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Class in Classics

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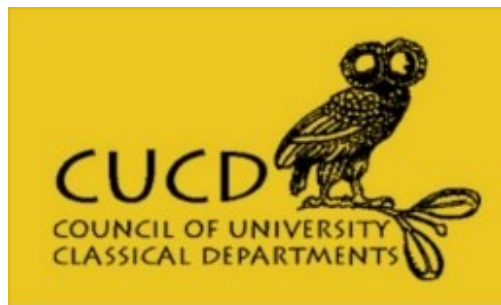Bianca Mazzinghi Gori, Henry Stead,
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On behalf of
the Network for Working-Class Classicists,
the EDI Committee of the Council of University
Classical Departments,
and the Classical Association

https://www.workingclassclassics.uk/

https://cucd.blogs.sas.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/

https://classicalassociation.org/
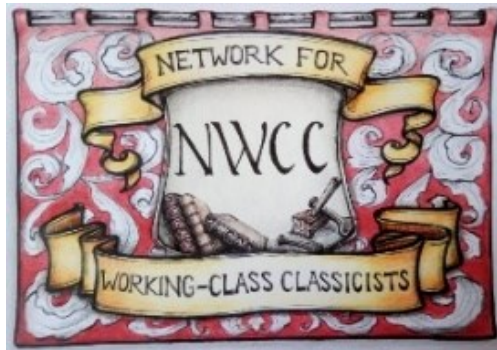
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Context

The UK Class in Classics Survey ran from 25 October 2022 to 25 January 2023 and was open to UK classicists from undergraduates to professors, including also schoolteachers. The survey comprised 51 questions, divided into 7 sections. Sections 1 to 3 collected demographic data about employment, education, socio-economic background, and the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Sections 4 to 6 collected qualitative and quantitative data about experiences of various professional activities in both research and teaching contexts. Section 7 collected recommendations. The survey had a total of 1,206 respondents.

Main findings

- **Class composition of the discipline**: Those with managerial and professional backgrounds are heavily overrepresented among Classics students, and even more among academic classicists and Classics teachers (around **70%**) compared to the overall workforce (around **37%**), with working-class backgrounds significantly underrepresented. This level of overrepresentation matches or exceeds that found in the most elite professions.

- **Leaky pipeline**: While postgraduate respondents show greater class diversity than undergraduates (with **28%** from working-class backgrounds), much of this diversity is lost in the transition to academic positions. And representation of working-class backgrounds declines steadily through the senior academic ranks, nearly disappearing among professors (at just **11%** versus **82.5%** from managerial/professional backgrounds).

- **Class at the intersection**: Class intersects with other axes of inequality like gender identity, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability to compound disadvantage. While representation of minorities declines across the board, it declines more steeply for those from working-class backgrounds. Any gains from EDI policies have disproportionately benefited those from managerial and professional backgrounds, while working-class women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people and disabled people continue to face exclusion, especially from permanent academic posts.

- **EDI and class**: The data shows that class-blind EDI approaches have proved inadequate. Class is rarely discussed in university Classics departments and EDI

conversations and is dismissed in favour of protected characteristics like race/ethnicity and gender. This is detrimental to working-class staff and students, who often face compounding disadvantage at the intersection of class and other identities.

- **Catching up**: Working-class and state-school students face pressure to 'catch up' with middle/upper-class and private-school students who have more prior knowledge and experience of Classics. This compounds barriers in language learning, creates a hierarchy between Classics and Classical Studies degrees, and impacts confidence and progression.

- **Money**: Financial constraints at all career stages disproportionately exclude working-class students and staff. This manifests in barriers to conferences, resources, field trips and activities that require out-of-pocket expenses. Precarious contracts and gaps between study/employment exacerbate the issues. There are often (middle-class) assumptions within departments that money is not a problem. This constitutes unconscious bias and causes exclusion, disadvantage, and resentment. Financial barriers start early, with chronic underfunding of state schools unable to provide Classics, but continue throughout educational and career progression.

- **Fitting in**: Working-class classicists face barriers when they are expected to fit into the middle-class paradigm that dominates the field. This manifests through classist slurs, accent bias, cultural exclusion, imposter syndrome, lack of working-class role models, and assumptions that the 'ideal' classicist is privately and then Oxbridge-educated, with vague notions of 'fit' (used in appointment procedures) concealing class bias. These exclusionary norms constitute a 'hidden curriculum' that pushes working-class staff and students out of Classics.

- **Mind the gaps**: There are 'gaps' in the Classics pipeline that disproportionately affect working-class students. Barriers exist in schools due to lack of funding and unchallenged perceptions among working-class students that Classics is 'not for us'. At university, financial constraints and feelings of not fitting in lead working-class students to drop out at higher rates. Outreach activities bring students in but more 'inreach' is needed to support them as they enter what are overwhelmingly middle-class spaces.

Key recommendations

1. **Collect class data** at all levels, continuously and comprehensively. Full demographic data about class background is needed to identify structural barriers, differentials in educational and career progression, and the extent of the class pay gap among

Classics professionals (in schools and in universities). Class data needs to be collected whenever data on the protected characteristics is collected.

2. **Rethink EDI initiatives.** The data from the survey strongly suggests that current EDI practices are working only for certain specific groups, which means they are not working at all. Include class in the EDI agenda, always and at all levels, without letting the (class-blind) priorities of standard schemes such as Athena Swan dictate the entirety of EDI initiatives and policies.

3. **Get more Classics in schools**, especially in state schools and with an equitable geographical spread. This is key – it is the goal of a number of initiatives mentioned in this report, and we need to support these in whatever ways we can.

4. **Invest in outreach**, ensuring that outreach efforts are focused on those sectors of the student population that are least likely to be exposed to Classics, and most likely to perceive Classics as alien and unwelcoming. Schools and universities should work closely together on outreach: it should come from what the schools need.

5. **Create and advocate for different routes to study classical subjects**, offering more summer schools, baccalaureate and bridging programmes, multiplying starting points for Greek and Latin, and revising degree requirements and programmes.

6. **Recognise class background as a key factor in determining student experience and progression**. Establish processes to monitor this, such as tracking class attainment gaps and withdrawal rates, and making class matters a standing item on EDI and Staff-Student committees.

7. **Challenge assumptions about money** by engaging with existing work on socio-economic inequality in education and take action to address this by reviewing policies and systems that enable financial exclusion.

8. **Advocate for increased funding opportunities across education** targeted to tackle socio-economic exclusion, ranging from better funding for schools and cost-of-living increases to student stipends, through to introducing departmental bursaries and microgrants, and rethinking of 'hardship' grants whose conditions of access are often punitive and humiliating.

9. **Tackle class-based bias and discrimination.** Implement robust class bias training. Embrace class diversity in the student body and workplace. Challenge the prevailing middle-class cultural habitus by amplifying working-class voices. Treat class-based (including accent/language) discrimination seriously. Establish more working-class role models in order to create a more welcoming space for working-class classicists.

Introduction

Class is not listed as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010.[1] This means that there is currently nothing in UK law to prevent class-based discrimination. The #Makeit10 campaign, run by the British Psychological Society, is lobbying to have social class added as a protected characteristic, and the Alliance of Working Class Academics have been running a similar campaign.[2] There are parallel movements in the Co-Op and the Bridge Group, among others.[3] Momentum is building, pressure is mounting, and hopefully we will see results soon. Why are these campaigns so important? The BPS report shows that the UK is currently facing a social and economic crisis in which social class-based inequalities continue to deepen.[4] Even in elite professions, there is a significant class pay gap (based on class background), which also worsens for women and those from ethnically minoritized backgrounds.[5] The findings shatter meritocratic illusions: the widespread notion that you can get wherever you want, if you work hard enough. There are barriers, and many of them stem from class discrimination.

> "When we make assumptions about someone's politeness, about their interpersonal skills, about how well put together they are, whether they have good taste, or if they are a good person to go to the pub with or to take out a client – what informs those judgments is actually a particular template for a way of behaving that is classed. When we remove some of the neutrality of that template, we come to see that what has been viewed as meritorious ways of behaving, are more often than not simply norms of the middle and upper classes." (Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington)[6]

The BPS report covers education, health, and work, and points out not only individual instances of classism but the structural inequalities at play across all areas. The main

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[1] The protected characteristics are: age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

[2] See the new BPS campaign to make social class a protected characteristic, and the website of the Alliance of Working Class Academics (accessed on 19 January 2024).

[3] See Co-op's campaigns to break the 'class ceiling' and the report of the Bridge Group on meritocracy (accessed on 19 January 2024).

[4] See the BPS report on the psychology of social class-based inequalities, 2022 (accessed on 19 January 2024).

[5] See the Social Mobility Foundation's guide on the Class Pay Gap, 2023 (accessed on 19 January 2024).

[6] See J. Sheehy-Skeffington, 'Should class be protected under law?', 2022 (accessed on 02 February 2024).

aims behind the #Makeit10 campaign and similar movements fall into three key categories. First and foremost, trying to **stop class-based discrimination** – but the campaigners are aware that this will not happen immediately and completely. So, second, adding class to the protected characteristics will allow us to **measure class inequality**. If class-based discrimination were to be illegal, we would have to put mechanisms and metrics in place to check on, for instance, class-based inequalities and exclusion in recruitment, pay and promotion. It would force organisations, from public bodies to private companies, to make sure they are not discriminating. Third, trying to **raise awareness**. If class were a protected characteristic, we would have to think about it, talk about it, be aware of social class as potential grounds for discrimination, and of the structural dynamics that cause marginalisation on the basis of class.

This is hopefully where we are headed. But it is not yet the reality. So what can we do in the meantime? We can work towards achieving these three key goals, even without the law on our side. Our ultimate aim is of course to stop class-based discrimination. In order to strive for this, we need then to pursue goals two and three: to measure class, and to raise awareness of class-based discrimination. This is what we hope to achieve with this Class in Classics Report 2024. We begin by explaining our method to 'measure' class origins, surveying the main metrics used to gather class demographics. This is not difficult or overly disputed, and it has been successfully practised in other sectors, so the 'ambiguities' of class can no longer be something to hide behind. We then set out the data we gathered in the Class in Classics Survey 2022, revealing class disparities across student and staff bodies. These disparities heighten as we progress along the academic career path, revealing a leaky pipeline in which working-class classicists are squeezed out of the discipline. Importantly, class is shown to intersect with the protected characteristics, and indeed to compound them. Improvements to widening access to Classics at undergraduate level for those who identify as disabled or are from Black, Asian or mixed ethnic backgrounds, are squandered. Our data strongly suggests that the current EDI agenda is not working, because it does not work for everyone. We urge a radical rethink of EDI practices in order to embed class alongside other axes of inequality. In Part 2 the qualitative data collected by the survey is set out in terms of respondents' experiences of class-based discrimination. This falls under the broad categories of EDI, catching up, money, fitting in and dropping out. The picture that emerges is one of a predominant managerial/professional class ethos that makes anyone else feel 'other' and alienates working-class classicists at every juncture.

The struggle is financial, social, cultural, and structural. These are systemic injustices that cannot be allowed to continue.

This is, as far as we know, the first report of its kind produced in UK Higher Education and one of the first to examine the intersections between class and other characteristics in an educational context. It provides the first study of class demographics and experiences of class-based discrimination in an academic discipline. Classics needed its own specific study, because of its particular demographics, its 'elitist' reputation, and its regional and class-stratified availability in schools. This report is a wake-up call for Classics. But many of its findings will resonate beyond Classics into other academic disciplines. Many of the structural inequalities we see in Classics apply to other subjects too. We hope that this survey and report will spark other similar studies and lead to a shake-up across academia. In Part 2 we offer a series of recommendations. We urge schools, universities and policy makers to give these recommendations serious consideration, and implement them wherever possible.

Part 1: Demographics

1.1 Measuring class

The complexity of social stratification presents considerable challenges to research endeavours, societal discussions, and informed policies. Despite the challenges, much work in the last decade has succeeded in identifying robust proxies for class origin which, under the stewardship of the Social Mobility Commission, have been applied in a number of studies and to a number of sectors, from 'elite occupations' in general, through the creative industries and the civil service, to retail and the financial services (Brook, O'Brien, and Taylor 2018; Friedman and Laurison 2019; Carey, Florisson, O'Brien, and Lee 2020; Friedman 2022; SMC 2023; BG 2023).

Key to our investigation is the identification of effective metrics for class, with an emphasis on those that facilitate an understanding of dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within the discipline of Classics.[7] The most widespread methodology takes as its starting point the notion that childhood social and occupational environment, as indicated by the occupations of a child's parents, is the best proxy for class origin (and the best predictor of future class). This is the methodology used in a range of studies and reports published in recent years, and explicitly recommended by the Social Mobility Commission. This methodology examines career roles and inspects the continuum from parents' jobs to the positions their offspring later hold (Brook et al 2020).

Although assessing class origins via employment categories is an imperfect method, reflecting only a fraction of class's extensive and nuanced influence on individuals and societies, it remains a valuable (and widely used) indicator of any sector's demographic composition. This method has the added benefit of highlighting how class disparity coexists and interrelates with gender and racial inequalities. In some studies, class origin as parental occupation is complemented by other proxies such as class self-

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[7] In the context of the report, 'Classics' is understood to encompass a wide array of disciplines such as Greek and Latin literature, ancient history, Classical reception, Classical archaeology, philosophy, linguistics, Byzantine studies, and various other fields related to the examination of ancient Mediterranean civilizations and their interconnected cultures.

identification, eligibility for free school meals, type of school attended, and educational attainment of the parents. Our survey collected relevant data also for some of these proxies, and we have used these primarily to double-check the robustness of the data on parental occupation and of our extrapolations (following the example of Friedman 2022). We compare our results with national benchmarks in section 1.4.

Our examination adopts the variant of the three-class version of the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) recommended by the Social Mobility Commission, coded according to the methodology recommended by the SMC and employed in a number of sectors. This system of classification organizes job types initially into eight categories, ranging from higher managerial and professional roles to routine positions, with an additional category for non-workers or the persistently unemployed. As recommended by the SMC (and in line with most comparable studies), we group these categories in three macro-categories, which we provide here with sample occupations, for reference.

1. **Managerial and professional:** accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil/mechanical engineer, finance manager, chief executive, large business owner, teacher, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer, bank manager.

2. **Intermediate**: secretary, personal assistant, call centre agent, clerical worker, nursery nurse, small business owner (who employed less than 25 people such as: corner shop owner, small plumbing company, retail shop owner, single restaurant or cafe owner, taxi owner, garage owner).

3. **Working class:** postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, sales assistant, HGV driver, cleaner, porter, packer, labourer, waiter/waitress, bar staff, motor mechanic, plumber, printer, electrician, gardener, train driver.

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Social Mobility Commission 2023, 'Socio-Economic Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit: Retail Sector', https://socialmobilityworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/SMC_Retail-Employer-Toolkit-July-2023.pdf

1.2 Survey and respondents

The UK Class in Classics Survey ran from 25 October 2022 to 25 January 2023 and was open to UK classicists from undergraduates to professors, including also schoolteachers. Safeguarding confidentiality and anonymity were top priorities in its design: it was conducted using the online survey tool Qualtrics, set up to allow only anonymous responses, and response groups (modelled on the Social Mobility Commission's toolkit) were broad enough to make sure that no individual or department could be identified. Access to the raw data of the survey has been strictly limited to the authors of this report only, for the sole purpose of analysing the results and producing the survey itself. Survey respondents were notified in advance that the survey responses would be used for the purpose of producing this report, and individual responses have been further edited to maximise anonymity.

The survey had 1,206 respondents overall, which compares favourably with the CUCD Experience Survey 2019 (294 respondents, including only postgraduates and university staff), the WCC survey Women in Classics 2016 (417 respondents, from the same pool as our survey), and the Pandemic Stories survey 2020-21 (246 respondents, from the same pool as our survey). It also compares favourably with the Royal Historical Society 2018 gender equality survey (472 responses from the pool of a much larger discipline: History). The sheer scale of the response is evidence that people want to talk about class – that class is perceived as a central issue in the experience of classicists of all kinds.

The survey comprised 51 questions, divided into 7 sections. Respondents had the option of skipping any question or section they felt uncomfortable with. Sections 1 to 3 collected demographic data about employment, education, socio-economic background, and the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The survey had a completion rate of 55% (with completion defined as going through all the questions, in all sections, all the way to the end of the survey). 71% (i.e. 850 respondents) completed the majority of the survey (with extended answers in at least five of the sections), and 77% (i.e. 932 respondents) gave answers in sections 1 to 3 – those which collected demographic data – providing therefore relevant and useful demographic information. Their responses are used for the demographic illustrations and analyses which follow.

1.3 Basic demographics

Among the respondents who completed the first three (demographic) sections of the survey, a large number were associated with university institutions (**86%**). Academics (or academic-adjacent staff) employed at UK universities comprised a notable segment of the respondents, at around **28%** (**337** responses). **161** were on open-ended contracts, and **175** on contracts (from Lecturer/Assistant Professor onwards) which would normally fall under Category A staff in REF2021 – this provides a comparandum with the field as a whole: **463** Category A staff were submitted, in Classics, for REF2021. There were also, among our respondents, **49** postdoctoral researchers, and **80** university teachers, including teaching fellows, teaching assistants, and hourly-paid staff.

A remarkable **27%** of the total were undergraduate respondents (**315** responses), and **14%** were individuals affiliated in various capacities with schools or further education (**138** responses). Participation by postgraduate students was substantial, accounting for **18%** of the respondents, with **125** pursuing PhDs and **87** enrolled in Master's programs. There was good representation of different age groups, which helps paint a picture of class experiences across the entirety of classicists' educational and career progression: **33%** under 24s; **24%** between 25 and 35; **25%** between 36 and 49; **15%** between 50 and 67; and **3%** over 68.

As in previous surveys, gender representation was skewed towards those who identified as female, but less radically so. This category made up **59%** of respondents, while **36%** identified as male. Non-binary respondents were also better represented than in previous surveys (**5%**). **8%** of respondents indicated a gender identity different from their assigned gender at birth – a higher proportion than in previous comparable surveys (e.g. **3%** in the Pandemic Stories survey). The same applies to ethnic identity, with **7.6%** of the respondents identifying as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, Asian/Asian British, or Mixed/Multiple Ethic Groups.

