


A network diagram background consisting of a black field with a complex web of thin white lines connecting various circular nodes. The nodes are in shades of white, light gray, and dark gray, creating a sense of depth and connectivity. The overall structure is irregular and dense, resembling a social or data network.

Lines Set One- Degree Off Parallel

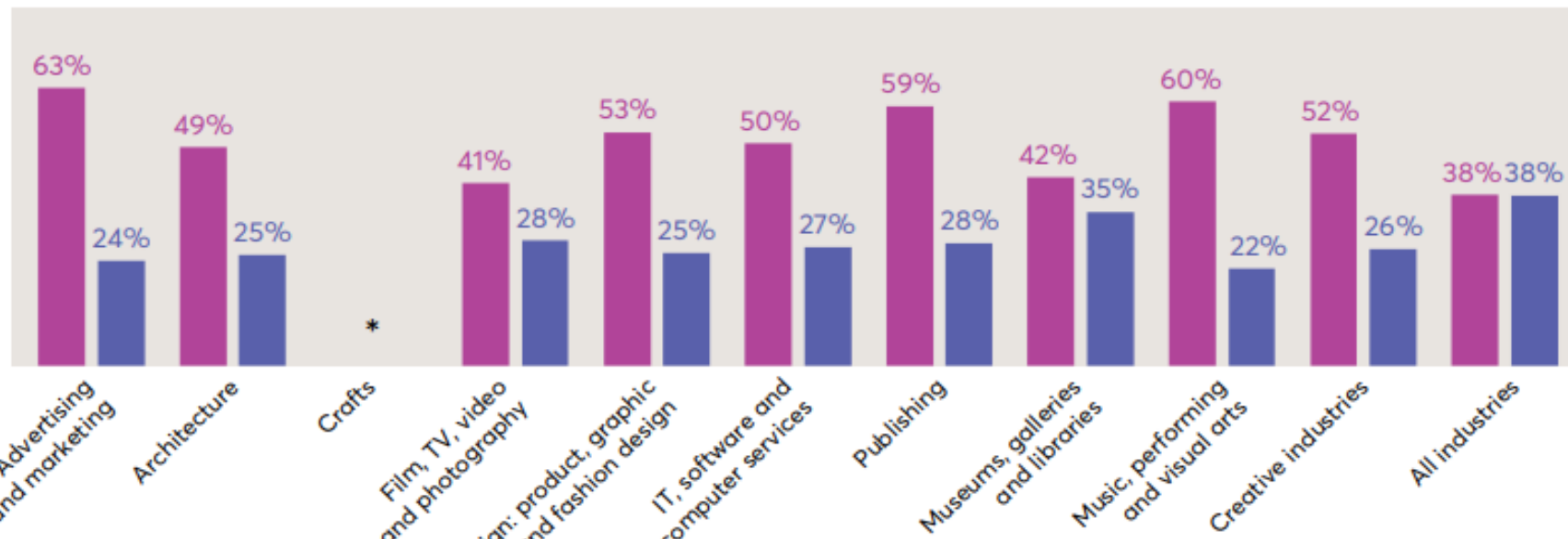
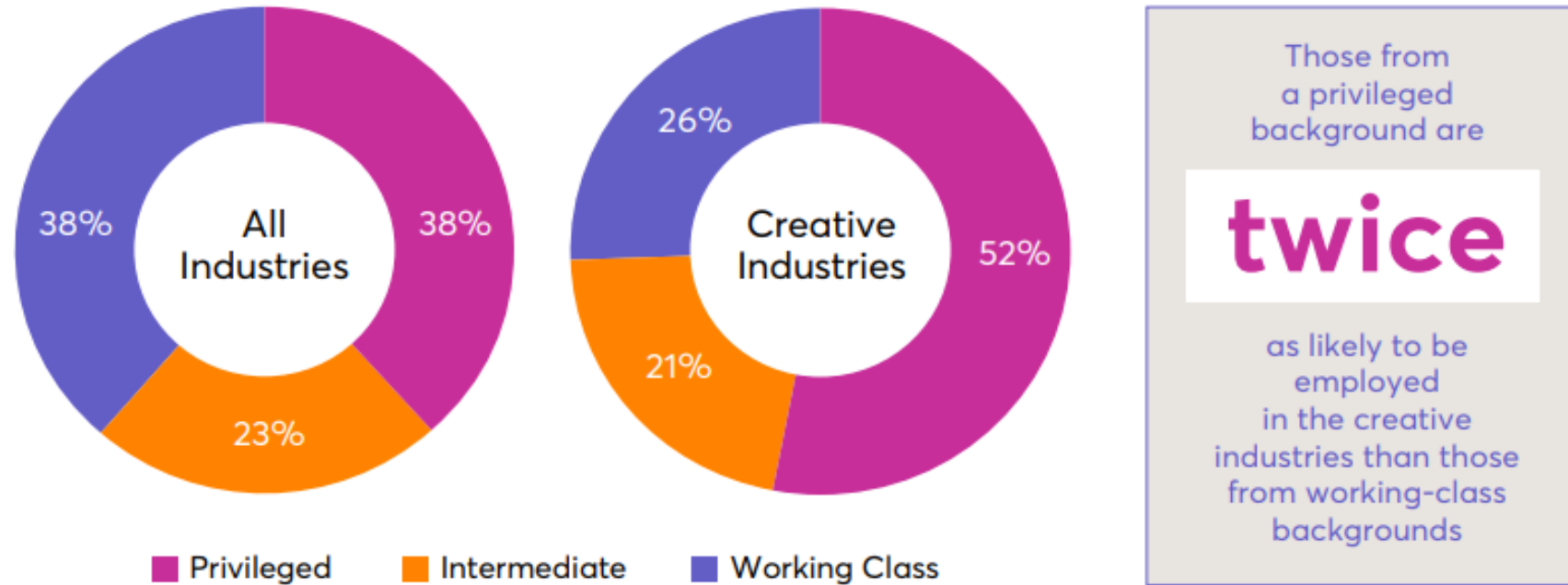
Cultural Deprivation And HE
Attainment



