



Cabinet Office

The socio-economic backgrounds of recent entrants to the SCS

September 2014

Introduction

The role of the Civil Service is to serve the government and we must have the best people to provide the best possible service. To ensure this, a core and longstanding principle of the Civil Service is that recruitment must be based on merit, regardless of background. We already employ many of the country's brightest and best and it is therefore inevitable, and right, that many of these civil servants come from our best universities. However, as we say in our recently published *Talent Action Plan: Removing the barriers to success*, 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. We don't want departments full of employees who think and sound the same.

That is why we announced in the Talent Action Plan the commitment that all managers will be required to complete unconscious bias training. An open and inclusive culture must be driven from the top, so our leaders must look beyond bias and relentlessly seek out merit.

It is why we have also announced that we will double the size of our Fast Track Apprenticeship Scheme, launched last year, so young people who leave school can go straight into the world of work. It has been wonderful to see new energy and fresh ideas enter the Civil Service over the last year and we hope that some of these apprentices will, in time, fill the very highest posts.

This is the first of what will be an annual publication and summarises survey data for those who joined the Senior Civil Service between August 2013-2014. Over time this data will help us to understand how well we are doing in terms of attracting talented new recruits from the widest backgrounds into the Civil Service and to see how the diversity of our leadership changes over time.

The socio-economic backgrounds of the SCS

About the survey

In August 2014, Civil Service HR (through departmental HR Directors) issued a survey to all staff who had joined the Senior Civil Service (SCS) in the previous 12 months. This is the first of what will be an annual publication and summarises survey data for those who joined the SCS between August 2013-2014. Of the 346 invited to participate, 192 responses were received. This equates to a response rate of 55%.

The socio-economic backgrounds of recent entrants to the SCS

- 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.
- 65% had at least one parent in a higher managerial, administrative or professional background.
- 44% had at least one parent with a degree level qualification or higher. However 49% of internal promotees had at least one parent with a degree compared to 35% of external entrants to the SCS.

Issues in measuring socio-economic background and for interpreting the results

The response rate (55%) means we cannot consider the results to be representative of the whole population of recent SCS entrants, as we cannot assume those who did not participate in the survey have the same profile as those who did participate.

Caution should be taken when interpreting the results of this socio-economic background survey. Other than school background, the surveys are asking people to recall information from when they were 14 years old about their parents' circumstances.

The survey asks about the type of work that respondent's parents did, the size of their parents' employer, whether their parents managed or supervised staff, and whether their parent had a degree or other qualifications. These are pieces of information that individuals potentially may never have known, may have forgotten, or may misremember. This has particular implications for the coding of socio-economic classification which relies on answers to multiple questions to produce a single classification – all questions need to be answered in order to calculate each parents' position in the classification scheme.

Further information on the methodology used to produce the analysis is provided in an annex at the end of the pack.

Socio-economic backgrounds of new entrants to the SCS in the year to August 2014

In late August 2014 a survey was conducted to look at the socio-economic backgrounds of entrants to the SCS in the past 12 months. Of the 346 invited to take part 192 participated, a response rate of 55%. This level of response means the results should not be used to generalise the backgrounds of recent SCS entrants.

Of those who responded to the survey, 10% attended an independent school and had assistance with their fees (either from the state, or through a scholarship or bursary), 13% attended an independent school and did not receive assistance with their fees. 54% attended a non-selective state school and 19% attended a selective state school.