Gender of Respondents

Ethnic Identity of Respondents
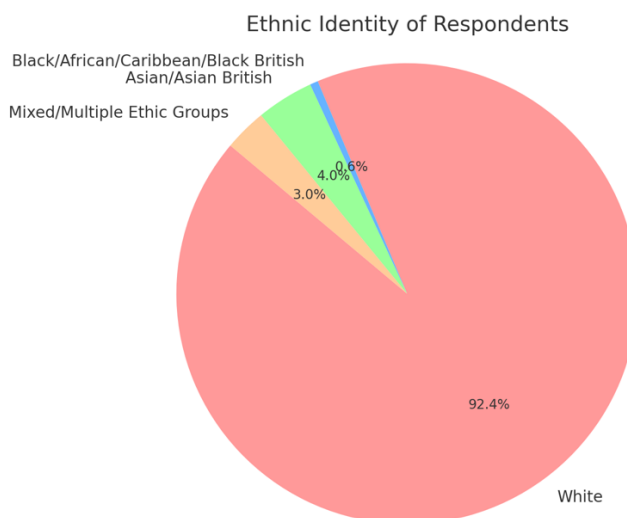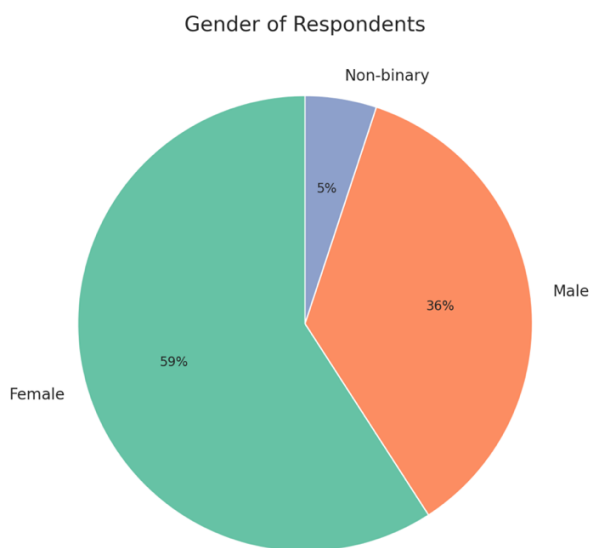
Those who identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Queer were also significantly represented (**35%**), particularly among working-class respondents (see section 1.6). One constituency that saw a remarkably high representation in our survey (boosted by working-class respondents) is those who declared a disability: **23%** of respondents – a higher proportion than in previous comparable surveys (e.g. 16% in the Pandemic Stories survey and 18% in the CUCD Experience Survey).

Sexual Identity of Respondents

Disability among Respondents
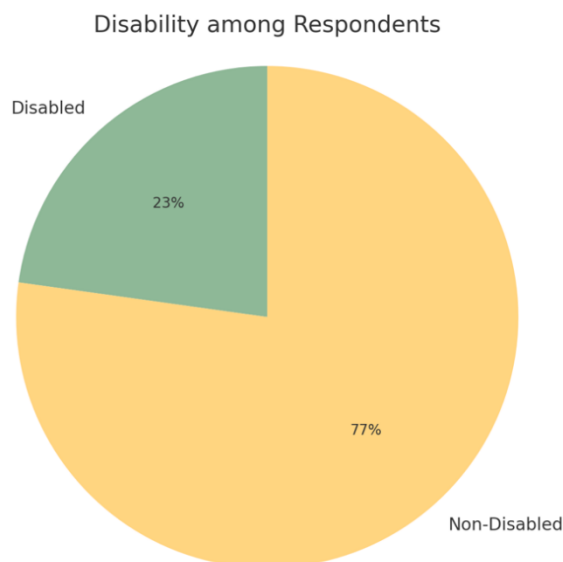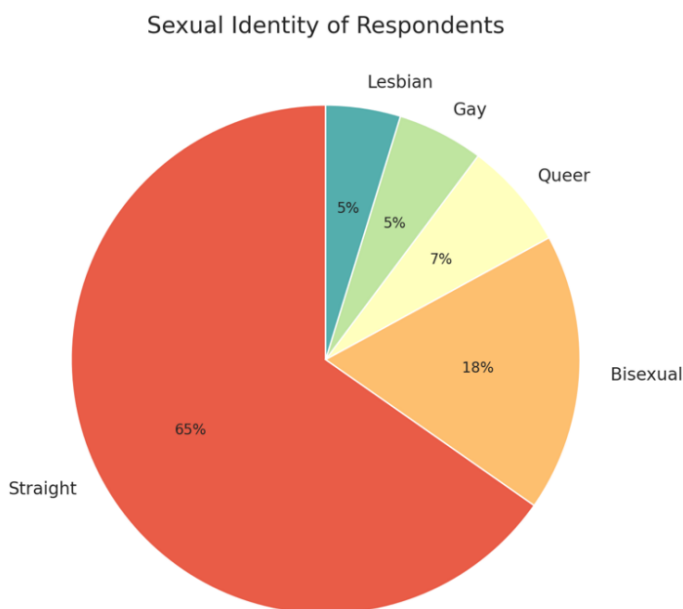
All this already suggests that the focus on class, far from discouraging the representations of other axes of exclusion, has in fact succeeded in better capturing also a wider range of diversities, an insight which will find much confirmation at various points of the report.

1.4 Class composition

As noted above, our primary method for assessing class origins was to ask respondents to identify the occupation of the primary earner in their households (according to the SMB version of the NS-SEC categories) when they were 14 years old. We also asked respondents to self-identify their class background, about their schooling, and whether they were recipients of/entitled to free school meals, and we have used this data (as standard in such analyses) to confirm the robustness of the occupational data. Overall, **67.2%** had, based on parental occupation, a managerial and professional class origin, **10.5%** an intermediate origin, and **22.3%** a working-class origin.
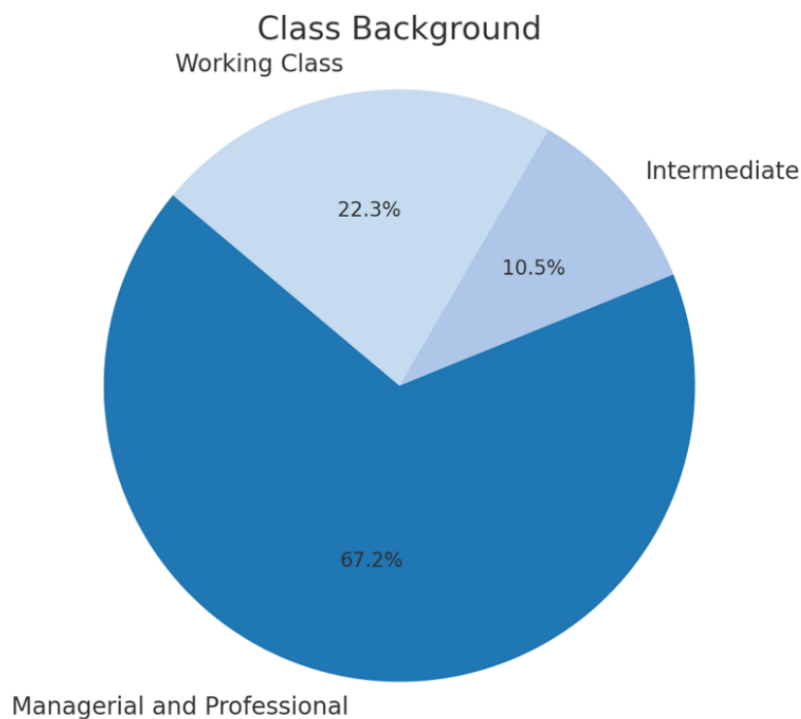
A key concern, in designing the survey, was that its explicit remit would lead to excessive overrepresentation of working-class classicists, painting therefore a (deceptively) rosy picture of the discipline's inclusivity. We should not have worried: although it is clear that working-class respondents are in fact overrepresented in such a survey, the percentages for each category are nevertheless striking compared to the overall workforce (suggesting even more worrying realities), as illustrated in the following table (workforce data from the Labour Force Survey):

Comparison of Class Distribution: Classics vs UK Workforce
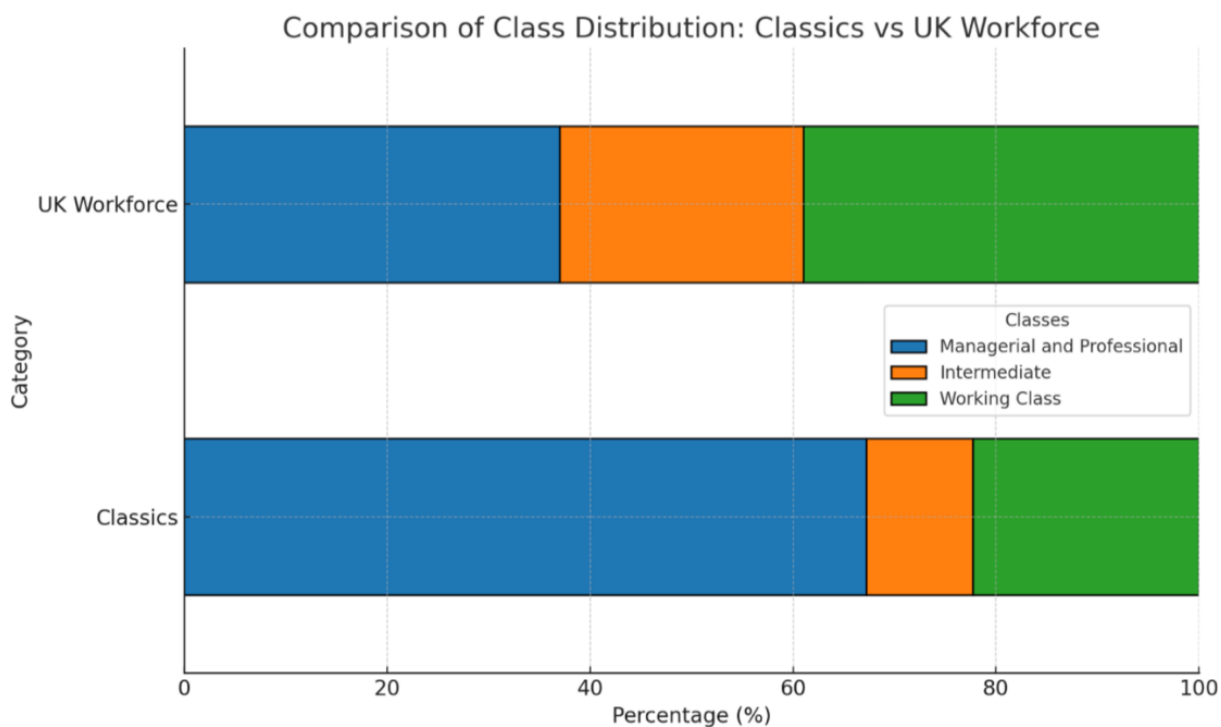
This is confirmed if we look into class self-identification (rather than parental occupation): although the percentage of those who self-identify as having a working-class background is higher (**27%**) than the percentage of those whose background is working-class based on parental occupation (**22.3%**),[8] they are in fact even more underrepresented compared to the overall self-identification data of the British Social Attitudes 40 survey, which shows that 46% of UK respondents describe their background as working-class.[9] The discrepancy is striking.

It is particularly helpful to compare the percentage of professional academic classicists (i.e. classicists with academic posts in universities, of all grades and regardless of contract type: this excludes undergraduate and postgraduate respondents) declaring a managerial and professional background in our survey with the equivalent representation in elite occupations as a whole, and in the most 'unequal' elite

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[8] The tendency to 'misidentify' or 'under-identify' as working-class is studied in Friedman, S., O'Brien, D., and McDonald, I. (2021), 'Deflecting Privilege: Class Identity and the Intergenerational Self', *Sociology*, 55/4: 716-33., who point to the intergenerational pull of the working-class origins of grandparents and ancestors and to the meritocratic implications of having a working-class background for managers and professionals. In the case of this survey, the qualitative answers suggest a further explanation: the higher echelons of the managerial and professional classes are, as we shall see, so heavily overrepresented among classicists that classicists of otherwise intermediate (and sometimes professional) origins end up feeling socially 'lower' than they would in other, more inclusive environments.

[9] See the British Attitudes Survey 40, Social Class, 2023 (accessed on 25 January 2024).

occupations individually (as studied in Friedman and Laurison 2019). The graph shows well how heavily overrepresented the top two occupational categories are in our discipline (among professional academic classicists) – on a level with only the most elitist of all elite occupations, Medicine (based on Labour Force Survey data), at around **70%**.

Professional and Managerial Backgrounds
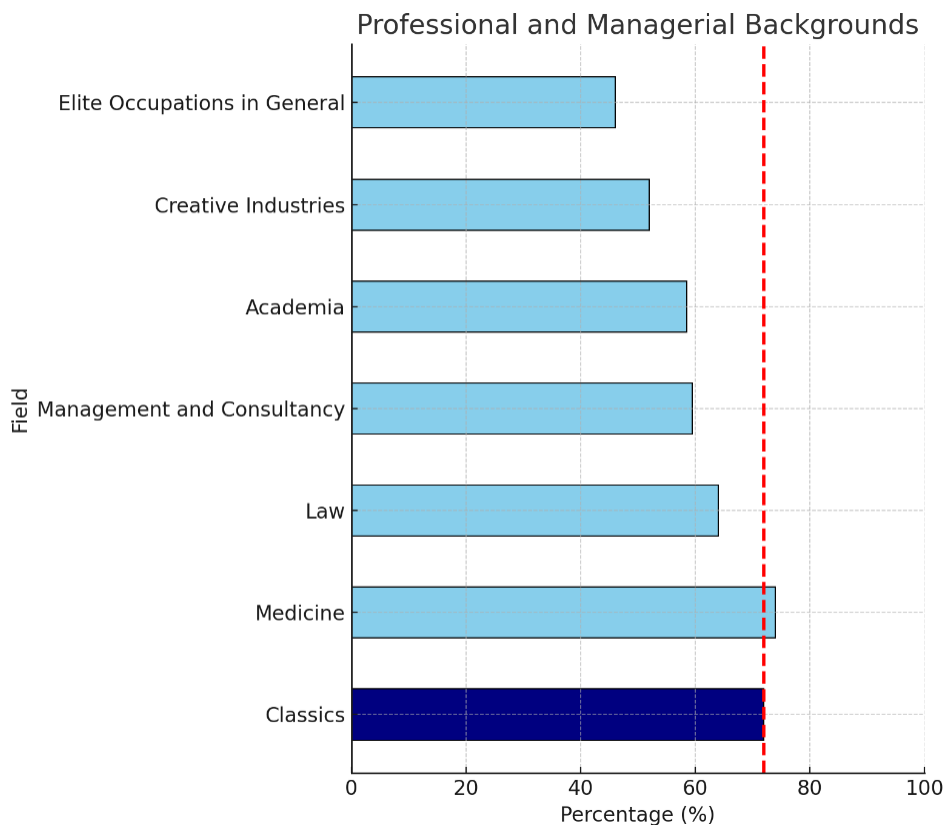
And it is worth stressing, once again, that the sample provided by our survey is very likely to be skewed towards working-class origins, so the reality might well be that the dominance of managerial and professional backgrounds among academics in Classics exceeds all other elite professions. Similar percentages are found also among the Classics teachers responding to our survey: **69%** had a managerial and professional background, **9%** an intermediate background, and only **22%** a working-class background. The problem, then, does not exist only among academics.

We find a similar picture if we zoom in on the class composition of the undergraduate respondents, compared to the relevant data published by HESA for 'UK domiciled full-

time HE undergraduate student enrolments by participation characteristics'.[10] In the enrolment period between 2017/18 and 2021/22, across all HE institutions in the UK, **51%** of entrants came from a managerial and professional background, **22%** from an intermediate background, and **27%** from a working-class background (according to NS-SEC classification). **9%** came from a privately funded school, and **91%** from a state-funded school or college. In our survey, **69%** of UK UG respondents came from a managerial and professional background, **13%** from an intermediate background, and **18%** from a working-class background. **66.5%** went to a state-funded school and **35%** to a privately funded one. Once again, it is probable that intermediate and working-class backgrounds are in fact overrepresented in our survey – given its focus on class exclusion – and the reality is likely to be even bleaker.
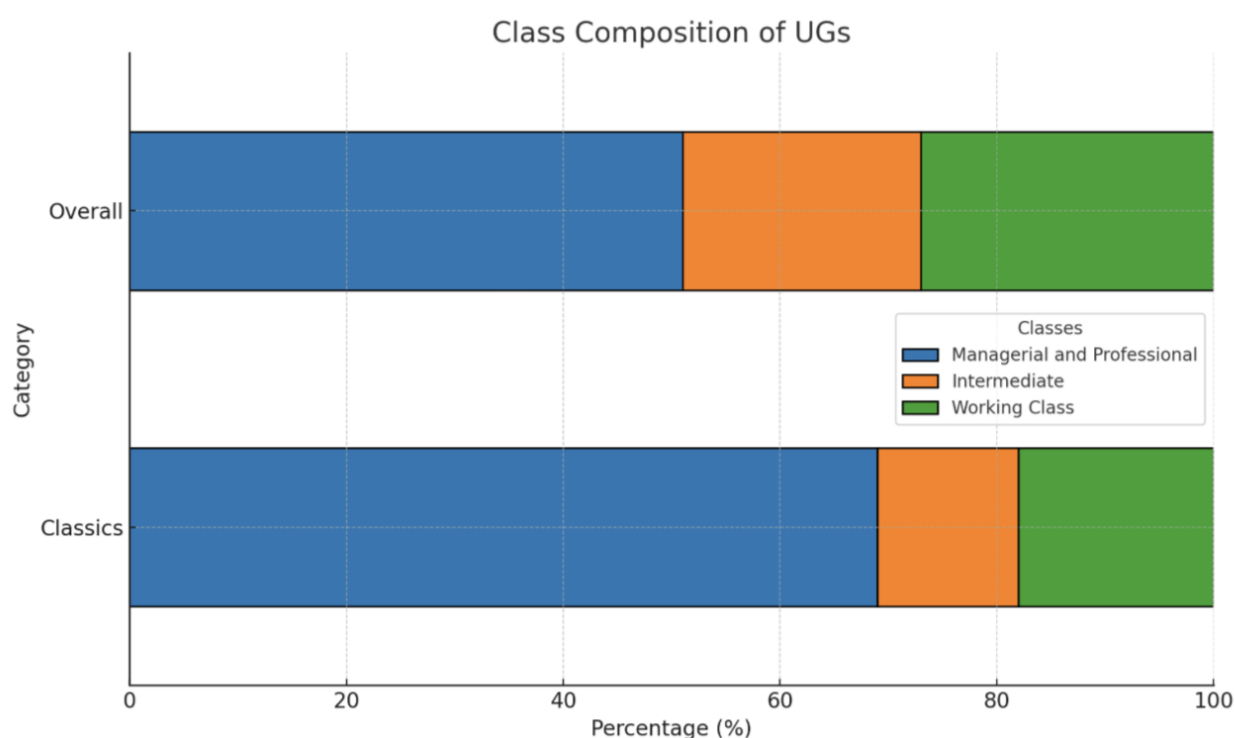
Other metrics of socioeconomic background recommended by the Social Mobility Commission (which do not replace but supplement parental occupation) are type of school attended between ages 11 and 16 (attending independent and fee-paying schools without full bursary 'shows extreme economic and cultural advantage', as shown by the SMC and the Sutton Trust), eligibility for free school meals (a measure of

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[10] See the HESA Student Data, 2023 (accessed on 20 November 2023).

