

Social background drives graduate outcomes and access to top jobs

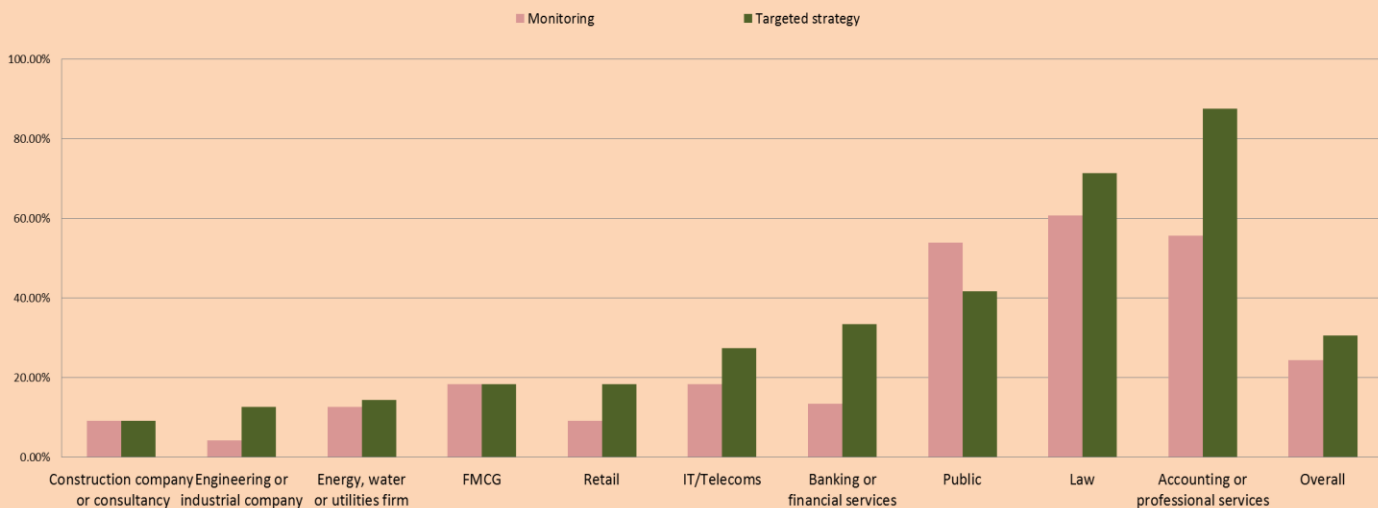
- ▶ A degree does not have the same value for all graduates. Even when institution and subject is accounted for, students from higher income families earn around 10% more. In addition Black African qualifiers are **14%** less likely than their white peers to be in professional work **6** months after graduation.
- ▶ There is also a **social mobility penalty** - those who make it from working class to **the professions** are likely to be paid **around £150 a week** less than their counterparts who grew up in professional families.
- ▶ The social make-up of some top firms is highly unrepresentative. In some law firms around **40% of staff were educated at fee-paying or selective schools** and as many as **70% in some elite accountancy firms** – compared to 7% in the wider population.
- ▶ Top firms' recruitment practices do not help: notions of talent at some **top firms rely on middle class characteristics**, rather than objective measures of how good someone might be at a job.
- ▶ Despite progress, research conducted for the commission in 2015 found a bias towards candidates from privileged backgrounds – reflected in out of date attitudes at the top of some elite firms.

Fig 1. Quotes from anonymous interviewees in Non-educational Barriers to the Elite Professions, June 2015



Some firms are doing more than others to tackle social mobility...

Proportion of graduate recruiters with targeted strategies or data monitoring programmes to address socio-economic diversity



- ▶ **Accountancy and law are farthest ahead in their efforts to improve social mobility** for their graduate intake, whereas engineering and construction firms do the least.
- ▶ **9 out of 10 accountancy graduate employers and 7 out of 10 law graduate employers report targeted strategies to address socio-economic differences.** Fewer than half of all other sectors have similarly targeted approaches.
- ▶ **Monitoring the background of staff is an essential** to understand the social mobility challenge faced by employers.
- ▶ **Over 50% of accountancy, law and public sector recruiters monitor the situation.**
- ▶ In most other sectors, monitoring is a minority activity: on average just over **one in 10 firms monitors the social background of recruits or employees (12%).**

Government and business both have a role. The Commission recommends:

1. Access

- The Government should increase access and transparency by **creating a single online portal (interns.gov.uk) for young people to access public sector internships by 2017.**

2. Best practice

- **Professional employers should:**
 - Collect data to understand the social background of applicants, recruits and staff.
 - Review selection procedures, ensuring application thresholds are not exclusionary.
 - Broaden universities from which they recruit and reduce minimum academic requirements with contextual admissions.
 - Pay and advertise for internships, targeting disadvantaged groups, and open up non-graduate entry routes.
 - Forge connections with schools and appoint a board-level business leader to champion this agenda.