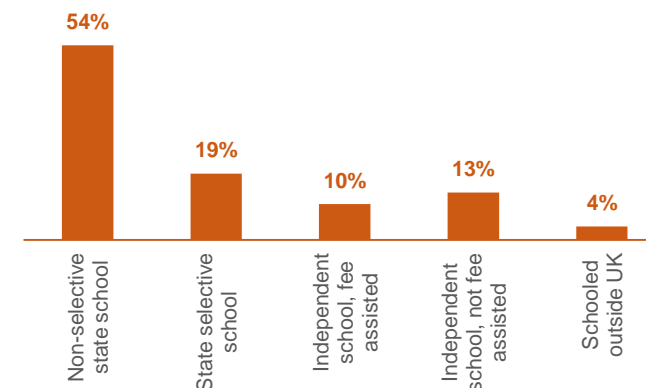
Looking at the socio-economic background of respondents' parents at the age of 14, 65% had at least one parent who was in a higher managerial, administrative or professional occupation, 11% had a parent in an intermediate occupation, and 10% had a parent in a routine or manual occupation. For 14% of respondents either their parents were not working or their parents' occupational status could not be calculated due to respondents not supplying all the necessary information.

Respondents were also asked about the highest level of qualifications held by their parents (excluding mature learning). For 22% of recent entrants both of their parents held a degree level qualification or higher and for a further 22% one parent held a degree or higher. For 31% of recent entrants both parents held qualifications below degree level, 13% had one parent holding qualifications below degree level and the other without qualifications, and for 11% neither parent had qualifications (excluding mature learning).

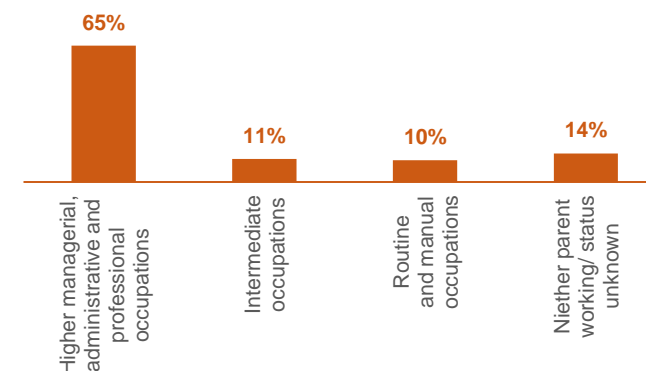
** This analysis presents the 3-group collapse of the NS-SEC grouping, ONS guidance advises that this should not be treated as an ordinal scale given the combination of the self-employed with intermediate occupations and lower supervisory*

*** Respondents were asked to ignore any mature learning undertaken by their parents*

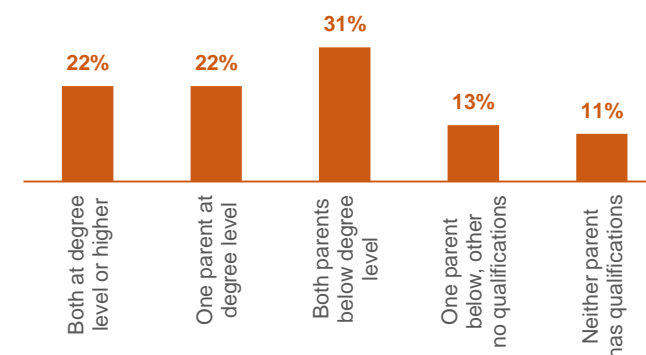
Type of school attended at age 14



Highest NS-SEC level of parents at age 14*



Highest level of qualifications held by parents*



Socio-economic backgrounds of new entrants to the SCS by route of entry to the SCS

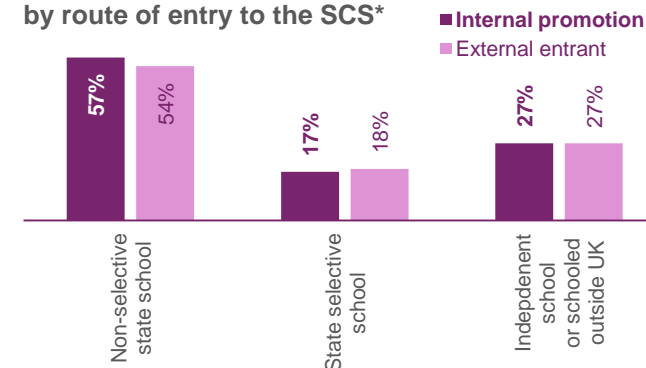
The August 2014 survey included a question asking how recent entrants came into the SCS: via an internal or external route.