extreme cultural and economic disadvantage, with the overall rate of FSM eligibility at top state schools being significantly lower than the national average)[11], and whether either of one's parents attended university and gained a degree by the time one was 18 (a measure of relative cultural advantage or disadvantage).[12] We compare in this table all UK respondents to our survey (in blue) with national benchmarks (in green) – our sample demonstrates a preponderance of privileged backgrounds on all metrics except, strangely, the percentage of UK respondents eligible for free school meals (which suggests perhaps that those respondents who are from a working-class background tend to be particularly disadvantaged).
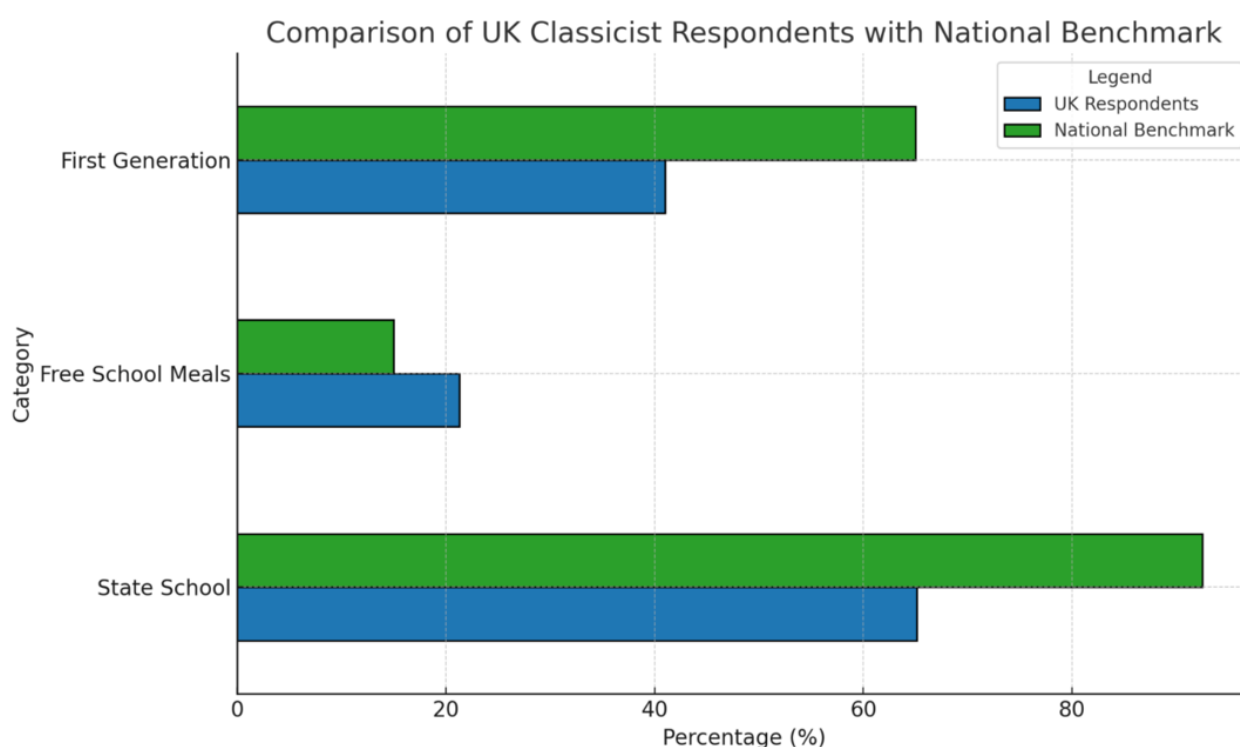
We also provide a further comparison of professional classicists from the UK (i.e. employed as classicists in universities and schools) with the national benchmarks – respondents are consistently more privileged than in the sample as a whole, and the discrepancy with the national benchmarks grows more significant. It is particularly interesting to compare the percentage of privately educated professional classicists with those of other elite professions.[13] Professional classicists would feature (at **44%**)

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[11] See the Sutton Trust report on eligibility for free school meals, 2005, (accessed on 17 January 2024).
[12] See the SMC toolkit for the measurement of socio-economic diversity (accessed on 23 November 2023).
[13] See the 'Elitist Britain' report published by the SMC and the Sutton Trust, 2023 (accessed on 23 November 2023).

among the 10 most elitist professions, roughly on a level with News Media, Newspaper Columnists, Public Body Chairs, and exceeded only by the Armed Forces (49%), Junior Ministers (52%), Diplomats (52%), Lords (57%), Permanent Secretaries (59%) and Senior Judges (65%). Of course, given the bias of our survey towards overrepresenting working-class respondents, it is likely that in reality professional classicists would rank even higher in this top ten.

Comparison of UK Professional Classicist Respondents with National Benchmark
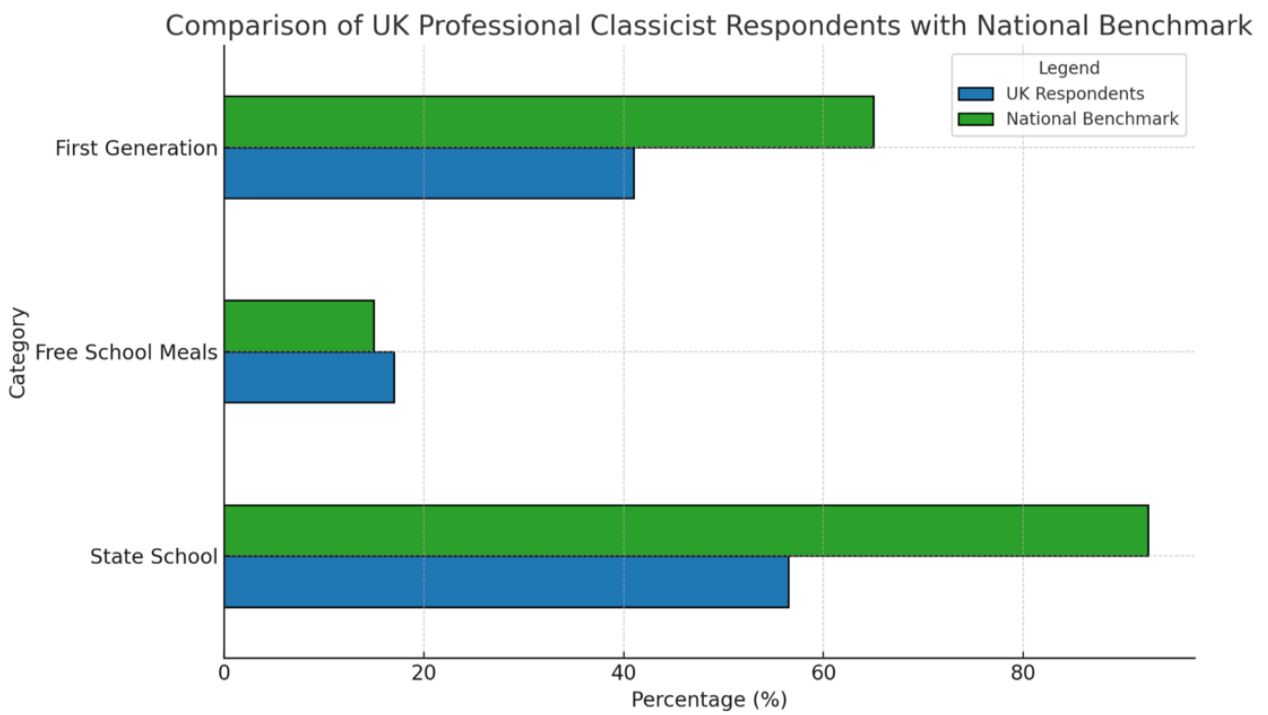
1.5 The leaky pipeline

The data of the survey, however partial and possibly biased (towards classicists with intermediate and working-class backgrounds), also allows us to identify some remarkable trends in terms of career progression, from undergraduates all the way to full professors.[14]

Class Background of UGs and PGs
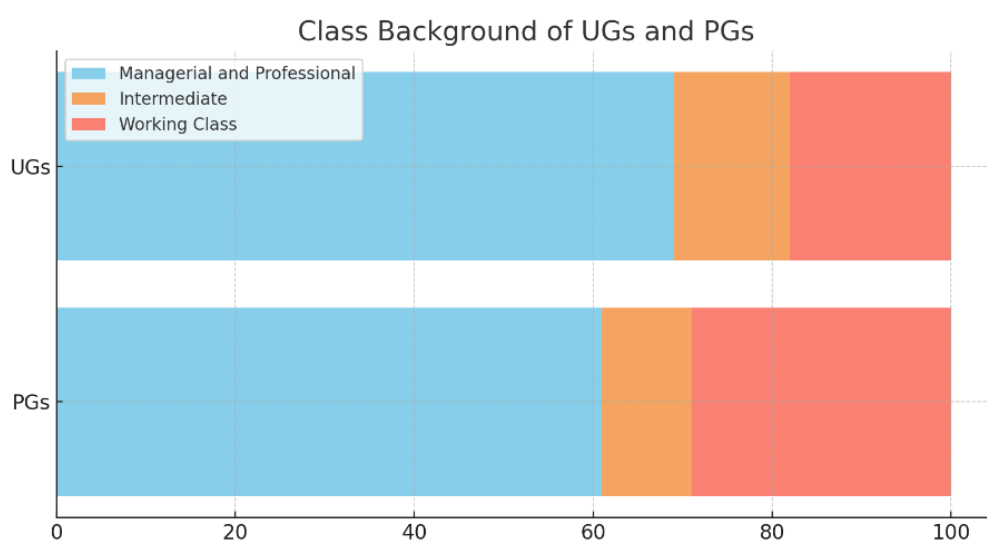
When it comes to the class background of students, the data shows that PG respondents are remarkably more diverse than UG respondents. This seems to have two roots. We note first that the proportion of non-UK respondents grows from **11% to 30%**, with the percentage of working-class backgrounds among them also growing significantly. Yet even within UK respondents the percentage from working-class backgrounds increases from **20%** at undergraduate level to **27.5%** among postgraduates. We can only speculate about the reasons for this trend. One factor may well be bias within our sample, although note that the numbers at least are very healthy (**212** PG respondents). Further reasons may have to do with historical employment trends: a Classics UG degree is traditionally, for students of higher

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[14] The number of respondents employed in schools (and particularly of headteachers and department heads) is too low to allow for such granular analyses, but the raw data indicates that respondents in leadership positions (both headteachers and department heads) were less likely to be from working-class backgrounds. Schoolteachers' answers to the qualitative questions are also invaluable for understanding the mechanisms behind access, inclusion, and exclusion, and also capture multiple forms of class-based exclusion in career progression.

socioeconomic origins, often a stepping stone towards careers in other fields, from the civil service to law and even banking. Working-class Classics students who do very well at UG level are perhaps more likely – given the more uncertain career prospects beyond the discipline itself, and the lack of mentoring and professional networks to mobilise – to pursue a PhD and, therefore, an academic career.[15]

Much of this diversity, however, appears to be lost in the transition from PG study to fixed-term early-career academic employment – the qualitative answers discussed in part 2 show that this is a critical career juncture when working-class classicists often abandon the discipline, and the data confirms their assessment. If **28%** of postgraduates come from a working-class background, only **19.5%** of respondents in fixed-term positions share the same background, while those with a managerial and professional background grow from **61%** to **70%**.[16] This particular transition, then, acts as a bottleneck, and deserves particular attention if socioeconomic inclusion in the profession is to be a goal.

Class Background of Academics by Career Stage

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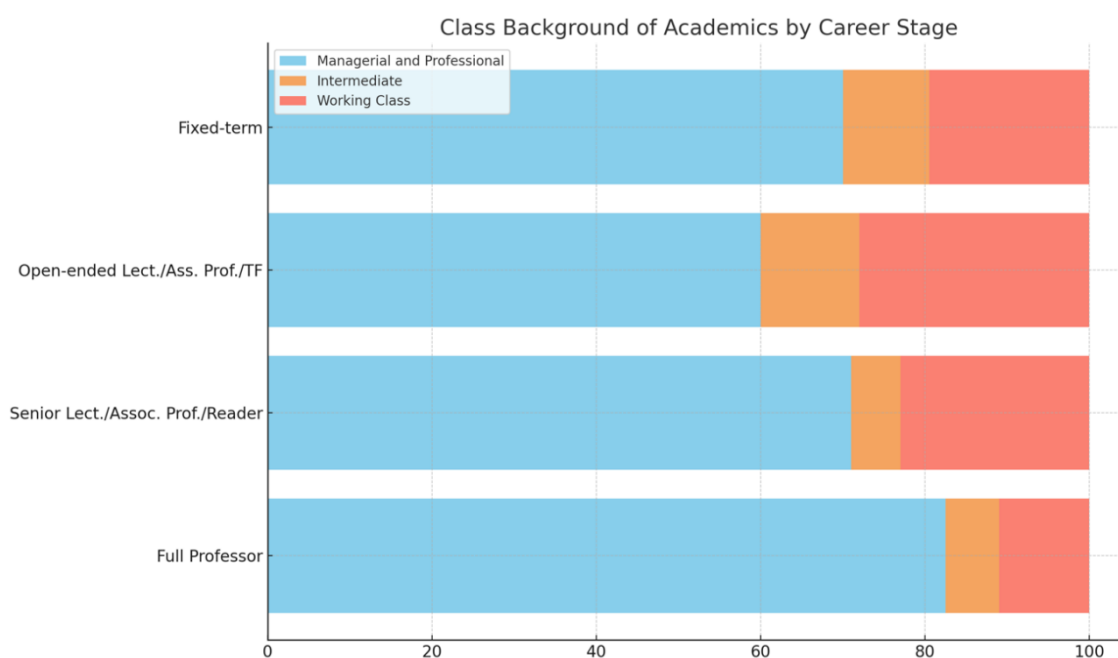
[15] Research has shown that, even when university attended and results are equal, the chances of working-class students securing graduate level employment are considerably lower than those of their more privileged peers: see e.g. Coulson S., Garforth L., Payne G., and Wastell E., 'Admissions, Adaptations and Anxieties: Social Class inside and outside the Elite University', in R. Waller, N. Ingram e M. Ward (ed.), *Degrees of Injustice*, Routledge, 2017: 3-21. There are, of course, problems of precarity in postgraduate study too, with funding being a major sticking point.

[16] These gaps widen even more for those who identify as female, disabled or of Black, Asian or mixed ethnicities, as we shall see in section 1.6.

The numbers for the next step of the academic ladder are at first sight more difficult to interpret and explain: among those respondents on an open-ended contract at Lecturer/Assistant Professor/TF level, **28%** have a working-class background – a considerable increase from the **19.5%** on fixed-term contracts. This could be a fluke in the data, but it is remarkable that this increase in working-class representation (matched by a decrease in the representation of those with managerial and professional backgrounds, at **60%**) appears to be due almost entirely to the influx of non-UK scholars who enter the profession, in the UK, at this stage: some **40%** of respondents at Lecturer/Assistant Professor/TF level (open-ended) are not from the UK, and **42%** of them are from a working-class background. Without them, working-class representation among respondents at this career stage is back down at **24%**, in line with the previous career stage (fixed-term). However skewed the data might be at this point, it is then a distinct possibility that working-class representation in the profession might be boosted – in the open competition for permanent academic jobs – by the relative socioeconomic anonymity of non-UK applicants, and that the very openness of the UK recruitment system (which is in this respect to be commended) might attract a disproportionate percentage of working-class early-career researchers from other countries whose progress at home was perhaps made difficult by their very socioeconomic background and lack of resources. We suspect this explanation will resonate with many foreign scholars in the UK, although this is of course, to a certain extent, speculation.

Whatever the gains in economic diversity at Lecturer/Assistant Professor level (open-ended), the percentage of working-class classicists on open-ended contracts declines steadily as we rise through the levels of the academic hierarchy: they are down to **23%** at Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor/Reader level (with managerial and professional backgrounds all the way up to **71%**), and they all but disappear in the professoriate, where they account for only **11%** of the respondents, while managerial and professional backgrounds account for **82.5%** of the total.

1.6 Class at the intersection

It is useful to disaggregate some of this data (as far as the sample allows) across different axes of exclusion, to try to understand how class intersects with a number of protected characteristics. Our primary finding is that respondents who are *both* working-class *and* female, of a Black, Asian, or mixed ethnic identity, LGBTQ+, or disabled face a 'double disadvantage' that results in underrepresentation or total exclusion from permanent employment as professional academic classicists. The data is of course partial, and the lack of comparable socioeconomic data e.g. from universities, departments and REF makes it impossible to test its robustness. The numbers, however, are significant, and they can give us some preliminary insights into the success (or otherwise) of standard EDI policy, as well as into how renewed attention to class might contribute to their effectiveness – insights that are strengthened by the qualitative answers analysed in Part 2. To anticipate our findings, it appears from both the demographic data and the qualitative answers to our survey that class-blind EDI approaches have so far proven by and large inadequate. The reason is that they overlook the complex interactions between class and other axes of inequality like gender identity, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. These intersections often result in unique obstacles and inequalities, which cannot be identified, let alone addressed, unless class is firmly on the EDI agenda.

We can start from gender balance and female representation. The data, as we shall see, strongly suggests that women from working-class (and, in fact, intermediate) backgrounds are disproportionately affected by barriers and disadvantage, and that whatever gains the EDI agenda has managed to secure, these have been by and large concentrated among women from a managerial and professional background. As we analyse the data, we should keep in mind that, as in previous surveys, women are heavily overrepresented in our survey (at **59%** against **36%** of men, overall). And, as in previous surveys, their numbers decrease as we rise through the ranks: they are, for example, **61%** of the UG respondents, **55.5%** of the PG respondents, **58%** of fixed-term academic staff, **53%** as they enter permanent academic employment, but only **41%** of the professoriate represented in the survey. This trend is well known, and it has long been the aim of EDI policies and interventions to rectify it. If we disaggregate this data based on class, however, we notice that female representation does not decline at a

consistent rate across all classes, but differentially depending on socioeconomic background.

At UG level, women account for **60%** of respondents from a managerial and professional background, and for **62%** from a working-class background – women are slightly more represented in the working-class cohort. At PG level, women are **54%** of managerial and professional respondents, and **57%** of working-class respondents – a similar arrangement. Similarly, among early-career, fixed-term academic staff, women are **58%** of managerial and professional respondents, and **63.5%** of working-class respondents. With permanent academic employment at Lecturer/Assistant Professor/TF level, however, women become significantly more represented among managerial and professional respondents (**61.5%**) than among working-class respondents (**50%**) – the trend is inverted. By the time we get to Professors, we find that women account for **43%** of respondents with a managerial and professional background – still a significant proportion, despite the decline – but only for **25%** of respondents with a working-class background. It is worth dwelling on this final figure to remember that this is **25%** of the **11%** total of working-class professors – in other words, working-class women make up a mere **2.75%** of professors.

The same trend is visible if we look, separately, at the socioeconomic distribution of male and female respondents at different career stages.