Rishi Sunak vows to end low-earning degrees in post-16 education shake-up

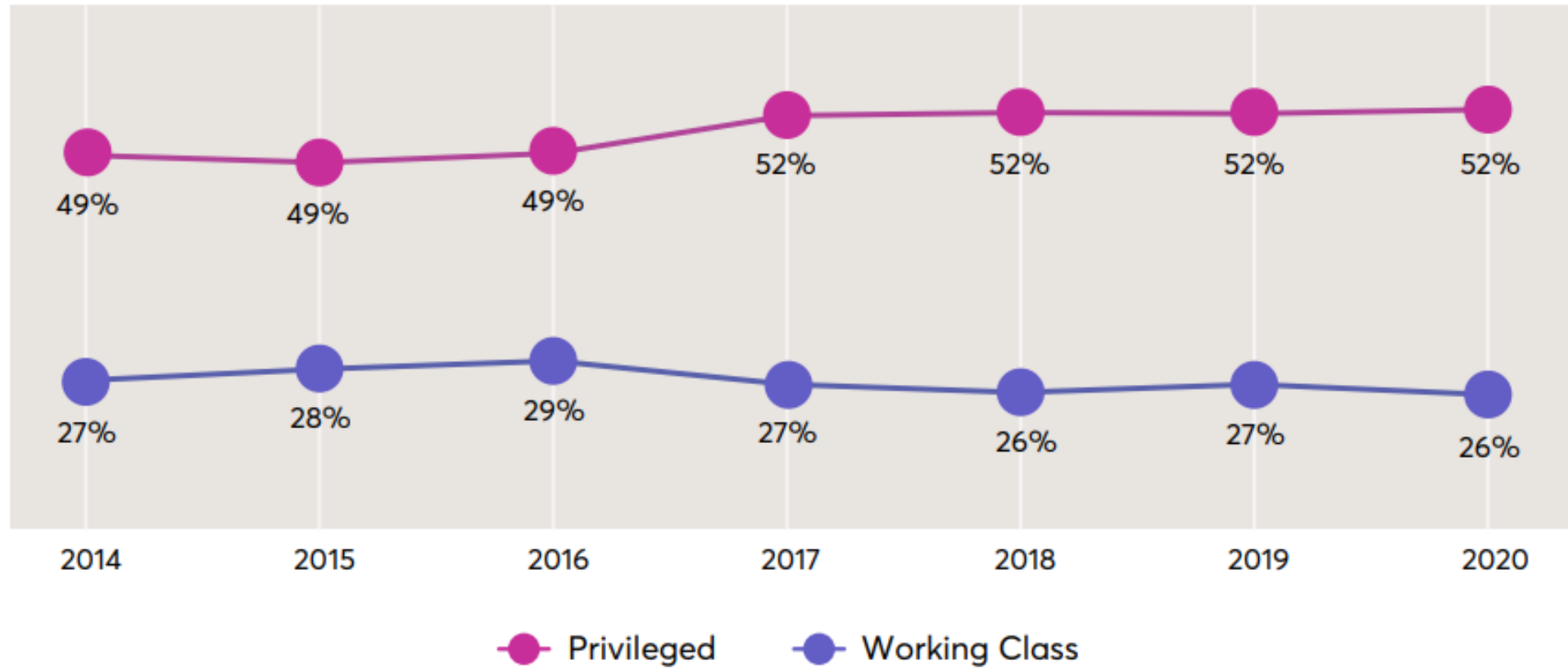
Candidate for PM proposes to raise prestige of vocational education and mandate sixth-form maths and English with a British baccalaureate