The school backgrounds of internal and external entrants were broadly similar: 57% of internal promotees attended a non-selective state school compared to 54% of external entrants.

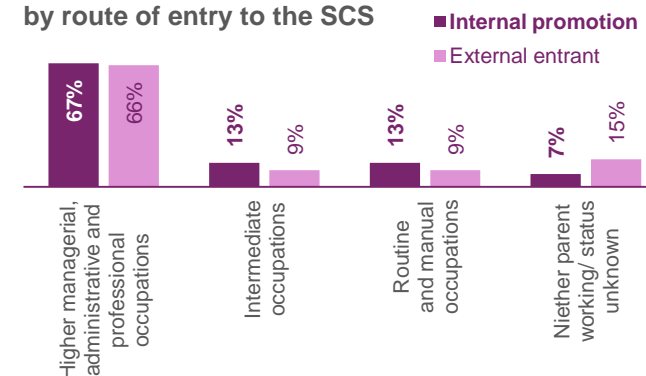
Similarly the occupational backgrounds of internal and external entrants' parents were broadly similar. 67% of internal promotees had at least one parent in a higher managerial, administrative or professional occupation compared to 66% of external entrants. However, the proportion of external entrants whose parents were either not working or their status is unknown is more than double that for internal entrants.

Looking at qualification levels, 49% of internal entrants had either one or both parents educated at degree level or higher compared to 35% of external entrants.

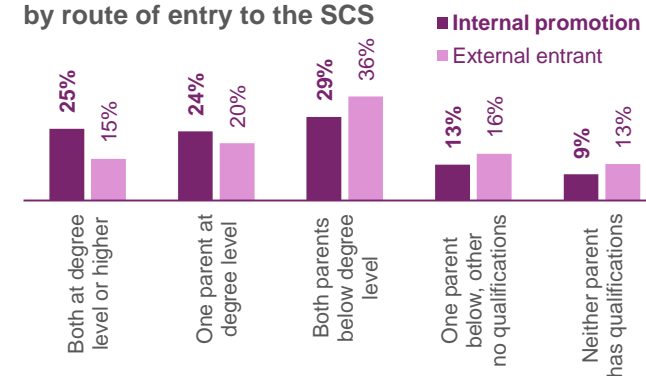
Type of school attended at age 14 by route of entry to the SCS*



Highest NS-SEC level of parents at age 14 by route of entry to the SCS



Highest level of qualifications held by parents by route of entry to the SCS



*Categories of school backgrounds have been combined to protect respondent confidentiality

Methodology: survey questions and analytical approach to measuring socio-economic background

Survey questions on school background and parental qualifications

School background

Thinking about your education when you were growing up between the ages of 11 and 16, what type of school did you attend? If you attended more than one school please think about the school you were attending on your 14th birthday (schooling at age 14 will normally be representative of your secondary education status)

- A state run or funded school that did not select pupils on the basis of academic ability (e.g. a comprehensive, secondary modern, Scottish High School/Secondary School/Academy)
- A state run or funded school that selected on the basis of academic ability
- An independent school, but your fees were paid in part or full by the local authority (sometimes called a 'direct grant' school or an 'assisted place')
- An independent school, but your fees were paid in part or full by a bursary or scholarship
- An independent school, and your fees were not paid in part by the local authority or bursary/scholarship
- A school outside the UK education system
- Prefer not to say

Parental qualifications

What was the highest education level that your Father achieved (at normal education age, rather than as a mature student)? / What was the highest education level that your Mother achieved (at normal education age, rather than as a mature student)?