Class Background by Career Stage - Female/Male
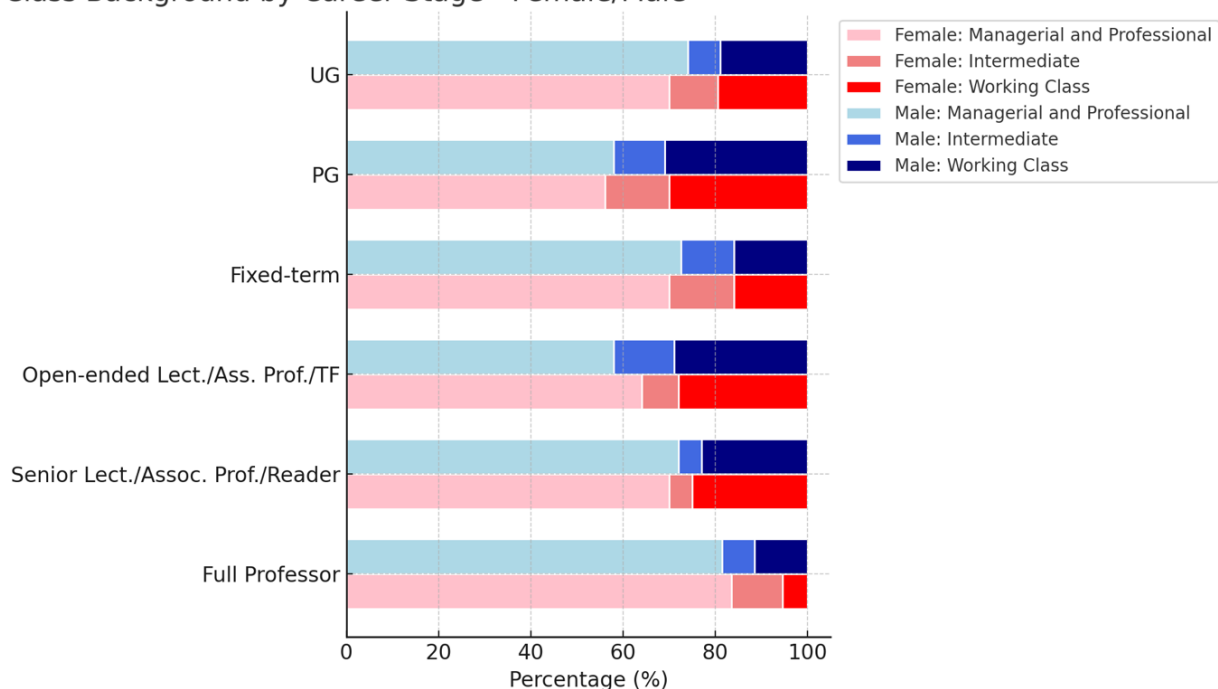
While the trends analysed in section 1.5 appear to apply to both men and women, they do so to different degrees. At student level (UG and PG) and in postdoctoral, TF, and TA roles, male respondents appear to be (slightly) less diverse socioeconomically than female respondents – the Managerial and Professional class is more represented among men than women. We have seen that the percentage of respondents from working-class and intermediate backgrounds goes up significantly with permanent academic employment at Lecturer/Assistant Professor level (while the overrepresentation of managerial and professional background concurrently becomes less stark) due to the large influx of non-UK respondents at this stage (**42%** of whom are from a working-class background), yet this graph shows that this gain in diversity – compared with those on fixed-term contracts – is overwhelmingly concentrated among men, and the preponderance of women from a managerial and professional background remains very pronounced. Working-class representation then declines further with promotion across both groups, and at professorial level the preponderance of respondents from a managerial and professional background, however staggering among men, is even more pronounced among women. This creates all sorts of issues in terms of available role models for working-class women, and suggests that EDI policies addressing gender imbalance – when they are effective – have a positive effect primarily on women from a managerial and professorial background, while the lack of attention to class ensures that women from a working-class (and, in fact, intermediate) background fall through the cracks.

A similar trend can be gauged when we look at how ethnicity intersects with socioeconomic background. In contrast to previous surveys, ours invited respondents to indicate if they were Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, Asian/Asian British, Mixed/Multiple Ethnic groups, or White. We did this to see if we could chart different experiences across different ethnic groups; but found that the number of respondents of Black, Asian, and mixed ethnic identities was too small to make meaningful distinctions. What follows here is a comparison between White, and Black, Asian and mixed ethnic identities. Respondents who identify as Black, Asian, or mixed ethnicities make up **8%** of the total, yet we can see that this steadily declines as we progress in terms of career stages: they make up **13%** of the UG respondents, **11%** of the PG respondents, **5.5%** of respondents in fixed-term academic employment, and only **3%** of those in permanent academic employment. If we disaggregate this data, we see that the progressive exclusion of Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity classicists affects

disproportionately those from a working-class background. In the transition between UG and PG, ethnicity appears to compound the same trend we have seen for class background (in section 1.5). At UG level, the percentage of Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity respondents is **15%** among those with a managerial and Professional background (not much lower than of the percentage of those identifying as Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity in the 2021 census data: 18%), but only **10%** among those
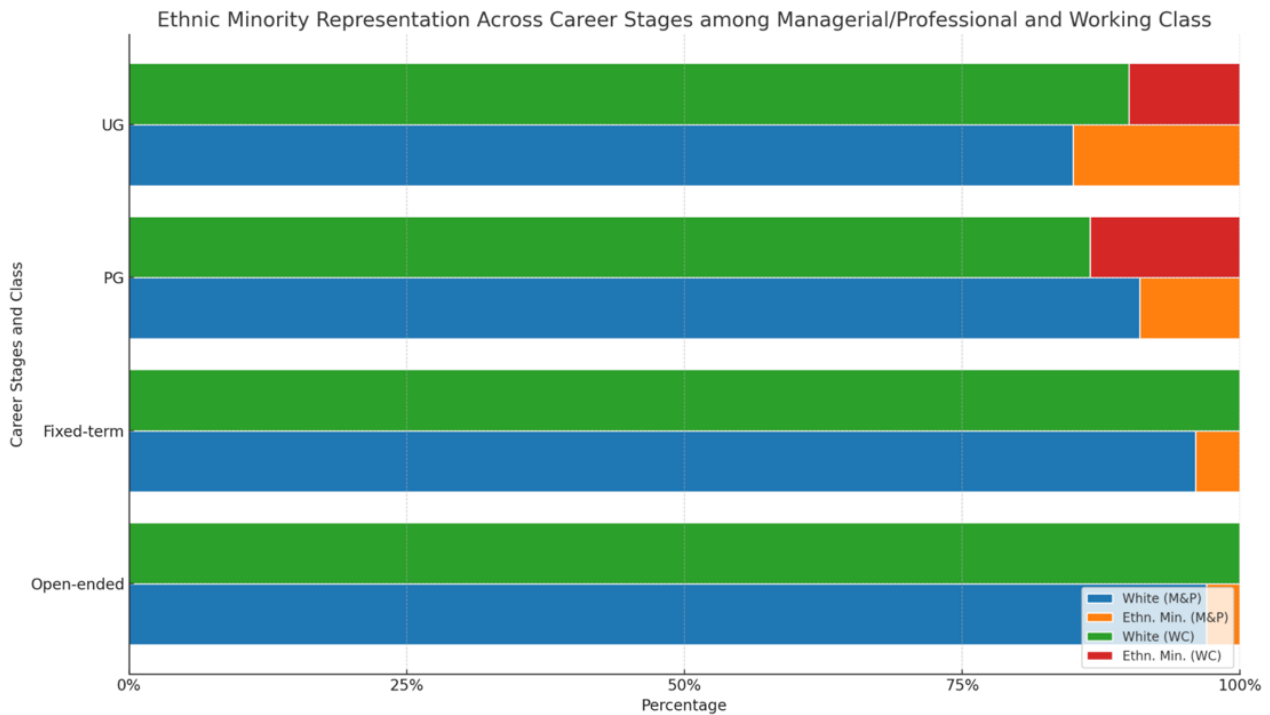
with a working-class background. A considerable proportion of working-class Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity respondents seem to continue into PG study: **13.5%** of working-class PGs are of Black, Asian, and mixed ethnic identities, against only **9%** from a managerial and professional Background. These gains in representation appear to be entirely squandered – as with socioeconomic background alone, but compounded – with the transition from PG to fixed-term academic employment: at that point, **4%** of respondents from a managerial and professional background are Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity, but none are from a working-class background. Finally, when it comes to permanent academic employment, **3%** of respondents from a managerial and professional background identify as Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity, but there are none from a working-class background. The data suggests, then, that while Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity classicists face exclusion across all socioeconomic groups,

and numbers decline across the board as we rise through the educational and academic hierarchy, working-class Black, Asian, and mixed ethnicity respondents suffer from higher levels of underrepresentation, and are in fact altogether excluded from academic employment in our discipline (fixed-term or open-ended) despite pursuing PG study in considerable numbers (not much lower than the national benchmark as in census data).

Similar trends are found also if we look at LGBTQ+ identities. As with the data we collected on ethnic identity, we hoped to be able to chart different experiences across different sexual orientations and gender affirmation or reassignment, but found that the number of respondents in each category was too small to make meaningful distinctions. We have therefore combined the data to comment on overall LGBTQ+ representation in Classics, but recognise that individuals may experience significantly different forms of exclusion in relation to their particular characteristics. LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ Representation Across Career Stages among Manag./Profess. and Working Class
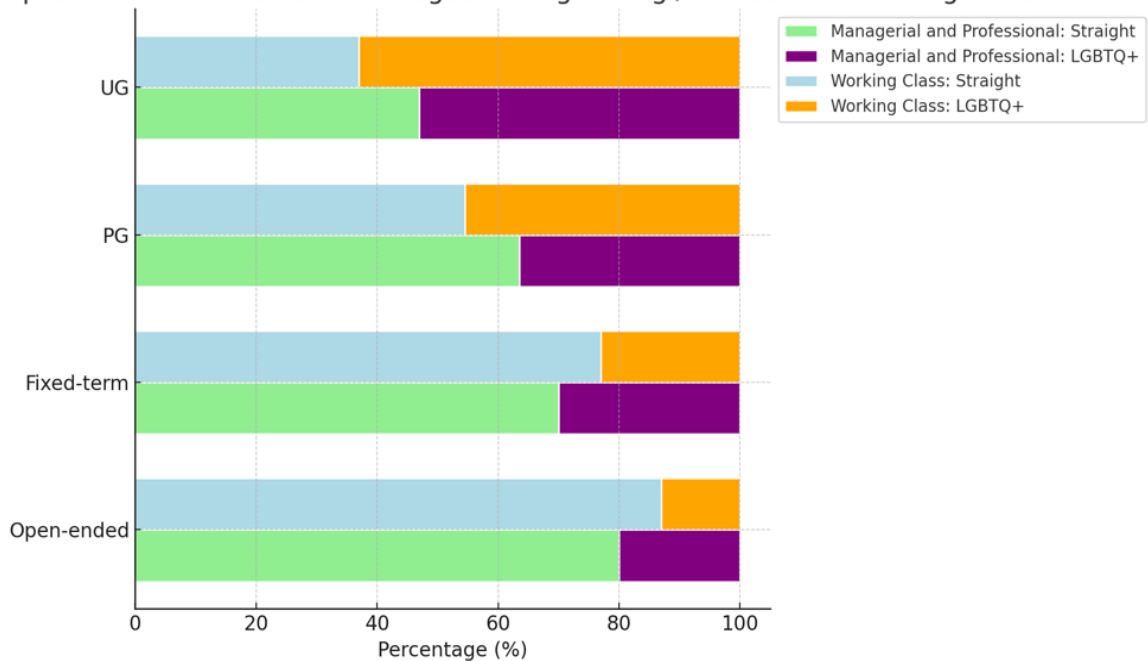
respondents, across all socioeconomic groups, decline from **56%** of the total at UG level, to **40%** at PG level, down to **30%** in temporary academic employment and to around **20%** among open-ended academics (with a further decline to only **16%** among Professors). Yet the data makes clear that their level of representation, when it comes to both temporary and permanent academic employment, is higher among respondents with a managerial and professional background, and lower among those

with a working-class background. This is particularly striking as working-class respondents are in fact significantly more diverse (in terms of LGBTQ+ representation) both among UGs and among PGs, yet they become less diverse with fixed-term academic employment and even less so with open-ended academic employment. While LGBTQ+ numbers among respondents with a managerial and professional background decline from **53%** at UG, to **36.5%** at PG, to **30%** in fixed-term academic employment, to **20%** on open-ended contracts, their decline among working-class respondents is much steeper (UG: **63.5%**; PG: **44.5%**; Fixed-Term: **23%**; Open-Ended: **13%**), suggesting that the disadvantage of LGBTQ+ respondents is compounded by a working-class origin, and vice versa.

Finally, the intersection of class and disability, as it is represented in our sample, provides particularly fruitful insights. A basic point is that disability and a working-class background appear, to a significant extent, to go together. **31%** of disabled respondents, overall, come from a working-class background, **14%** from an intermediate background, and **55%** from a managerial and professional background. Working-class representation among disabled respondents, that is, is much higher than the average across the survey (**23%**). This is even clearer if we look at the representation of disabled respondents among managerial and professional and working-class backgrounds.

Disabled among Manag./Profess. and Working Class

Managerial and Professional   Working Class

Disabled 19.0%   81.0% Not Disabled   Not Disabled 69.0%   Disabled 31.0%
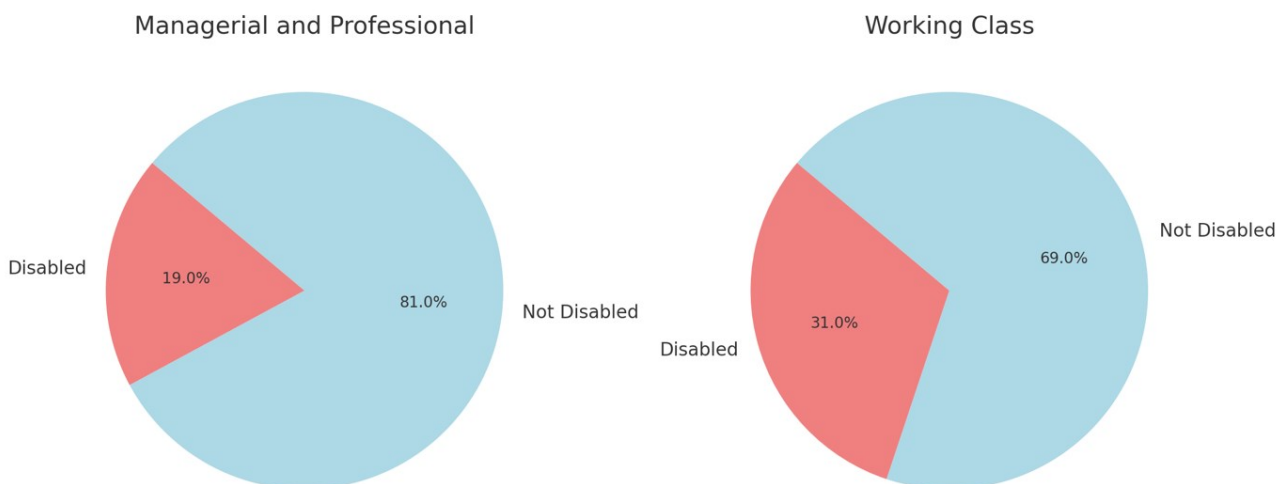
More attention to the barriers that exist for working-class classicists, therefore, is likely to help – at all points of the educational and professional journey – disabled classicists, and vice versa, given the strong correlation between the two.[17]

Ultimately, the data presented in this section, however provisional, strongly suggests that all the main forms of disadvantage on which EDI discussions and policies focus are in fact significantly compounded by class. Class-blind EDI fails to address the myriad ways in which class combines with gender identity, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability to create barriers and disadvantage for certain groups. The data also suggests that, whatever success EDI policies and interventions might have achieved so far, minorities and subaltern groups with a working-class (and, in fact, intermediate) background have failed to reap the fruit, and gains have by and large gone to those from managerial and professional backgrounds. All this finds much confirmation in the qualitative answers to the survey that will be the subject of Part 2 – there is a widespread sense that EDI is failing all but the socioeconomic elite.

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[17] It is worth noting that these figures are bolstered by higher numbers of disabled respondents who are students, at all levels (61% of the total of disabled respondents), with disabled respondents on fixed-term or open-ended academic contracts being far fewer (16% of the total). The limited representation of disabled respondents (regardless of class background) at postdoctoral level and above prevents robust analysis of how class disadvantage may (or may not) play out at different career stages. What is clear, in any event, is that working-class respondents are more likely to be disabled, and vice versa. It is also clear that, intersecting with class or otherwise, disability constitutes an enormous barrier in itself: disabled respondents are 31% of student respondents but only 15% of respondents employed as professional academic classicists. A report specifically devoted to disability in Classics is very much a desideratum.

Part 2: Experiences

2.1 EDI and class

Respondents noted that there is little discussion about class in their departments, to the detriment of their EDI agenda and the working-class staff and students involved. Class is considered less important than the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Even when discussions do happen, they don't feed into change, they are limited to admissions, they are largely 'opt-in' so are easy to avoid altogether, and they are deemed 'uncomfortable' by the middle-class majority. If real change is to happen, class needs to be firmly on the EDI agenda at all levels.

Talking about class

Speaking out about class has not been easy. Class has become such a difficult subject to broach that even in this anonymous survey there were concerns about saying the wrong thing. A number of respondents even asked us not to share their experiences in this report.

Sometimes raised; normally dismissed as 'class war', 'revolution', 'socialism' or 'tearing down British institutions', or just as a joke.

No discussion of class - when raised as something that should be considered (especially linked to cost-of-living crisis, pedagogy, practices around ancient language expectations) it is usually ridiculed by others.

It is mentioned in passing, but with apathy by people who themselves are not from a disadvantaged background and therefore feel no need to really address such questions.

I have raised it. Colleagues are pretty much blind to the issues or adopt deeply patronising attitudes which assume educational and intellectual inferiority. The assumption is a norm of upper middle-class values and experiences to which all should aspire. This just further alienates working-class students.

Sadly, even on an anonymous survey, I feel it is difficult to discuss these kinds of issues for fear of saying the wrong thing.

The lone voice

Discussions about class seem to take place only when there is a working-class representative. In many cases this means that such discussions simply don't happen. When they do happen, it puts a lot of undue pressure on that minority representative. We can see in the following responses both the difficulty of being that lone voice, and even (in the last comment) vilification of the lone voice in action.

It has started to become a matter of discussion, mainly thanks to a colleague, who themselves is first-generation and identifies as coming from a work-class background.

I find myself being the only main voice for the issue, constantly repeating myself to the point of feeling like I have made a name for myself as 'the state school advocate'. It's embarrassing and frustrating.

“   At an EDI meeting I raised the issue of socioeconomic inequality at my university. I was told it wasn't the type of inequality they wanted to discuss. I was the only working-class person in the room.

“   Discussed to an extent. My experience is largely negative, but that is because of one individual department member who wants to grandstand about his/her working-class background. Several other working-class members of the department, who are also first-generation scholars, maintain a quieter profile. In general, I feel our department is accepting and harmonious.

Intersections

Class may not be a protected characteristic, but as we have seen in section 1.6, it is a factor of identity and background that interacts with the protected characteristics. Respondents described their experiences at the intersections of class with gender, race, sexuality, disability and others. It is clear that the EDI agenda in all areas needs to incorporate class.

“   Yes, it is discussed, but often in opposition to other disadvantaged characteristics, usually race. I find this a frustrating way to discuss class, and misses the overlap and mutual benefit in discussing class *and* race/disability/sexuality, although it requires more effort and nuance to do so.

“   Lack of intersectionality when considering socio-economic background often meant that I missed out on funding/hardship grants etc. as class was only really identified or managed in relation to protected characteristics, rather than functioning as a characteristic on its own (e.g., others with protected characteristics in better socio-economic positions than I received hardship/funding support to which I was not entitled). I'm not saying I necessarily disagree with decisions like this, as there are many forms of privilege to which I have had access that others have not, but it highlights an inconsistency in how socio-economic background is treated at major universities.

Does EDI need to change?

Class is sometimes dismissed and disregarded *in favour* of a focus on other characteristics. The persistent dismissal of class issues, particularly when they are raised by working-class voices, is inherently classist and, as we can see from the charts in section 1.6, ultimately damaging to the protected characteristics too. In this respect, it is significant that while a majority of respondents from a managerial and professional background believed '**that class/socio-economic background was taken adequately into account in the training for equality and diversity or unconscious/implicit bias in recruitment that you received**', a large majority of working-class respondents believed instead that class was not, in fact, adequately taken into account. There is a clear mismatch here between what the managerial and professional majority in HE institutions, and in Classics in particular, believe is sensitive handling of class within EDI, and what is in fact perceived as such by working-class colleagues.