Figure 2.1: Scaling class¹⁵ imbalances in the Creative Industries, 2020 ^{16, 17}



Source: Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre 'Social mobility in the Creative Economy' report

Figure 2.5: Class profile of the workforce over time, Creative Industries



Source: Labour Force Survey, July – September quarters. Office for National Statistics. Crown Copyright 2021.



Social Mobility
Commission



State of the Nation 2022: A fresh approach to social mobility

June 2022

Analysis of the impact of previous crises shows that economic downturns can encourage more young people to stay in education after leaving school. However, as we reported in chapter 3, young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds are still more likely to attend and benefit from university. This is probably due to the increased influence of parental educational background during periods of crisis. For example, secondary analysis of the UK British Household Panel Survey and Understanding Society's UK Household Longitudinal Survey (HLS) datasets by the University of Essex shows that, during periods of high unemployment, the influence of parents' educational background on their children's educational choices increases. The analysis found that immediately after the 2008 recession, young people whose parents had low levels of education were 25 percentage points less likely to want to attend university than young people with highly educated parents.⁸⁸

In future, it may be possible to look at the value of new level 4 and level 5 qualifications (post-18 but below degree level), and to broaden the scope of this driver to include those. We do not, by the inclusion of this driver, wish to suggest that any particular individuals or groups should increase their participation in HE.

Driver 2.4: Availability of high-quality higher education

We illustrate this driver with retention and completion rates. The proportion of UK students dropping out of university after the first year of their course hit a record low in the 2019 to 2020 academic year (see figure 4.9). Just 5.3% of full-time undergraduate students who started their course in the 2019 to 2020 academic year were no longer in HE at the start of their 2nd year. This represents a fall of 1.4 percentage points on the previous year, and the lowest non-continuation rate observed since the statistics have been collected.⁸⁹

Despite these increases, many questions remain. Understanding how the rise in participation rates relates to completion rates, and how HE relates to subsequent employment, forms key aspects of future work for the Social Mobility Commission.

A similar pattern is seen for the non-continuation rate for mature full-time, first degree entrants (aged 21 years and older). The number of students dropping out was 11.9% – down 1.6% points from the previous year. Projected outcome statistics show that only 9.4% of full-time first degree entrants in the UK are projected to drop out of HE without a qualification. This is the lowest rate on record.⁹⁰

The problem

In our view, traditional approaches to improving social mobility haven't always worked widely, despite the best of intentions. Too many interventions have focused on getting people to leave the place where they grew up, acquire brilliant academic credentials, and gain entry into an elite professional occupation. There is nothing wrong with this view of social mobility, but it is not enough.

Widening access to university has not brought the dividends many hoped for, and has diverted attention away from the 50% that pursue other routes.

Meanwhile, not enough attention has been paid to improving the skills of those at the bottom – both adults and young people – whose opportunities, because of a lack of basic literacy, numeracy and employability skills, are extremely limited.

