrants.

The recommendations in this report are based on evidence of what works, informed by the views of over 1,000 young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, gathered through Unheard Voices survey.

Unheard Voices methodology

The Social Mobility Foundation commissioned a survey of 3,500 young people aged 16-24, in school or college in the United Kingdom. The research was conducted by Platypus Research between 5th and 29th March 2024.

The research compared the experiences and views of young people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds via an online survey. The sample was drawn from an online panel sample provider partner (ResearchBods) and Social Mobility Foundation.

Higher socioeconomic background sample size and criteria	Lower socioeconomic background sample size and criteria
Sample size: 1,577	Sample size: 1,923
Household income over £35,000 if living with parents or young people from a social grade 'AB'.	Household income of less than £35,000 or young people from a 'DE' social grade, have received free school meals. 'AB' social grades are excluded.

Description	Social Grade	Social Class
Senior, middle or junior managers or administrators such as: finance manager, chief executive, large business owner, office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, warehouse manager.	C1	Professional
Modern professional and traditional professional occupations such as: teacher, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer, accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil or mechanic engineer.	C1	Professional
Clerical and intermediate occupations such as: secretary, personal assistant, call centre agent, clerical worker, nursery nurse.	C2	Intermediate
Technical and craft occupations such as: motor mechanic, plumber, printer, electrician, gardener, train driver.	C2	Working / Lower
Routine, semi-routine manual and service occupations such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, sales assistant, HGV driver, cleaner, porter, packer, labourer, waiter/waitress, bar staff.	DE	Working / Lower
Recently or long term unemployed (has been unemployed for less than a year).	DE	Working / Lower