Class in EDI Training: Is It Done Adequately?
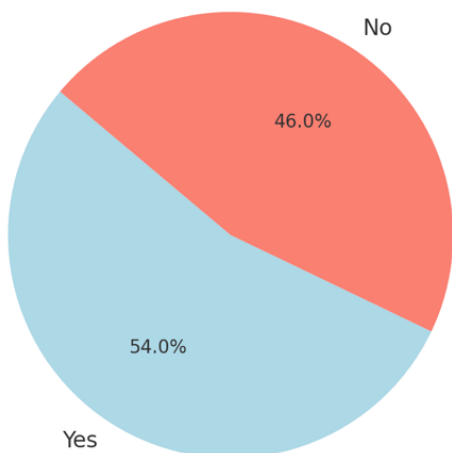
Managerial and Professional   Working Class
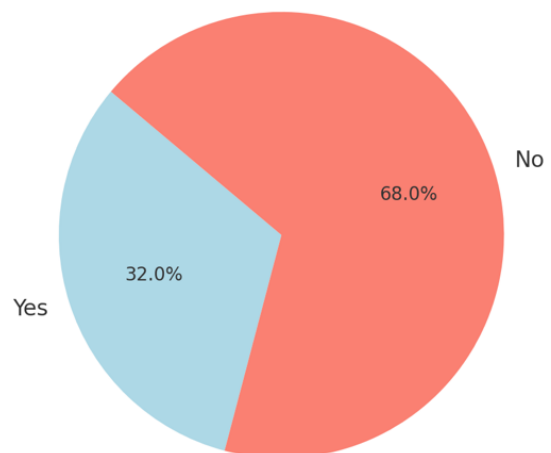
Not that often, and some of my posher colleagues (liberals, mind; not the conservative ones, who are – paradoxically – more open to talking about class) rolled their eyes, as if class is a white-van-man issue, and we should really be talking about race and gender.

> Since it is not a part of Athena Swan it does not get the attention it requires. It feels like an open secret, or an unsurmountable problem. When class is brought up, honestly, I feel as if this is met with some dissatisfaction from colleagues for whom gender and ethnicity are more pressing issues. In my view the discipline is institutionally classist and we do not yet have the tools to address this.

> It is also my impression that emphasis on gender as the main focus of EDI issues has legitimised anti-working-class sentiment among middle- and upper-class colleagues.

Compounding inequalities

> An intersectional approach shows us that we should be looking at the characteristics combined and not privileging one over others. Race and gender intersect with class in ways that may doubly disadvantage certain groups. This needs to be taken into consideration when devising EDI policies.

> I have sometimes found it hard to gain the respect and attention of undergraduate students from a higher-class background when teaching, in particular, Latin prose composition. Students – overwhelmingly men – whose class background has given them early practice at school in translation into Latin sometimes find it hard to believe that I can teach them more about this skill when my class background (and gender) means that I did not have this experience.

> As a working-class woman, I have often found myself doubly disadvantaged. In meetings dominated by middle-class men, I stand out like a sore thumb! Further, I don't quite fit in with the vocal feminists in academia. They come predominantly from middle-class backgrounds and so their experiences (and their priorities) don't really resonate with my own.

Disability

As seen in section 1.6, the data shows that disability is disproportionally represented among working-class respondents. It is an intersection that warrants particular consideration. And the qualitative responses suggest that the all-important issue of money looms large at this intersection. Working-class classicists encounter many financial barriers, as we will see in more detail in section 2.3, and the same is often true for disabled staff and students: these barriers are cumulative.

❝ My class background and socio-economic status has a massive impact on my daily life as a disabled person.

❝ I've often found that elements of my working-class background have intersected with my disability, for the worse… I could never take a leave of absence from my PhD, despite becoming seriously unwell on multiple occasions. It also meant that I didn't complete my PhD during the funded period and I had to take on additional employment… The time I lost is still having a negative impact on my career now.

❝ I feel that both disability and class-related issues are areas that need more attention. Currently, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and on the basis of race leave little room for discussion of the grave adverse effects of poverty and disability (as a registered carer I know from personal experience how little support is available, and how eye-wateringly expensive help can be, even from organisations that are defined by law as charities/non-profit). The burden falling on esp. young people to care for disabled relatives, and the financial costs associated with getting help for persons with physical disabilities are serious impediments to any classicist from a non-affluent background, whatever their colour, gender or sexual preferences.

What we can do

> **Key recommendations**
>
> - **Collect demographic data** about class background, always and at all levels (from student admission to recruitment and progression).
>
> - **Rethink EDI initiatives** altogether. The data from the survey strongly suggests that they are working only for certain specific groups, which means they are not working at all.
>
> - **Include class** in the EDI agenda, always and at all levels. It should not be an outlier but should be fully embedded. It should have more than a lone voice advocating for it, and should take both a 'nothing about us without us' and an 'allied' approach.

Detailed recommendations

- Ensure that the EDI agenda adopt an intersectional approach that includes class. Discussions about class should not be 'opt-in', but essential and therefore threaded through all areas of work (rather than relegated to 'widening participation' discussions alone).

- Robust class-bias training should be devised with working-class colleagues, made mandatory for all staff, and tailored for different scenarios (e.g. student and staff recruitment, teaching).

- Funding bodies should also engage with class-bias training when developing new funding schemes and assessment processes. They should capture class data and publish success rates alongside other types of demographic data.

- Ensure that funded medical and compassionate leave is available to postgraduates. This is particularly important for disabled students, for which funding processes must recognise that such students may be more likely to require extended breaks from their studies and that the assurance of consistent financial support can aid recovery. Criteria for determining such leave must be inclusive and intersectional, and recognise that some pauses or changes to study will relate to protected characteristics, such as gender identity and reassignment.

2.2 'Catching up'

> "You must learn & catch-up with a social group you were not born into....
> and perhaps you never will feel entirely comfortable"

The Golden Standard

There was a persistent concern amongst respondents about the perceived and institutionalised need for working-class or state-school students to catch up with middle/upper-class or private-school students. Those coming into university with some knowledge of Latin and Greek, or familiarity with Classics more generally, or even a certain cultural capital, are held up as the golden standard against which everyone else is compared. Often, students who had not studied any classical subjects before attended schools where there was no provision of any subjects on or off timetable. Likewise, schoolteachers were keenly aware of the disadvantages their students may face if they have had little experience of studying classical subjects at school, particularly Latin or Greek. It is significant that working-class respondents expressed considerably more agreement than respondents from a managerial and professional background with the statement: '**In a teaching and learning context, a lack of prior knowledge or experience of the ancient world has resulted in me feeling out of place, excluded, or lacking in confidence**'.
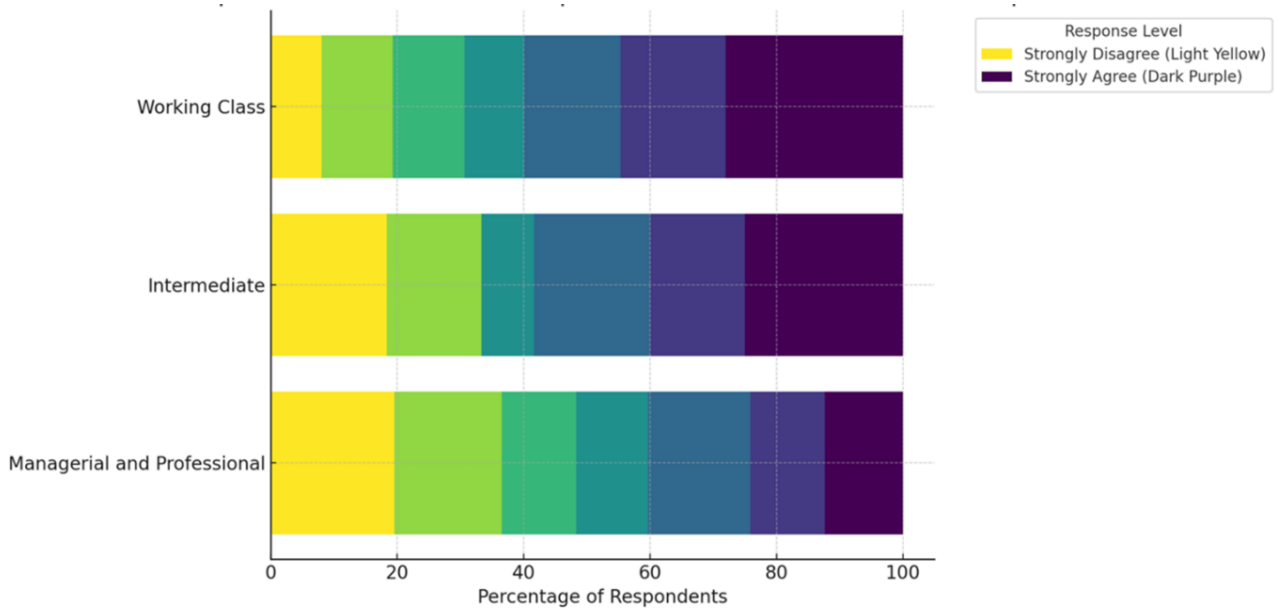
These subjective evaluations are supported by the demographic evidence of the survey. We have provided in section 1.4 data and graphs showing the remarkable extent to which first-generation classicists (whose parents did not go to university) are underrepresented among the respondents to our survey – this underscores the point that differentials in cultural capital are particularly stark in our discipline, and significantly more extreme than in general trends in other disciplines and across higher education. And, as we have seen, the privately educated are also heavily overrepresented among Classics students and classicists in general. As Classics provision is overwhelmingly more present in privately funded and independent schools, this is very significant. It is equally significant that, irrespective of type of school attended, Classics students (and even more professional classicists) by and large attended schools where there was some kind of Classics provision. While inevitable, this contributes to the sense that those who did not have access to such provision (a larger portion of whom are working-class) are somewhat deficient and need to 'catch up' with their more privileged peers. Qualitative responses to the survey demonstrate the impact of this pressure to catch up on student experiences and progression.

Classics Access in Schools
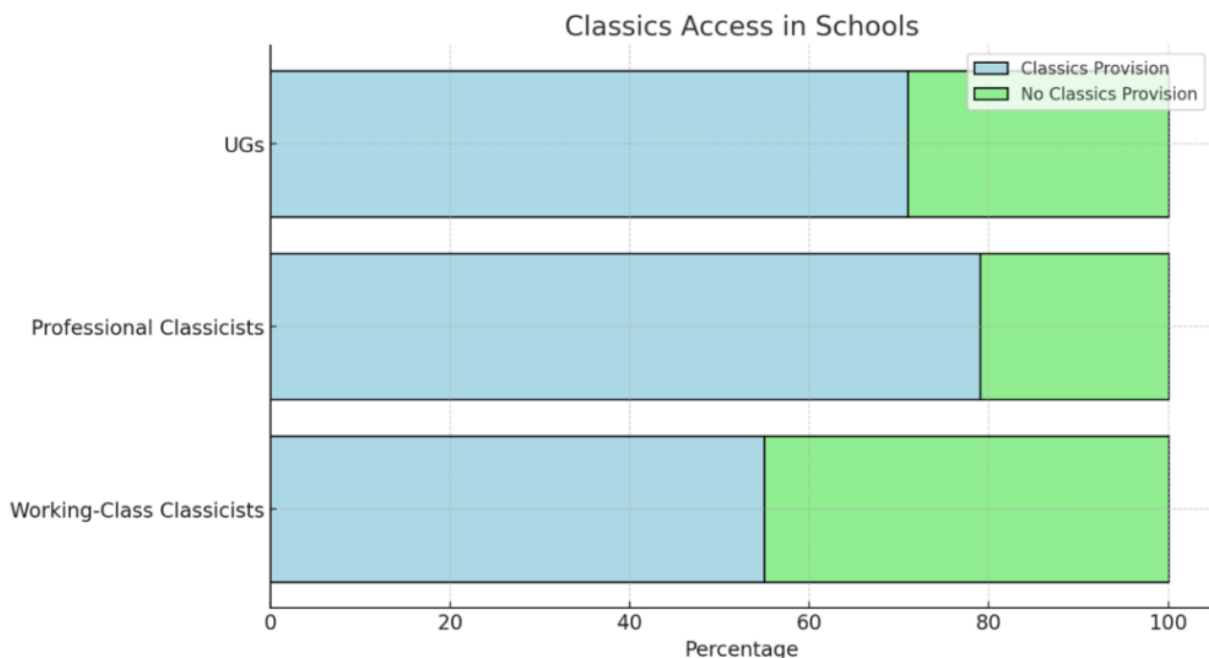
❝ At university, as a northern, state-school educated female I was significantly in a minority – biggest impact was the catching up I needed to do compared with fellow students from independent & selective state schools.

❝ With no opportunity to study classical history or languages until attending university there is no way that you can catch up with your colleagues from more privileged backgrounds (esp. in languages). I didn't know Classics was even a subject until I went to university and changed to do a joint degree.

❝ There are huge disparities in access to prior knowledge about the ancient world across the student body. Some students will have benefitted from ancient language and/or classical civilisation classes on timetable for their entire school career, whilst others will be studying languages and/or the ancient world for the very first time. I've also noticed the harmful rhetoric of 'catching up' being attached to students with no prior knowledge, as if they don't bring any valuable skills or knowledge from other areas of study and instead will only be valued once they have obtained an equivalent level of knowledge to their (typically middle and upper class) peers.

❝ They [state-school students] have no previous access to ancient languages and this limits their opportunities at university and beyond if they want to remain in the field.

❝ When I started teaching, Latin and Greek were seen as the 'proper subjects' but Classical Civ as an easier option. Many teachers of Classics were educated in independent schools and have articulated this sometimes.

❝ There is often a snobbery about which degree you have done which is often linked to class. Once someone said in a meeting that you can't be a proper Classics [school] teacher if you haven't studied Greek which is a class thing because it is very rarely taught in state schools and is generally the preserve of fee-paying schools.

First encounters with Classics

There is a huge element of risk in taking a subject at university that you have not studied before. As such, students taking Classics without a background in

the subject should be supported, encouraged, praised. And yet, the opposite holds true in many cases. Students who had not had the opportunity to study classical subjects at school spoke of developing an interest in the ancient world via popular culture, which was sometimes set against forms of exposure that require financial resources, particularly travelling to museums and archaeological sites.

I have seen working-class or state-educated students being patronised or skipped over in conversations - I have also seen both staff and students not explain their Classical references as they name-drop plays etc., leaving students who are new to Classics looking (and I imagine feeling) pretty awful.

There are a lot of assumptions made about the knowledge you (should) already have, which you just don't have if you attended state school, or are the first person in your family to attend university. Although widening participation initiatives (from which I benefitted) have succeeded in getting more working-class people into universities, there is no support once you are there - to guide you through the university process, to encourage you to do a masters, etc.

I have also found that many more wealthy individuals in my university have a wider knowledge of the Classical world as a result of extensive travel to important sites and museums.

The discrimination is mostly financial – my [school] students will struggle to ever visit Greece or Rome and this puts them at a disadvantage. We also can't afford to attend the trips we would like.

Learning Languages

Although language learning from beginners level is now offered in many university Classics departments, the pace of the learning is often escalated to allow beginners students to 'catch up' with those students who come to university with some knowledge of Latin and Greek. This often means working-class students (who have less access to language instruction) having to 'catch up' with middle/upper-class students, creating class-based discrimination. There is also a culture of counting the number of years studying the languages,

as if this necessarily correlates to knowledge/skills. This leads to class-based discrimination during studies but also, crucially, can cast a long shadow over an individual's employment prospects, both in universities and schools.

Timetabled Latin and Greek at School
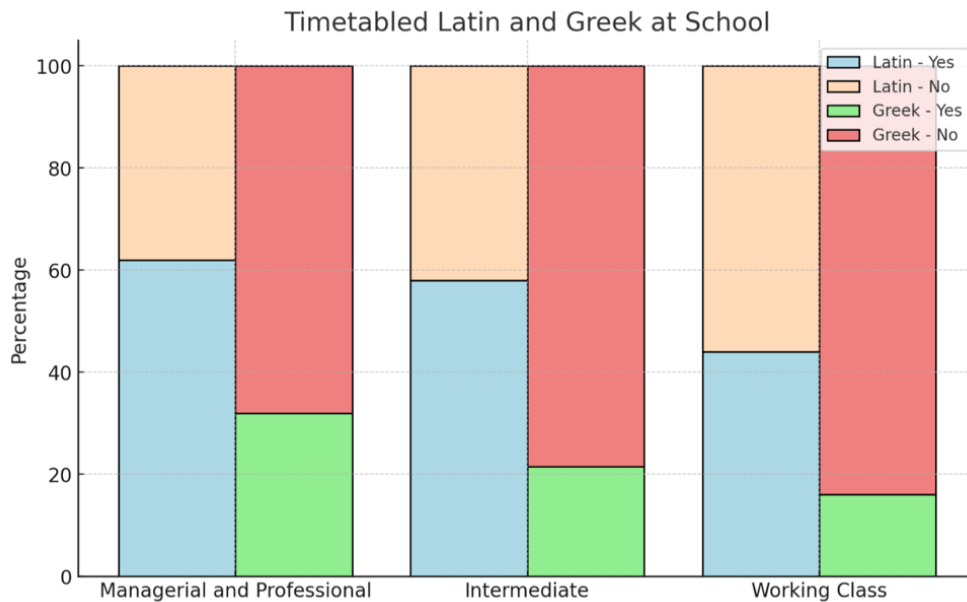
Especially in languages, students learning language at university have a different experience to those coming in from fee-paying schools, and these kids have a massive advantage just in terms of years spent learning Latin/Greek. It's a hard barrier to push through confidence-wise.

Although the Oxford course is designed to accommodate all prior experiences, it still naturally prioritises those with A level Greek and Latin; for example, my college arranged for Homer reading classes for the cohort in which we are all expected to prepare the text to the same level despite me (and another student) still learning the basics of forming verb endings, for example, in our Greek lessons. It seems that this is representative of the attitude that the 'standard' is to have A-level Greek and Latin, placing everything else below it, rather than treating this as a privilege that many have been excluded from.

I have worked mainly with adult students in an institution that valued and promoted part-time study and charged modest fees. It also devised a curriculum that allowed students to experience classical subjects as part of a broad-based foundation

year. This opened horizons. However, it was still difficult for students from comprehensive schools, however capable, to progress to PhD and academic status because of lack of long years of language learning (still available in many public schools), even if they took advantage of the beginners/intermediate language courses of offer. I call this the socio-economic language ceiling.

❝ I didn't get the chance to study Greek at school, and gave up Latin after three years because the teacher was a tyrant – and therefore was 'left behind' to catch up at uni. So sniggers from posh contemporaries at conferences (vel sim.) about 'X started Greek at university/sneer sneer' made me feel an outsider.

❝ I was told by a fellow student that he didn't believe people who hadn't done Greek at school should be allowed to study at places like Oxford, Cambridge, and our university. This led to me feeling like I wasn't good enough to be there, and it was a struggle to get out of that.