And there is a particular challenge for people living in neighbourhoods and places where, for a whole variety of reasons, educational and economic outcomes appear to be poor across generations.

The state of social mobility

Despite the popular narrative, it's not true that social mobility is getting worse on all counts. In reality, the picture is complex. Occupational mobility has been fairly stable for decades, while on other aspects there is less consensus.

Nonetheless, there are pockets of real concern. Even if social mobility is not deteriorating, it can still be much harder for some compared to others.

Because of this, we're convinced we need to take a more nuanced view of social mobility so that we can prioritise the areas where need is greatest, and where we can have the most impact.

“Despite the popular narrative, it's not true that social mobility is getting worse on all counts. In reality, the picture is complex.”



Why?



A 'Working-Class'/Low-SES Habitus?

- A worldview or set of behaviours and habits belonging to a social group.
- 'The internalisation of possibility' (Lee and Kramer, 2013).

Cleft Habitus

- The challenge isn't necessarily 'habitus reformulation'.
- What if the two habiti are difficult to reconcile?
- Additional labour involved.



I Am Proud To Be British

1h · 🌐



Remember when bins didn't have wheels and were carried by the bin men?



Cleft Habitus

- The challenge isn't necessarily 'habitus reformulation'.
- What if the two habiti are difficult to reconcile?
- Additional labour involved.
- 'Habitus' in conflict with 'field'.

Out with the Old, In With The New? Habitus and Social Mobility at Selective Colleges (Lee and Kramer, 2013)

- ‘Even when I go to visit my parents, [I am] so scared of them thinking Linden has turned me into an elitist snob [...] [My brother] constantly makes fun of me’ (Lee and Kramer, 2013, p. 27).
- My older sister a lot of the time would give me a hard time about things that aren’t under my control, like not being home all the time [...] Because she didn’t do that, she doesn’t get it’ (ibid.).
- In fact something I’ve been scared about before is not losing my roots, but I can feel myself becoming very different from my family [...] There’s almost a feeling of selling out a little bit’ (ibid., p. 29).
- ‘[...] sets them on a trajectory of class mobility, [...] experienced as a **painful dislocation** between an old and newly developing habitus, which are ranked hierarchically and carry connotations of inferiority₃ and superiority’ (Baxter and Britton, 2001, p. 99).

Ways to help working class students at university

One of the main ways to help yourself is to look after your wellbeing. Imposter syndrome can take a toll on your mental health, and it is important to take time out to relax and have fun. If you feel like your wellbeing is affecting your daily life, you should reach out to people around you for support. This may be your family, friends, your supervisor, GP, or the [Open Door Team](#) provided by the University.

Financial issues can create significant challenges for working class students, especially in an expensive area such as York. If you are struggling financially, the University offers support through [bursaries, scholarships, or emergency loans](#).

Taking part in additional opportunities to gain experience can be a useful technique to further enhance your CV and give you the edge over other students or job candidates. It is also a great way to build those connections which have been shown as important for someone's career.

Benefits of being working class

Lastly, being working class creates many benefits for an individual and it is nothing to be ashamed of.

A working class student faces many challenges in their life and educational pathway, meaning those students have to be incredibly hardworking and resilient to successfully gain a place at such a prestigious university. This

‘I was told I was part of ISIS because of where I went to school’

I literally changed my whole self to fit in

‘The dreaded question of “which school did you go?” to comes up constantly’

The posh girl was referred to as the ‘clever one’

‘He literally said – **while laughing** – “I’m trying to make fun of you because you’re poor”‘

It just sounds so funny hearing something clever in that accent

I was told I’d have a worse quality of life

‘Southerners presume I have no intelligence or money because of my accent’

My accent was considered ‘rude’ and ‘bad-mannered’

What school did you go to?

‘Oh you poor thing, how unfortunate you are’

‘Day one of uni people came to my room to see what the “state school Geordie girl” looked like’

‘People thought I was a plumber because of my accent’

Do you have a scholarship or something?