- Degree level or Degree equivalent or above (for example first or higher degrees, postgraduate diplomas, NVQ/SVQ level 4 or 5, etc)
- Qualifications below degree level (for example an A-level, SCE Higher, GCSE, O-level, SCE Standard/Ordinary, NVQ/SVQ, BTEC, etc)
- No qualifications
- Do not know or cannot remember
- Prefer not to say
- Not applicable

Survey questions for calculating parental socio-economic status

The socio-economic background survey used the ONS' self-coded method for calculating socio-economic status against their National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification scheme (NS-SEC). The NS-SEC self coding system requires answers to four questions: employment status, size of employer, supervisory status and occupation. For the SCS socio-economic background survey respondents are asked to recall when they were aged 14 what the circumstances of their parents were. This information is then used to calculate the NS-SEC codes, the approach for which is detailed on the following page. The same questions have been used in all SCS socio-economic background surveys.

Employment status

Thinking back to when you were aged about 14, did your parents work as an employee or were they self employed? *(Separate response for each of the respondent's father and mother)*

- Employee
- Self-employed with employees
- Self-employed/freelancer without employees
- Not working

Employment status

If your parents were employed when you were aged 14, how many worked for their employer? If they were self-employed and employed other people, how many people did they employ? *(Separate response for each of the respondent's father and mother)*

- 1-24
- 25 or more

Supervisory status

If your parents were employed when you were aged 14, did they supervise any other employees? A supervisor or foreman is responsible for overseeing the work of other employees on a day-to-day basis. *(Separate response for each of the respondent's father and mother)*

- Yes
- No

Occupation

Thinking back to when you were aged about 14, please tick one box which best describes the sort of work each of your parents did in their main job? *(Separate response for each of the respondent's father and mother)*

- Modern professional occupations such as: teacher/lecturer, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, welfare officer, artist, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer
- Clerical and intermediate occupations such as: secretary, personal assistant, clerical worker, office clerk, call centre agent, nursing auxiliary, nursery nurse
- Senior managers and administrators usually responsible for planning, organising and co-ordinating work and for finance such as: finance manager, chief executive
- Technical and craft occupations such as: motor mechanic, fitter, inspector, plumber, printer, tool maker, electrician, gardener, train driver
- Semi-routine manual and service occupations such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, receptionist, sales assistant
- Routine manual and service occupations such as: HGV driver, van driver, cleaner, porter, packer, sewing machinist, messenger, labourer, waiter / waitress, bar staff
- Middle or junior managers such as: office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, warehouse manager, publican
- Traditional professional occupations such as: accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil/mechanical engineer

Using the survey questions to calculate parental socio-economic status

The National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) is a multi-layered classification scheme, in its most detailed form it has 17 different groups, but can be collapsed down to five and three category versions. The self-coded method uses the information from the four questions presented on the previous page to approximate an individual's position in the NS-SEC scheme.

The questions on employment status, employer size and supervisory status are used to derive an individual's overall employment position. This derived position variable is then combined with the question on occupation to identify which of the following five NS-SEC classes the individual belongs to:

- Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations
- Intermediate occupations
- Small employers and own account workers
- Lower supervisory and technical occupations
- Semi-routine and routine occupations

A separate NS-SEC position is calculated for each of the respondent's mother and father. If information is missing for one of more of the questions for a particular parent then no NS-SEC position is calculated.

The NS-SEC positions for each parent are then compared and the "higher" of the two is selected to represent the highest position of the respondent's parents.

Given the small sample sizes of the different survey groups, to ensure accurate interpretation of difference between groups, the five-class scheme calculated by this method is reduced to the three-class NS-SEC scheme:

- Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations
- Intermediate occupations ("Intermediate occupations" and "Small employers and own account workers")
- Routine and manual occupations ("Lower supervisory and technical occupations" and "Semi-routine and routine occupations")

The ONS advise caution when interpreting the three-class and that it should not be directly interpreted as a hierarchy like the older schemes of Social Grade and Social Class. The meaning of the "intermediate occupation" class is not the same as in older classification schemes because it includes the self-employed. Similarly "routine and manual occupations" class should not be considered to replicate the older distinction between "manual" and "non-manual" work, as "changes in the nature and structure of both industry and occupations have rendered this distinction outmoded and misleading"