❝ More subtle is the weighting placed on language excellence above all other analytical skills within progression into PG work and beyond. I have seen persons preferred for appointments for their ability to write Latin verse, which is not a skill ever called upon in the institution, even if showing no evident critical skills. Although that is not immediately exclusionary as a characteristic for appointment, in effect it is. Criteria-based job evaluations have helped here, but one may note the pervasive issue of sky-high marks in some advanced language modules and the knock-on effects into degree classifications.

❝ As someone who did not have the opportunity to gain qualifications in ancient languages, this limits the number of jobs open to me. In fact, I was even rejected from the [university] classics PGCE on this basis.

❝ I did not study classics at school and I only learned Latin at university, which put me at disadvantage when applying for [school] teaching jobs as they perceived my subject knowledge wasn't good enough.

Two-tier system

Many universities make a distinction between 'Classics' (with an emphasis on languages) and 'Classical Studies' (not so language focused). This has crystallised into a perceived hierarchy, and because of inequalities in access to ancient languages it generates a class hierarchy.

❝ Classics students at uni made it abundantly clear that they looked down on Classical Studies students. I did not go to a school that gave an opportunity to take Greek or to take Latin to a level, so Classical Studies was the only option for me.

❝ Social barriers of Classical Studies and Ancient History being seen as inferior to traditional Classics due to the lack of language instruction…

❝ Having a 'Classical Studies' degree… has definitely made me seem second-class.

❝ Classics was fairly hierarchical when I started out. Having a degree with 'Studies' at the end, not having studied Latin and Greek at school, and not having been to the 'right' university made me feel out of place at times.

What we can do

The 'catch-up' rhetoric has to stop. There should be no golden standard, no ideal journey for a classicist.

Key recommendations

- Schools, universities, and charities should work closely together to create and advocate for **different pipelines to study classical subjects**, such as: improving access in schools, offering summer schools, baccalaureate and bridging programmes, and revising degree requirements and programmes.

- Universities should **recognise class background as a key factor** in determining student experience and progression, and establish processes to monitor and address this, such as tracking class attainment gaps and withdrawal rates, and making class matters a standing item on EDI and Staff-Student committees.

Detailed recommendations

- Schools and universities should work collaboratively to widen access to classical subjects, including fee-paying schools and universities doing the heavy-lifting to support non-fee-paying schools and valuing the expertise schoolteachers have to improve pupil inclusion.

- Summer schools should be more flexible and more affordable, fitting around paid employment and caring responsibilities.

- There should be baccalaureate, bridging and foundation programmes, and greater departmental involvement in e.g. access programmes. These should be framed as an essential part of student recruitment, as opposed to an add-on.

- First-year UG teaching in particular should take into account that not all students come to university with prior knowledge of Classics. This might mean changing the way topics are introduced, providing additional support, and revising syllabi to reward different forms of prior knowledge.

- Departments should work with their local 93% Club to help them level the playing field.

- All Classics degree programmes should offer Greek and Latin from beginners level and there should be multiple entry points for starting to learn Greek and Latin (not just first-year UG but throughout UG, at Masters and PhD level).

- Language teaching should take all student cohorts at a pace that is suitable for their stage, and not attempt to 'catch up' with other student cohorts.

- Language modules should be weighted more fairly, and marks assigned coherently with other non-language modules.

- University departments should consider creating one Classics degree, which may or may not include languages, with no hierarchy between pathways. The perceived hierarchy between 'true' Classics and Classical Studies is fundamentally classist and needs to be abolished.

- Appointment committees (or anyone judging applications: for jobs, (post-graduate programmes, funding, promotion etc.) should *not* prioritise 'years studied' when considering knowledge of Classics. They should develop criteria that recognise and reward different skills and experiences held by candidates who studied classical subjects for the first time at university.

❝ Be more open/welcoming to students without any ancient languages when they begin their degrees. Also, ensure it's possible to do Classical Studies without Greek

or Latin. Not everyone is ready to learn an ancient language at UG. And/or provide additional support for those who did not have access to either Classical Studies or Classics at secondary school. I spent many hours in my first year of university just trying to work out the spelling of people/places mentioned in class.

2.3 Money

> "It's harder to achieve your goal when you can't afford
> the steps to get there."

The rising cost of living, high fees and limited bursaries at all levels have a disproportionate effect on working-class students and staff. With precarious contracts, gaps between employment opportunities or periods of study, and a lack of understanding within departments about the ramifications of financial constraints, money issues are pushing classicists out of the discipline. These are tangible issues, many with practical solutions we can and must implement.

School underfunding

> Financial inequality begins at the start of the education pipeline in schools. Schoolteachers stressed that chronic underfunding across state education has made it difficult to introduce or continue classical subjects, both in terms of justifying its inclusion on the curriculum and recruiting qualified staff.

❝ I would point to decreased funding in state schools, making it harder to justify having a subject which may have small classes. Also, harder to recruit teachers into state sector due to increasing disparity in pay and working conditions.

❝ [Classics] is not considered important enough in the current climate of insufficient funding and focus on Maths and English.

❝ Massive financial constraints on state-sector schools means smaller classes of Classics subjects cannot run. GCSE Class Civ isn't an Ebach Subject so not a priority for head teachers to offer it.

Paid employment

> A recurring theme amongst respondents of all career stages was the inequalities caused by having to prioritise paid employment over studying or professional development. This inequality is not just grounded in access to money, but also the freedom to *not* have to work. For student and early-career respondents, the absence of familial wealth and financial aid forced them to choose paid work over unpaid activities, such as internships, fieldtrips, networking and publishing. Working-class respondents and respondents from an intermediate background expressed significantly more agreement than respondents from a managerial and professional background with the statement: '**I have had to undertake paid employment alongside my studies to the extent that it had a detrimental impact on my learning**.'
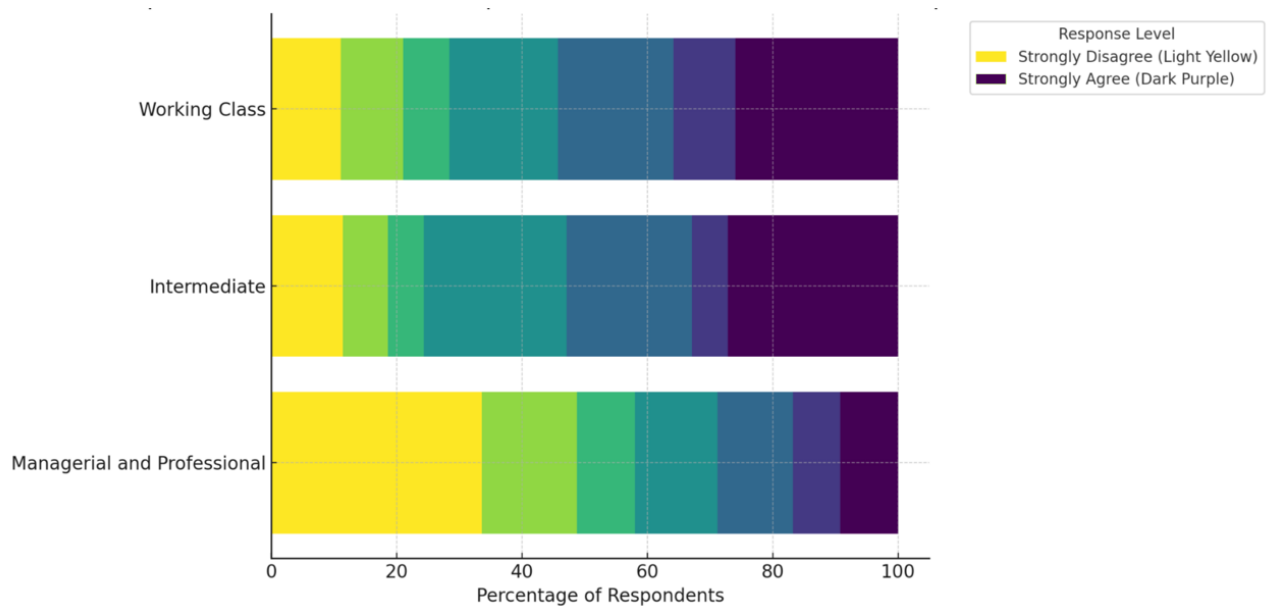
> 	I spend my vacations working as a waitress in order to have enough money for my next year of study so I feel like I haven't done enough reading to contribute to discussions and, when others talk of conferences, I don't have anything to add. I'm comparatively lucky though because I only work during vacations, I can at least spend term time dedicated to my studies.

> 	A tutor told me that I would not succeed in my module because I was unable to visualise Athens as I had never been. When I told him I couldn't afford to, he sent me a link to funds which I could access to go. But this misses out the crucial point that I needed to work to pay my rent and my bills over the vacations and could not take a month-long holiday.

> 	Research events/seminars/conferences take place at all hours of the day, and at weekends. Having multiple jobs with irregular shift schedules impeded attendance, which is a problem if you're trying to build a network on repeated attendance, never mind not being able to attend in the first place.

> 	Unpaid labour which would benefit my studies, such as relevant unpaid internships, or some archaeological digs, are not options I can easily pursue, as I need to undertake paid labour in order to pay for my studies.

> 	… language schools and archaeological excavations can be another activity that is difficult to access without familial wealth. Although many offer bursaries, this fails

to recognise that you might also need to use that time to undertake paid employment.

Fieldtrips, language courses, and summer schools

Exclusion from key learning and development activities starts early in the educational pipeline, including at school. Respondents highlighted that a lack of money presents a significant barrier to accessing activities like fieldtrips, language courses, and summer schools. Crucially, respondents framed this exclusion as detrimental to their academic progression and perceptions about their ability to 'catch-up' or 'fit in'. Unsurprisingly, working-class respondents expressed significantly more agreement than respondents from a managerial and professional background with the statement: '**Personal financial constraints have prevented me from taking advantage of opportunities such as conferences, field trips, language schools, etc.**'
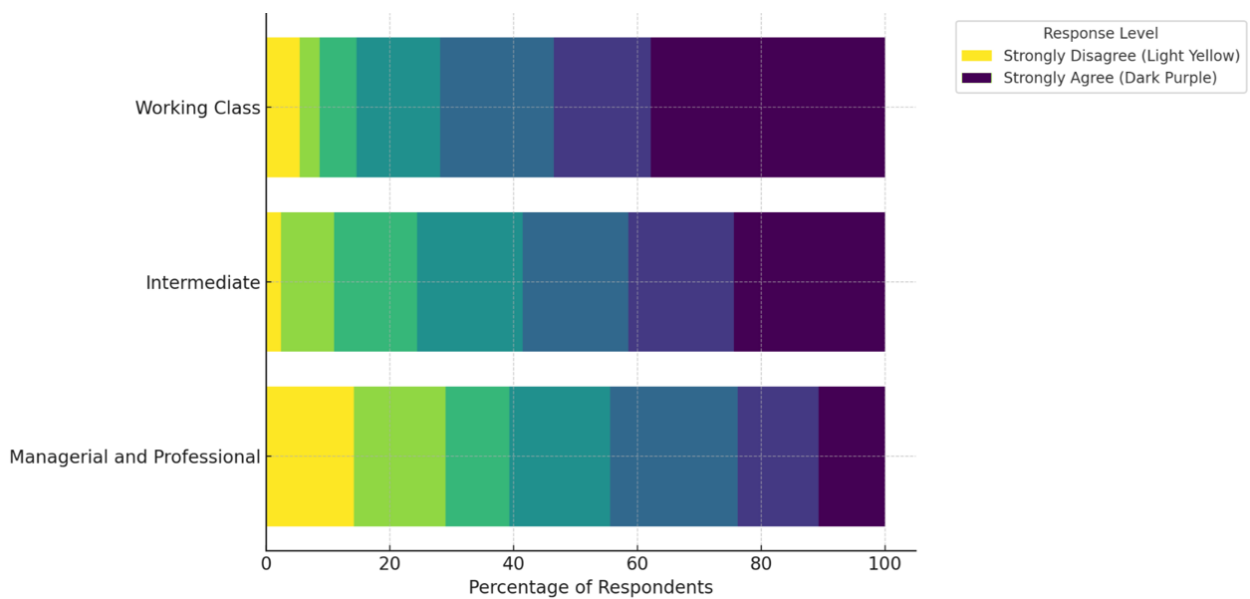
" … not having had experiences such as Summer Schools, trips abroad etc. have certainly impacted my career.

" Generally, I would say a big problem in Classics is the amount of summer schools etc. which people rely on to get 'into' Classics, and these are all extremely expensive and therefore exclusionary.

❝   Right from my first day as an undergrad I felt confused and on the back foot by the fact that most of my peers seemed to know each other from Bryanston Summer School, which I hadn't even heard of.

❝   I've not applied to conferences and summer schools due to not being able to afford them (primarily travel costs), which didn't feel like an issue until I saw what my peers were doing.

❝   Finances to support on school trips, learning outside the classroom, extra resources for in and outside the classroom, extra reading materials and free time around school to use for learning, all impacted by the financial background of the family.

Access to resources

Many respondents, particularly undergraduate students, commented on the prohibitive cost of resources like textbooks, dictionaries, or e-learning resources. Schoolteachers stressed that their schools could not afford to purchase sufficient copies of textbooks, nor provide staff with adequate learning resources or access to training. They also highlighted the advantage gained by students whose parents could afford private tutors for them. There was also a concern amongst all respondents about digital inequality, including the assumption that everyone has access to appropriate computer equipment and the internet.

❝   At one point [in a meeting where the respondent was the PGR student representative], staff were discussing the cost of textbooks for a particular module. I said that the cost was too high and prohibitive (two volumes of 40 pounds each for 1 module). This was met with criticism that students need to plan their finances etc. (as well as with some support from junior staff). As someone who has been unable to buy most of the prescribed books during their UG, and who was always photocopying books (and even that was sometimes a bit of a financial stretch), that was really hard.

❝   …expectations of expensive book purchases e.g. Latin dictionaries which is impossible for many working-class students.

❝ Previous schools were state schools – with limited resources in terms of purchasing/access to new textbooks. Students did not have their own copy of any books, and in some cases only the teacher had a copy. Also limiting in terms of subscription, access of Massolit…

❝ There is an assumption that everyone has easy access to technology. Accessing a computer can be quite difficult.

❝ As a teacher, I have noticed that some students from working-class/lower socio-economic backgrounds feel that there are barriers, e.g. because they can't afford a laptop of their own.

❝ … an important email about funding was sent during the holidays, which I missed due to not having internet at home.

❝ I teach in a grammar school with mostly affluent students who can afford tutoring in subjects they struggle with, giving them an advantage when they encounter a challenge.

❝ [Continuing Professional Development] events are often unattainable due to price. Can't organise trips because most are in London and require high costs.

Conferences

Respondents noted that there is an expectation within universities that staff and students use personal resources for professional activities. This is discriminatory and untenable. Low-income or working-class students and staff are unable to attend conferences, missing out on the dissemination and networking opportunities they provide. Without a financial cushion, conference attendance is completely dependent on funding. Online or hybrid conferences improved accessibility, particularly for those with disabilities or caring responsibilities; but there is a concern that this mode of attendance is already being phased out, and that it does not provide adequate networking opportunities. Once again, unsurprisingly, working-class respondents and respondents from an intermediate background expressed significantly more agreement than respondents from a Managerial and Professional background with the statement: '**I have felt excluded from research networks, seminar series, conferences/meetings etc. due to financial constraints.**'
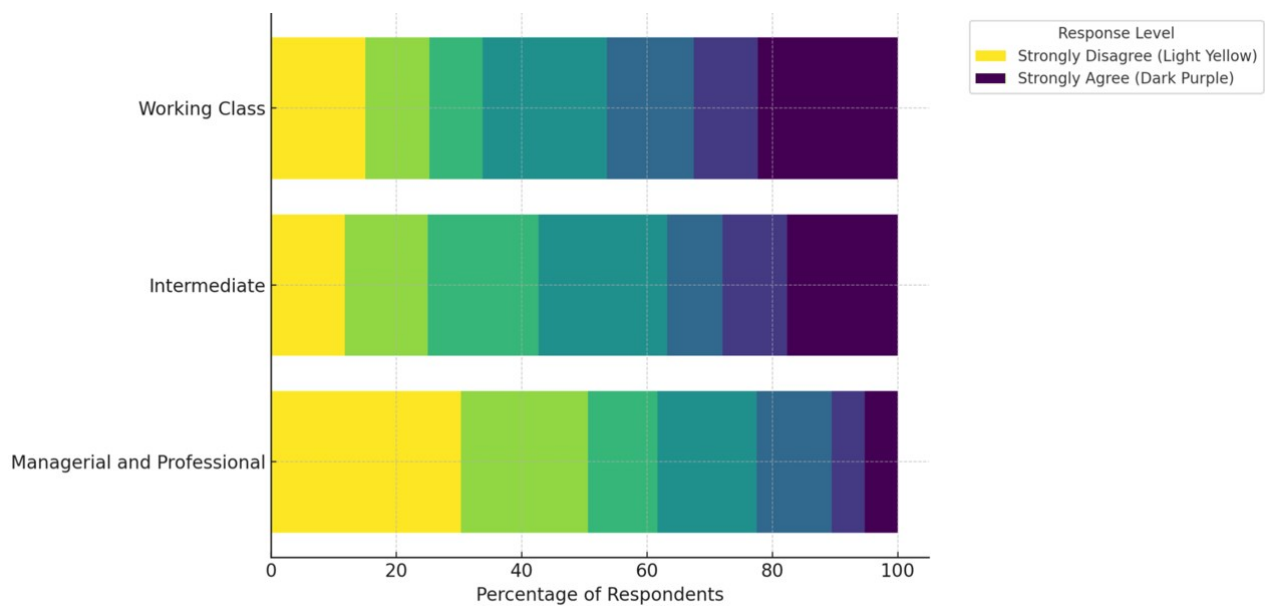
“ My PhD supervisor laughed in my face when I expressed a concern that I wouldn't be able to afford to travel internationally for a conference (I think she thought I was joking, or perhaps she just couldn't imagine that someone wouldn't have a spare £3000 for a trip to the US). There is a general expectation that you have to attend international conferences to network and make yourself visible to the Classics patron-client network – it's just not possible for many of us.

“ Quite simply, I haven't been able to afford the cost of attending many conferences - both specific to my area of research and national meetings that are important for networking. Relatedly, there's also the additional networking costs if you do actually attend, whether that's the often-overpriced conference dinner or the meal after a small colloquium where everyone splits the bill. In some respects, this became worse as an early career researcher because, even though I had a teaching salary, it was still relatively low and a lot of funding schemes were no longer open to me. What's particularly tough is that I'm now at the stage of my career where people are approaching me to contribute to conferences, organise panels etc., but I can't agree to anything unless it's funded.

“ For several years I have found myself unable to attend conferences elsewhere in the UK or abroad, because I could not afford to pay for a carer in my absence. The pandemic has helped somewhat, because it introduced the option of attending on Zoom/Teams.

❝ Hybrid events have so far been the only way for me to attend conferences, and few organisations seem to want to continue the 'hassle' of hybridity now that everything is returning to normal.

❝ Paying for childcare is a huge barrier to attending conferences or summer schools because even though bursaries etc. are available for travel and attendance, the practical implications of leaving the family for a week or more are huge and there is a cost involved.