You seem really intelligent for someone who went to a public school

‘I’ve been mocked regarding my accent and culture’

‘You write like my dad who works in investment banking’

What school did you go to? You’re clearly not a chav because you’re dressed like that

Someone once asked me: ‘How do I speak to disadvantaged students?’

‘People have said I was awarded my academic scholarships because of my background’

Your writing skills are pretty good for a Grimbsy girl

I felt so out of place that I developed severe anorexia and have never recovered

‘My roommate said we should be like “ships passing in the night”‘



What Does it Look Like?



Self-Exclusion

- ‘Throughout my time here, if I'm totally honest, there have been quite a few times when I've just gone “I am never coming back”, when I've thought “I want to go home, and I never want to come back.”’ (Reay, 2021, p. 57).
- ‘I started off feeling timid here. And you know, I'm not a timid person. But my confidence took a big knock in the first few weeks and I didn't do what I'd hoped to do in terms of social stuff and joining societies’ (ibid.).
- ‘I just thought, “right, work, that's what I'm here for”, and the social stuff got missed off’ (ibid.).

Downplaying of Achievements

- Not wanting to be 'too' successful.
- Self-limiting behaviour.

Further Reading

- Jennifer Morton – *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way*
- Teresa Crew – *Higher Education and Working-Class Academics: Precarity and Diversity in Academia*
- *The Myth of Meritocracy* article
- Rebeca Clark – *The Experiences Of Working-class University Students: To What Extent Does Social Class Still Negatively Impact On Students Experience Of Higher Education?* (CCCU master's thesis)

Bibliography

- Schofield, L. M., Takriti, R., & Atkinson, S. (2023). Higher Education, Social Mobility and Social Class: Importance of Habitus and Capitals when Analysing Student Choice and Transitions. *International Journal of Educational and Life Transitions*, 2(1): 6, pp. 1–14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/ijelt.45>.
- Baxter, A. and Britton, C. (2001) 'Risk, identity and change: Becoming a mature student', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 87-102.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London, Routledge.
- Carey, ., Gable, O. and O'Brien, D. (2021) *Social mobility in the Creative Economy: Rebuilding and levelling up?* Available at: <https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/social-mobility-in-the-creative-economy-rebuilding-and-levelling-up> (Accessed 10/06/2023).
- Hancox, D. (2022) "Who remembers proper binmen? The nostalgia memes that help explain Britain today", *The Guardian*, 15th November. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/nov/15/who-remembers-proper-binmen-facebook-nostalgia-memes-help-explain-britain-today>.
- Lee, E. M. and Kramer, R. (2013) 'Out with the Old, In with the New? Habitus and Social Mobility at Selective Colleges', *Sociology of Education*, vol. 86, no. 1, pp. 18-35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040712445519>.
- PA Media (2022) 'Rishi Sunak vows to end low-earning degrees in post-16 education shake-up', *The Guardian*, 7th August. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/aug/07/rishi-sunak-vows-to-end-low-earning-degrees-in-post-16-education-shake-up>.
- Reay, D. (2021) 'The working classes and higher education: Meritocratic fallacies of upward mobility in the United Kingdom', *European Journal of Education*, vol. 56, no. 1 (pp. 53-64). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12438>.
- Social Mobility Commission (2022) *State of the Nation 2022: A fresh approach to social mobility*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1084566/State_of_the_Nation_2022_A_fresh_approach_to_social_mobility.pdf (Accessed 11/06/2023).
- The Tab (2020) 'I'm making fun of you because you're poor': Northern students on classism at Durham. Available at: thetab.com/uk/durham/2020/10/23/im-making-fun-of-you-because-youre-poor-northern-students-on-classism-at-durham-49321 (Accessed 18/06/2023).
- The Tab (2020) 'You're actually pretty intelligent': Students share their experiences of classism at uni. Available at: thetab.com/uk/2021/07/14/youre-actually-pretty-intelligent-students-share-their-experiences-of-classism-at-uni-212102?fbclid=IwAR1H2_ojLIXNfxjwVGhB6qGpLWihSoje5kjt6XbbrlBa6K0qljct-lsPeVA (Accessed 18/06/2023).
- University of York (2023) *How does being working class affect your university experience?*. Available at: https://yusu.org/news/article/working_class_at_york (Accessed 19/06/2023)