Out of pocket expenses

As well as conference attendance and organisation, there are other events that come at a price. Many universities run regular research seminars, and much of the discussion and networking is done at a restaurant or similar. If these dinners/drinks are not funded or subsidised, they become exclusionary. Many university activities such as conference attendance, travel, dinners and similar operate on a reimbursement basis. Attendees or organisers pay for the activity with their own funds and are later refunded. This can be a barrier to participation.

❝ Attending after talk dinners always presents an awkward moment: 'Will you be attending the meal?' 'No because I cannot afford to do so…' is always an extremely painful moment and also feels like a roadblock to further networking.

❝ Worse were conference dinners where the bill is split at the end: even if you don't drink alcohol or have dessert because you are conscious of the cost, you will end up paying for the wine and dessert and expensive dinners of your affluent older colleagues. To avoid this, I would leave dinner early and pay for my own meal in cash to the organiser as I did so, but that meant missing out on the rest of the evening's conversation and networking.

❝ There have been many times where I have self-excluded from activities at meetings/conferences, especially activities such as dinners and meals, because I could not afford to eat at a restaurant, and food was not included in any funding (in cases where I was privileged and lucky enough to have funding). This means that I have often eaten bread in my hotel bed - and missed out on socialising and/or networking activities.

❝ During my PhD I frequently could not attend conferences, either due to a lack of funding or because I could not afford the money up-front and wait for reimbursement.

❝ The university system of requiring me to pay for travel, accommodation etc. and be reimbursed is far from ideal – it would help if this was paid directly so I didn't have to be out of pocket in the meantime.

❝ The reimbursement culture is crippling for working-class academics – if conference attendance is dependent on funding, how can we be expected to attend the conference first and receive the funding later?

Gaps in employment

The current structure of graduate and postgraduate programmes and application systems involve waiting times between potential funding; part-time teaching roles often do not pay a living wage; short-term contracts do not allow for financial stability. Without a financial safety net, there are many gaps to fall through. And so, it comes as no surprise that working-class respondents and respondents from an intermediate background expressed significantly more agreement than respondents from a managerial and professional background with the statement: '**I have experienced study/career breaks because of financial constraints**.'
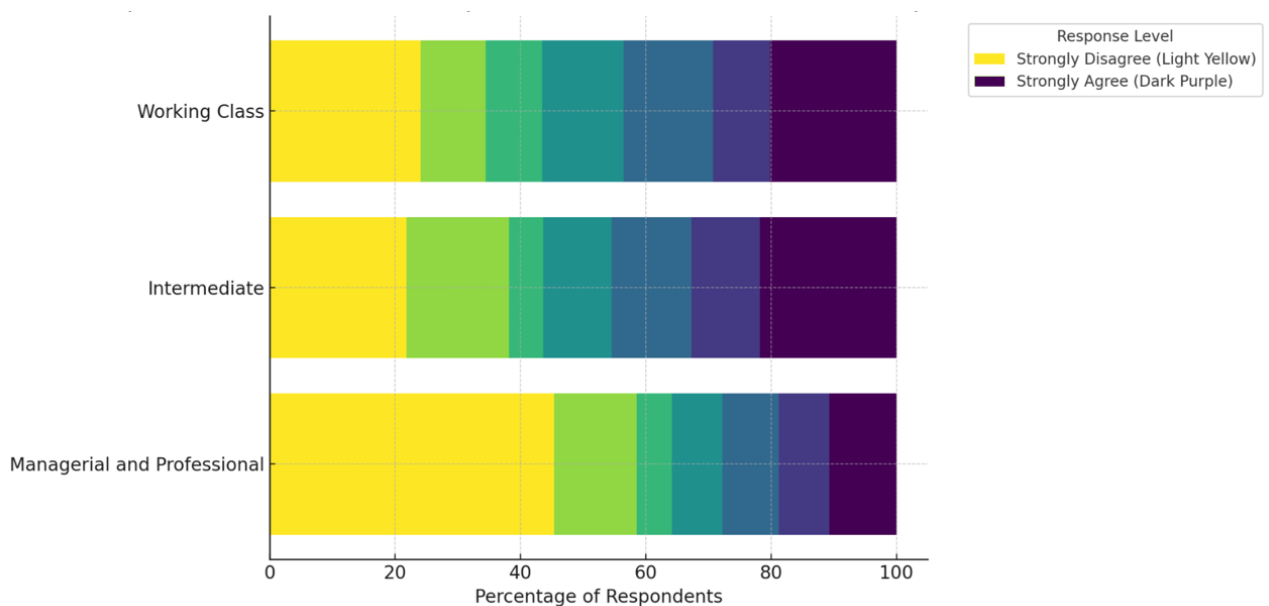
❝❝ There are very few working-class PhD students who can relate to the struggle of knowing there's no safety net once the PhD stipend ends. Careers talks at uni by academics on how to get into academia similarly fail to take into account that some people can't afford to take on part-time teaching work after submission while they publish articles/apply for fellowships etc. Part-time teaching work is not a sufficient form of income.

❝❝ I had to take a year off from academia between my Masters & PhD for lack of funding, during which I had to work to support myself and could not participate in conferences or research as much as I wished to due to time & money constraints.

❝❝ There is the unspoken expectation that after completing a PhD, graduates have an endless supply of money to support them whilst they are applying for postdoctoral fellowships. Similarly casual or fixed-term ten-month contracts leave individuals working in precarious situations which many of us cannot afford to be in. This is one of the reasons why I chose not to pursue a career in academia.

Assumptions about money

Because of the class demographics identified in this report, there is an assumption amongst the predominantly middle-class staff and student body that money is not an issue. This leads to inequalities of opportunity as well as resentment and discord, and it constitutes unconscious bias.

❝❝ In my current department, people are generally relatively class-aware in the case of our students (this is a large, state university) but the class factors within the faculty are less examined. For example, there's the assumption that I would just buy a car when I got here, without any consideration of the financial burden of that, and with the assumption that my credit would be good enough to get a car loan.

❝❝ When I was a postgraduate, my department would run evening seminars with guest speakers, followed by dinner at a restaurant. The assumption was that the postgraduates would attend dinner, and those who did not were heavily criticised. I couldn't afford dinner, and gained a reputation for not being a team player.

What we can do

> **Key recommendations**
>
> - Schools, universities, and charities should critically reflect on their **assumptions about money** by engaging with existing work on socio-economic inequality in education (such as the National Union of Students Cost of Living Campaign) and take action to address this by reviewing their own policies and **systems that enable financial exclusion**.
>
> - Advocate for institutional and national interventions to **increase funding opportunities across education**, ranging from better funding for schools and cost-of-living increases to student stipends and loans, through to introducing departmental bursaries and microgrants.

Detailed recommendations

- Universities should avoid reimbursement systems whenever possible. Examples of good practice include:
    - The use of a departmental credit card for dinners and other hospitality.
    - Funding for conferences etc. to be offered before the event rather than after.
    - Push back against funding bodies' reimbursement policies.

- Universities and funding bodies should work to close gaps in employment and funding timescales. For instance, PhD funding applications that require a completed Master's degree (or prioritise those who have a completed Master's degree) *expect* students to (have the money to) wait a year – this needs to be revised.

- Hardship funds should be renamed. 'Hardship' can be a stigmatising term and it can also deter potential applicants if they believe they are not experiencing sufficient hardship. Consider borrowing phrasing from Sportula Europe ('microgrants') or the Women's Classical Committee ('small grants'). Similarly, revise policies that require applicants to demonstrate extreme poverty and/or exhaustion of commercial credit schemes before being considered for funding.

- In universities, explore options to reduce the cost of resources, such as setting departmental limits on the price of books listed as essential purchases or (even better) making sure that all resources are either open-access or provided free of

charge by the institution. Encourage university leadership to offer technology bursaries to students and to ensure that digital exclusion is evaluated when developing policy changes.

- Have honest conversations with students, staff, and leaders about the impact of paid employment on student progression, and explore ways to mitigate this – such as improving funding or providing more flexible learning opportunities.

- Remove financial barriers to participation in wider departmental life by offering no- or low-cost activities and events like research seminars or student social inductions. Consider using departmental spaces where food and drink can be shared socially, rather than defaulting to external venues that necessitate a certain level of expenditure.

- Where possible, offer hybrid meetings and events to allow participants the choice of attending remotely or in-person. For some, remote attendance will allow them to save on travel costs; and, for others, in-person attendance can reduce at-home energy costs.

- Appointment and funding committees should recognise the need to undertake paid employment as a valid reason for career breaks or delays, and develop criteria to assess such candidates equitably.

❝ Offer assistance with purchasing materials, be more aware of work commitments outside of uni and how these differ between students.

❝ More funding for people from lower-class backgrounds is always helpful, particularly those of us who have to work in vacations and therefore can't keep up with the amount of vacation work we receive.

❝ Whilst the attempts at introducing Classics to state schools by the likes of Classics for All and ACE are admirable, there needs to be government funding and intervention to promote Classics.[18]

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[18] This respondent is referring to Classics for All and Advocating Classics Education, two organisations devoted to widening access to Classical education to more schools and more students. For more such efforts, see (to give just a few examples) STALOS, the Iris Project, the Bristol Classics Hub, the Birmingham and West Midlands Classics Network, or Classics in Communities.

2.4 'Fitting in'

Many survey respondents have felt out of place in classes, at conferences, in their studies and jobs more generally. This is often due to the 'hidden curriculum', the set of unspoken norms that operate on a middle-class paradigm and that can feel impenetrable to those from a working-class background. We see in the responses that these can include cultural knowledge such as classical music or wine, dress, accent, pre-existing networks and travel. This prevailing social habitus pushes working-class classicists out, because of insecurities, lack of confidence, feeling out of place, imposter syndrome and experiencing out-and-out classist slurs. Working-class classicists are forced to code switch or hide their identity, and this is damaging both to the individual and to our attempts at diversity in education. Furthermore and particularly worryingly, the idea of 'fit' has been used in appointment procedures, with search committees dismissing candidates who do not adhere to what they see as the image of a proper classicist.

Classist slurs

> We begin this section with just a very small and restrained selection of the classist slurs reported by respondents. Our aim in including these is to alert readers to the scale and severity of the problem. Class discrimination in Classics is not just about unconscious and unspoken bias – it is also about active pejorative language.

❝ I have been sneered at a bit, and mistaken for the tea lady even at events where I was speaking in the plenary session.

❝ I was described as "having a streak of vulgarity" by a reviewer of an application to the AHRC. Unbelievably, it was not redacted.

❝ As an undergraduate at Oxford, I was frequently teased by fellow students for being from [the North] and jokes were regularly made by tutors about me being 'the first Northern Classicist in living memory' to attend [this College]. I was also often asked to do tasks such as technical support and pouring drinks by certain tutors because I must be familiar with those roles given my background.

❝ I've been told 'you've never been to an opera, wow!'; 'do you know what this is' on being shown an avocado by a colleague they were having for lunch. 'Oh I'd expect you to go to Greggs for your coffee'. List is endless and almost daily outright scoffing in interview contexts at Oxford. Humiliation of mispronunciation. Mockery of Classical Civilisation qualifications as 'intellectual baby food'.

Accent

> The north-south divide is particularly evident in Classics because of the regional concentration of Classics teaching in schools. Respondents noted that this divide is intensifying as 'Classics poverty' in the north increases.[19] This has led to an image of the 'true' classicist, who is (upper) middle-class southern English, and sounds like it. Regional accents are therefore criticised or mocked, and those who do not conform to the model are made to feel like imposters.

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[19] Steven Hunt and Arlene Holmes-Henderson, 'A level Classics poverty. Classical subjects in schools in England: access, attainment and progression', CUCD *Bulletin* 50, 2021 (accessed on 25 January 2024).

> Those with regional accents feel compelled to tone their accents down, or they are pushed out altogether. Respondents even noted that accents have affected the outcome of job interviews or similar. A recent study for the Sutton Trust showed that 35% of university students feel self-conscious about their accent.[20] 33% of university students are worried their accent could affect their ability to succeed in the future. And 56% of university students from the north of England have had their accent mocked in a social setting. The numbers are likely to be even higher for Classics, because of its regional concentration.

❝ It feels isolating when all your lecturers are Oxbridge educated with RP accent and practically all your fellow students went to either grammar or independent schools where they received a Classics education prior to coming to university.

❝ The experience of (and fallout from) giving talks, papers, and lectures in a regional accent is worth commenting on. Students have approached me to ask where I'm from, what school I went to (in critical tones). At conferences I have been approached by academics expressing surprise that my research should be presented in such an accent. The experience has been so persistent and pernicious that I have toned down my accent considerably – this has an impact both on my own identity, and on what is perceived as acceptable in the workplace. We need to push back on this – it has a huge effect on working-class academics.

❝ My department does not suffer from a profusion of extremely posh academics, however, its members are uniformly solidly middle class. No one from a British background has a regional accent (for example), and all move through the world with the ease and comfort of class.

❝ In recruitment processes: people being treated differently because of their accents.

❝ I was told it was acceptable and correct for parents [of the school children I was teaching] to query my accent since I was teaching a language.

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[20] Erez Levon, Devyani Sharma and Christian Ilbury (2022) 'Speaking up: Accents and social mobility', Sutton Trust, 2022 (accessed on 25 January 2024).

> When I took my [school] students from Liverpool to an Oxbridge talk one of the professors failed to understand my student's question (their accent was not very strong) and then said 'we would like some more of you people to apply'. To this day I'm not sure if they meant because she was northern, poor or female.

Cultural Norms

Beyond toning down accents, there are dress codes to master, cultural knowledge to attain, behaviours to adopt. These expectations to conform are damaging and discriminatory. They assume access to both economic and cultural capital, with the latter also bound up in classist ideas about the value of different cultural experiences.

> I don't know, and cannot afford, how to dress in ways that conform with normative expectations at research events. I always feel like I am the odd one out.

> I've certainly never been able to dress like many peers in my field or know anything about fine dining, good wines, etc.

> There are SO MANY unspoken class rules at these events, from what you wear, to how you hold your wine glass.... it really wears you down.

> Discussions of topics I felt excluded from - horse riding, opera.

> Colleagues have looked down on me because of my clothes or tight budget in the past, making me feel awkward at some events.

> I have felt discriminated against in [school-teaching] job interviews because I did not ski or could not offer more 'middle class' sports/activities.

Exclusion

Many respondents felt excluded from school, university, and academic activities simply because the activities are considered 'not for them'. This is the Old Boys' Club, the kind of network that operates on similarity, on class-coded behaviours. It pushes out those who are not part of the in-group, making imposter syndrome a reality. There is even concern that missing certain activities or not 'fitting in' can threaten job prospects. Once again, it is not

surprising, but jarring all the same, that working-class respondents and respondents from an intermediate background expressed significantly more agreement than respondents from a managerial and professional background with the statement: '**I have felt excluded from research networks, seminar series, conferences/meetings etc. due to my class/socio-economic background.**'
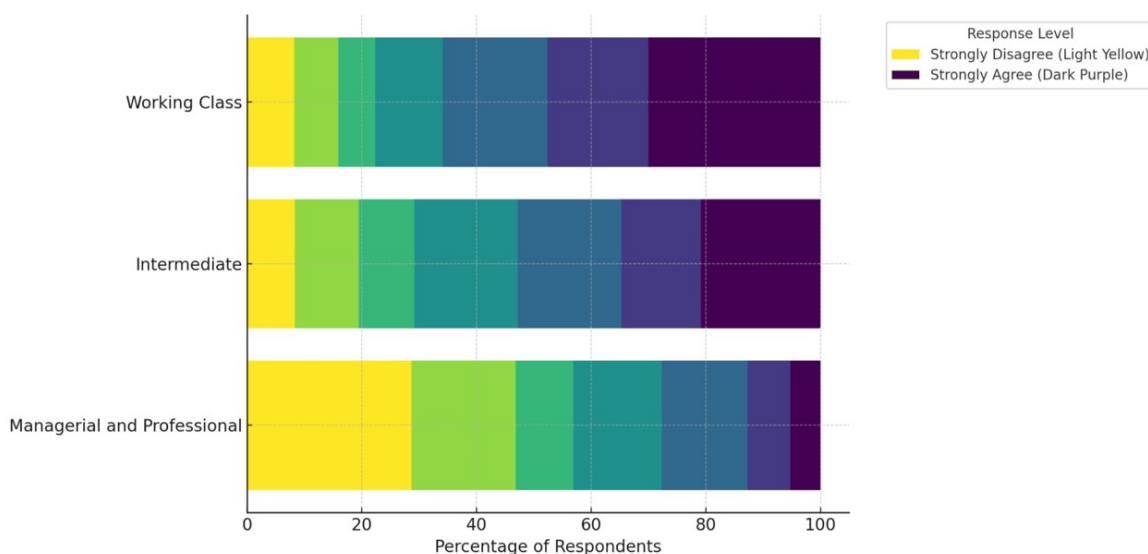
I was excluded from the final session of a faculty-mandated reading class on Cena Trimalchionis, as the graduate tutor had finished the text, without telling me, over cocktails with other students at their college. I was not included because 'there would have been cocktails and things and it wouldn't really have been your sort of event'.

Individuals who haven't attended particular society dinners or attended particular rather expensive conferences are excluded from the second round of interviews in multi stage interview processes.

The situation has changed, but I don't think it has changed much. In early career, I read references which discussed 'Oxbridge quality' or some variations of collegiality in the SCR or even, on a particularly memorable occasion, knowledge of choice wines. Although not explicit, these were absolutely clearly proxies for social class and 'being one of us'. 'Fitting in' may be important in terms defined against the intellectual and educational mission of the institution, but this was not a critically examined notion and was clearly about social exclusion. I have seen examples of this within Classics and History Departmental appointments. More recently, it is not got much more

subtle, with the expectation of a certain manner or background meeting student expectations for a role, which comes down to 'does this person sound like a Classics lecturer'? People work consciously with a paradigm which unconsciously has class-specific elements. More subtle is the weighting placed on language excellence above all other analytical skills within progression into PG work and beyond.

Oxbridge

A strong thread in the survey responses was that of class bias being particularly pronounced at Oxford and Cambridge. Further, those who have experienced the job market (in both universities and schools) felt there is Oxbridge favouritism as the Oxbridge classicist is seen as the 'ideal' model and applicants are judged against this standard. In publications too, there is seen to be a prioritising of Oxbridge. It is certainly true that, in our data, the class composition of Oxbridge-educated respondents is more skewed towards managerial and professional backgrounds than that of respondents as a whole.

Class Composition of Oxbridge Educated Respondents
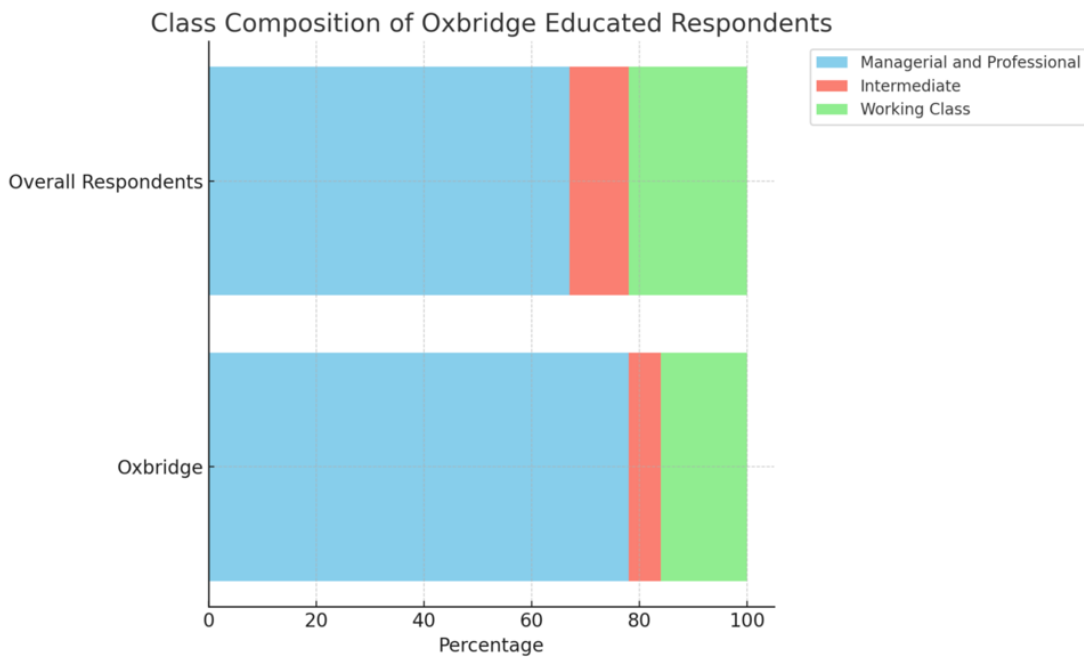
It is also true that a very large proportion of professional classicists among our respondents (whether academics or schoolteachers) are Oxbridge educated (a whopping **40%** of the total), and that their class composition is significantly more skewed towards managerial and professional backgrounds than that of non-Oxbridge-educated professional classicists.

This explains the feelings expressed in this section (although it should be noted that graduates of other ancient and Russell Group universities are only marginally less dominated by managerial and professional backgrounds).

Class Composition of Oxbridge and non-Oxbridge Educated Professional Classicists
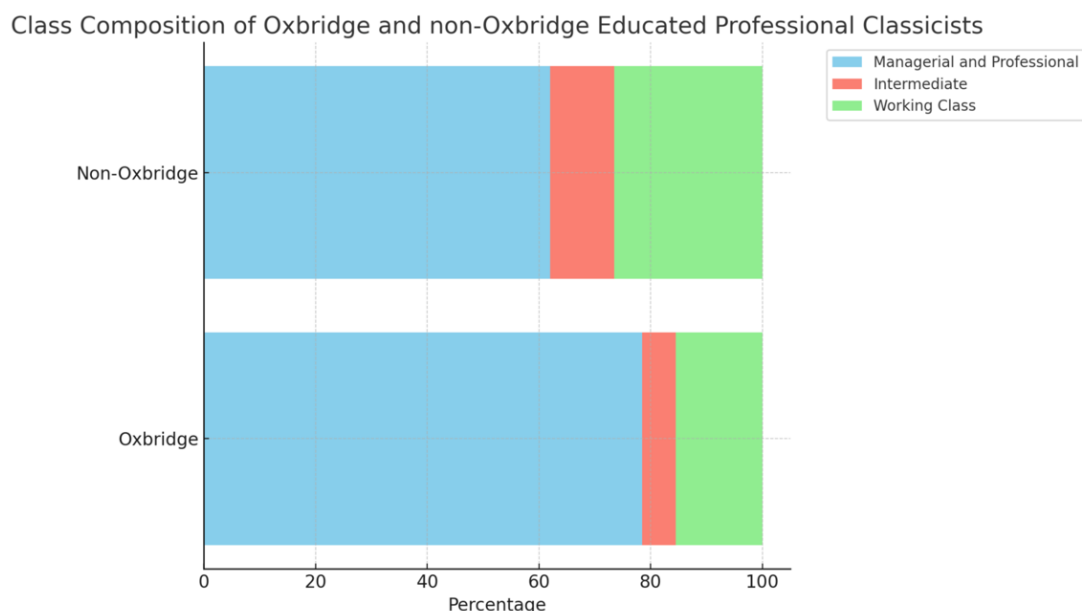
❝ Non-Oxbridge background has sometimes made me feel invisible.

❝ I have seen schools hire Oxbridge graduates over experienced teachers.

❝ On a hiring committee, applicants (who happened to come from the UK) without Oxbridge BA degrees are sometimes viewed as questionable candidates.

❝ There is definitely an Oxbridge 'set' and a network of contacts/opportunities that arise from it (e.g. JRFs, colloquia etc). It's a closed world or bubble. You are either in or you aren't.

❝ I now review manuscripts for OUP, and they regularly consider Oxbridge PhD theses for publication, but very rarely ones from other universities. It is especially galling to receive manuscripts of Oxbridge PhD theses for review that are vastly poorer in quality and rigour than my own thesis, and those of my PhD students, both of whom have had their manuscripts rejected by OUP/CUP outright.

❝   When the department tends to recruit new staff from predominantly two or three institutions from England, it can hardly be surprising when these groups are over-represented. It is pleasing to see a bit of effort now in recruiting from different European institutions, but even most of these candidates arrive with the stamp of Oxbridge somewhere on their CV. If this is truly the mark of employability, it is a wonder anywhere else even offers postgraduate study.

❝   I have seen job adverts for a school in London that specifically requests someone who has a degree from Oxford or Cambridge.

❝   I also notice difference in treatment of classics teachers from Oxbridge vs other universities. Most of the senior leadership teachers at my current school are Oxbridge educated too.

Role Models

Working-class respondents often described feeling lost, unsupported, with no-one like themselves to look up to or ask questions. Working-class classicists are in the minority, and become more difficult to find the higher in the academic hierarchy we get (as is clear from the figures in section 1.5) – and they struggle to find each other, whether within the student body or in the academic faculty. The lack of role models makes falling out of the discipline seem almost inevitable.

❝   The biggest barrier is the lack of role models in potential students' acquaintance.

❝   Wider initiatives now exist. Sadly, though, these clearly have a massive image problem, since there are no role-models!

❝   As a working-class single parent, there are few people in academia I can look to as success stories. I don't know anyone who has succeeded in a similar situation.

❝   Having those teaching us acknowledge their own backgrounds/perspectives and related limitations has also been great both for creating transparency and making students think about their own perspectives and privileges.

What we can do

Key recommendations

- Embracing **diversity** in the student body and workplace *must* **include class diversity**. This includes welcoming regional accents (and, as demographics change, hopefully hearing more of them). It involves changing the prevailing middle-class cultural habitus by **amplifying working-class voices**, and treating class-based discrimination seriously.

- **Working-class role models are desperately needed**. To get more, we need to employ more working-class academics and to create a more welcoming space for working-class students. But the issue is also one of visibility. Working-class classicists need to feel like they are safe and appreciated, allowing them to acknowledge their backgrounds and identities and disclose them to students and colleagues. Working-class academics might consider including their class background on their university webpage, or contributing a bio to the Network for Working-Class Classicists website.

Detailed recommendations

- There needs to be more work/lobbying on changing/increasing/removing damaging student quotas. One significant example is existing quotas for Scottish students (paying no fees) at Scottish universities: the current quota is very limited and the students admitted as part of this quota are almost entirely from very disadvantaged areas and backgrounds, creating an unsustainable polarity between a small minority of working-class Scottish students and a large majority of very privileged English students, which makes local students feel hopelessly out of place.

- More generally, there is a need (particularly in top institutions) for more ambitious quotas for widening participation/state school/working-class students, which explicitly aim to approach national averages (rather than contenting themselves with tiny improvements).

- There is also a strong need, across the board, to encourage recruitment from local schools, to avoid top institutions becoming islands of privilege in otherwise underprivileged areas, within which local students feel like a minority (geographically and socioeconomically).

- Hire more working-class staff. Consider introducing recruitment quotas, and taking into account class in recruitment (collecting class data in application forms).

- Accent, hobbies and Oxbridge affiliation should play no role in job interviews, funding decisions etc. Robust class-bias training should be mandatory for all academic staff.

- The Sutton Trust gives concrete recommendations for combating accent bias.[21] These include:

  - Action to tackle accent bias should be seen as an important diversity issue in the workplace. Efforts to tackle accent bias should be part of a wider strategy within organisations to improve socio-economic diversity of the workforce, and instances of accent discrimination should be taken seriously by employers.

  - Recruiters should undergo training to help to reduce any accent biases.

  - Employers should aim to have a range of accents within their organisation, and not require or encourage their employees to adopt Received Pronunciation. Permitting a greater diversity of accent types in schools, universities, and professions will eventually break the association of particular, middle-class voices with professional authority.

  - There should be no implicit expectation within the workplace that professionalism is signalled by sounding like a person from a certain region, socio-economic background, or who has had a public-school education.

  - Action to tackle accent biases and prejudice should take into account work-associated social settings. Accent-related commentary and mockery are highest in social settings, and this can compromise a person's sense of belonging in a given professional or educational community.

  - Remember that managing accent differences and accent bias is not solely the responsibility of the speaker. 'Allies' should point out accent bias within the workplace wherever they see it.

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[21] Erez Levon, Devyani Sharma and Christian Ilbury (2022) 'Speaking up: Accents and social mobility', Sutton Trust, 2022 (accessed on 25 January 2024).

> Some respondents were concerned that the privileges of an elite education are under fire.

❝ Classics feels to be an increasingly hostile environment for those who work in private schools, or indeed even went to one (unless now vocally critical of private education). The privately educated are dismissed as merely privileged rather than in any way capable.

❝ There is an increasingly widespread perception that, as a private school and Oxbridge educated individual, you're privileged rather than intelligent.

> The evidence of the survey shows – soberingly – that such concerns are unwarranted.

2.5 Mind the gaps

The survey identified a number of problem areas not only for getting into Classics but also for getting on. The first is at school level. Learning about Classics, finding a route into Classics, feeling like studying Classics at university might be a viable path: these are not straightforward, and experiences are tied to class background. At university level, there are plenty of holes to fall through, for many of the reasons given so far in this report: from money to fitting in. Here we use qualitative responses to flesh out the experiences behind the 'leaky pipeline' statistics set out in section 1.5.

Classics in Schools

> The teacher respondents indicate that there is both much existing good practice and serious challenges to inclusivity for working-class pupils. The main barriers identified can be subdivided into causes and effects. Lack of funding and lack of access cause major barriers for working-class pupils, and these create serious practical issues (and moments of exclusion) faced by pupils and their teachers. Then there are the perceptions of the subject which cause pupil self-exclusion as well as shore up existing practical barriers.

❝ Have you seen the price of textbooks?!? If an 'A' level student wants their own copies of the books for Classical Civilisation, that is well over the £50 mark.

❝ Cost of books and research materials, accessibility issues – so many I meet haven't even heard of the subject & aren't aware it exists.

❝ Pupils from higher socio-economic backgrounds can afford tutors. They attend schools which are more likely to provide an education in Classics. They have the space and environment at home where they can complete schoolwork.

❝ I have previously taught Classics at HE and observed in seminar teaching the differences in how confident and articulate students from private-school backgrounds are compared to state-school educated students. This does not necessarily equate to any advantage in their study skills, but in presentation skills it is evident. I now work at a sixth form college (in the most deprived region in England) and, whilst we do recruit around 40 students a year for Classical Civilisation A-level, many students are concerned about not having any prior knowledge of the subject.

This is linked to socio-economic background as state schools, where the vast majority of our students are from, do not offer Classics beyond primary school.

Several teachers commented on the benefit of directly addressing issues surrounding the public perception of Classics. One teacher encouraged us:

❝ Continue to work hard on changing the perception of Classics amongst the general populace. It IS so useful, but is seen as hard or only for the bright or only for posh people (whoever they are!). Our government closing uni departments and saying non-vocational courses are not a good thing is not helping.

Job prospects

School students and their parents are concerned about a career trajectory with Classics. This concern is coloured by class background. Whilst a middle-class student might take up Classics with a view to a career in law or one of the other traditional 'professions' because this is something familiar from their background, the risk is greater for a working-class student in more urgent need of financial stability and without a family professional history.

❝ The assumption is that Classics will not gain you a 'decent job' and therefore is not for working-class students.

❝ Parental views, concerns about getting a job, not knowing the subject even exists...

❝ There are also real concerns about future earnings and fiscal stability for any upwardly mobile member of the working classes.

❝ Subject choices are often based on misapprehension that some are 'useful' for well/paid jobs - e.g. A level Business – whereas more affluent families, with higher levels of education, can have greater confidence in the value of more traditionally academic study.

Outreach

We are in a unique position with this survey, in that we had responses from schoolteachers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and academic staff. This means that we can see the need for outreach from all angles, expressed by all parties. Many respondents praised the efforts of organisations like Classics for All, ACE, JACT and the Classical Association for promoting Classics in schools and communities. But they also noted that much more needs to be done. Outreach activities need to be properly funded. They need to be equitably allocated amongst staff. They need to be part of a widening participation strategy and not just one-offs. They need to be directed in the right place. And there should be stronger and more sustained links between schools and universities.

❝ Outreach activities are now demanded (though unequally performed by Classics colleagues -- it seems to be women and younger academics who 'do' outreach, as it does not give kudos in the department and is not properly workloaded!).

❝ Focusing outreach activities on state-funded schools (I see a lot of 'outreach' activities with independent schools already well represented at university level.

❝ Visibility has increased, but access and perceptions of the discipline remain fairly stagnant or, if anything, have worsened. State school (lack of) provision is certainly a factor here, but high-visibility outreach in Classics is also founded on a benevolence model rather than articulating a place for working-class students.

Outreach *and* Inreach

Work on widening participation must not stop with outreach. It needs to focus on 'inreach' too: continued support.

❝ More work on outreach, continued work on 'inreach' focused on the experience of current students.

❝ I feel that a lot of the access work that has been done is purely performative. The bridging schemes, the courses developed for people from a non-language background, the outreach work is all to get people here. But when those individuals

are here and studying, they are failed. They are placed at a disadvantage to their peers with no way to remedy that. If the faculty wish to improve access, they need to create an accessible environment for those individuals to enter into rather than simply getting them here and abandoning them.

Dropping Out

> Working-class respondents were by far the most likely to have left or consider leaving academia, whether explicitly for financial reasons (**25%**) or for some other reason (**37%**). This is one crucial factor behind the leaky pipeline.

❝ I doubt that I will stay in academia (though perhaps will go back to teaching in schools). The low salaries and expectations of relocation seem out of reach of all but those with parental support.

❝ I thought of leaving because of job insecurity and the instability conferred by the lack of any other income or property, and basically any possible safety net outside of my own income. I have also been thinking of leaving for the aggressions suffered from a colleague who thought class does not belong with race, gender and sexuality, and that my project was 'problematic'.

❝ Many of my fellow PhD graduates have been able to afford to take unpaid or short-term contracts. I could not afford to do so, hence my decision to join the civil service.

❝ When I came to university, I wanted to become an academic. I adore the discipline and do not want to leave when I graduate but class factors are the main reason that I probably will. For two reasons - 1) the discipline at Oxford seems so stuck in the Victorian era, most tutors regurgitate classist views without critique and my class background has often made me feel undervalued or unintelligent in teaching environments. This is because in order to even start my degree, it feels like I have to complete another one in the correct language, appropriate culture and analogies, how to integrate into this society. It is overwhelming and I cannot see it improving without complete overhaul. 2) Access to postgraduate education is becoming even more inaccessible - stipends are small, funds are ultra-competitive and the odds feel

stacked against me. I am ***, *** and working class[22] – competing in an environment that was created in opposition to me and it often feels hopeless. The desire to make change and produce work that is meaningful and impactful to the discipline is being overwhelmed by the extra work that needs to be put in just to get to that point. I am tired.

What we can do

Key recommendations

- The key structural change is to ensure we have **more Classics in schools** (especially in state schools and with an equitable geographical spread). This is the goal of a number of initiatives (some are listed in n. **18** at p. 56) and we need to support these in whatever ways we can.

- Universities need to focus more time and funding on **outreach**, making it an essential component of workload models and recognising its importance in allocation of resources.

Detailed recommendations

- Schoolteacher respondents noted partnerships between private and state schools, sharing materials and resources. This should be supported, and universities need to make sure that their outreach efforts reach beyond private schools.

- Greater communication between schools and universities. Universities should work directly with schools, finding out what they need.

- More funding for schools for textbooks, trips etc.

- Support PGCE programmes in Classics and related subjects, including more funding.

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[22] The respondent listed here two protected characteristics, in addition to a working-class background. This brings home the importance of an intersectional approach to class *together with* the protected characteristics. We have chosen to hide the relevant protected characteristics in this response to preserve the anonymity of the respondent, given the amount of specific information provided.

- We need to focus on more sustained forms of outreach, joined up with broader WP strategies. More integration between institutional efforts and those at department level.

- Showcase the utility of Classics and its routes into work.

- Support for students needs to continue beyond admission. 'Inreach' must be a priority.

- Learn from the good practice highlighted by schoolteacher respondents in particular:

    o Embed more non-elite sources into teaching.

    o Use a greater range of scholarship: accessible, written by a diverse range of scholars.

    o Broaden the discussion of who Classics is for.

    o Relate material to what students know; use popular culture.

    o Build a Classics element into other (curriculum) subjects to gradually introduce it.

Conclusion

Working on this report about class and socioeconomic inequality in Classics has been a sobering experience. Although the results did not surprise us, it was eye-opening to read so many responses that set out so clearly how classist and exclusionary our discipline can be. The barriers which prevent working-class students from accessing and progressing in Classics are vast. They are structural, financial, and cultural; they involve attitudes, expectations, and overt as well as hidden behavioural norms.

It has also become painfully clear that the problem of class intersects with other axes of exclusion such as gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and disability. These issues intersect and often overlap with class to such an extent that it is (or should be) impossible to talk of equality, diversity and inclusion without talking about class. EDI policies that ignore class are thus doomed to fail. And yet EDI policies have consistently neglected class. In doing so, they have not only let down working-class classicists; they have let down all but the privileged few among the very groups they aim to help.

However, what shone through more than a thousand survey responses was the sheer appeal of Classics – of its texts, contexts, artifacts, and insights, which draw people in, from all backgrounds. Against narratives that paint it as hopelessly compromised, and hopelessly uninteresting for all but a small elite, our survey shows the drive, effort, and commitment – the love for the discipline – among the most diverse demographics. Working-class classicists, Black classicists, disabled classicists, LGBTQ+ classicists (and more) continue to flock to our field and are willing to face barriers to make it their own.

It is the duty of all classicists to make our discipline more welcoming and inclusive than it is and has ever been. We need to rethink personal and institutional priorities and think hard about what kind of future we want for Classics. Who gets to shape its trajectory, whose voices are valued, which stories matter? There are no easy fixes, but an important start is to acknowledge how the lack of socioeconomic diversity diminishes Classics. It leads us to ask narrower questions, lose sight of broader human experiences and concerns, and miss invaluable perspectives.

Making Classics welcoming to all classes and to all backgrounds will involve re-evaluating everything from the structure of our degrees to our admissions practices, our funding structures and priorities, the nature of our student support, the pedagogical (and social) norms in the discipline, and the research assumptions and evaluation criteria for appointments and promotions. The transformations needed are wide-ranging, even daunting. This report is a call for collective responsibility. If it can be a springboard for the difficult but necessary conversations needed to bring about change – cultural and institutional – it will have begun to serve its purpose.

CLASS IN CLASSICS

REPORT 2024

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