

LIFE CHANCES & SOCIAL MOBILITY : AN OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

Stephen Aldridge, 30th March 2004

Note: this paper contains an analysis of relevant data and research to facilitate discussion. It does not represent Government policy

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1. What do we mean by life chances and social mobility?

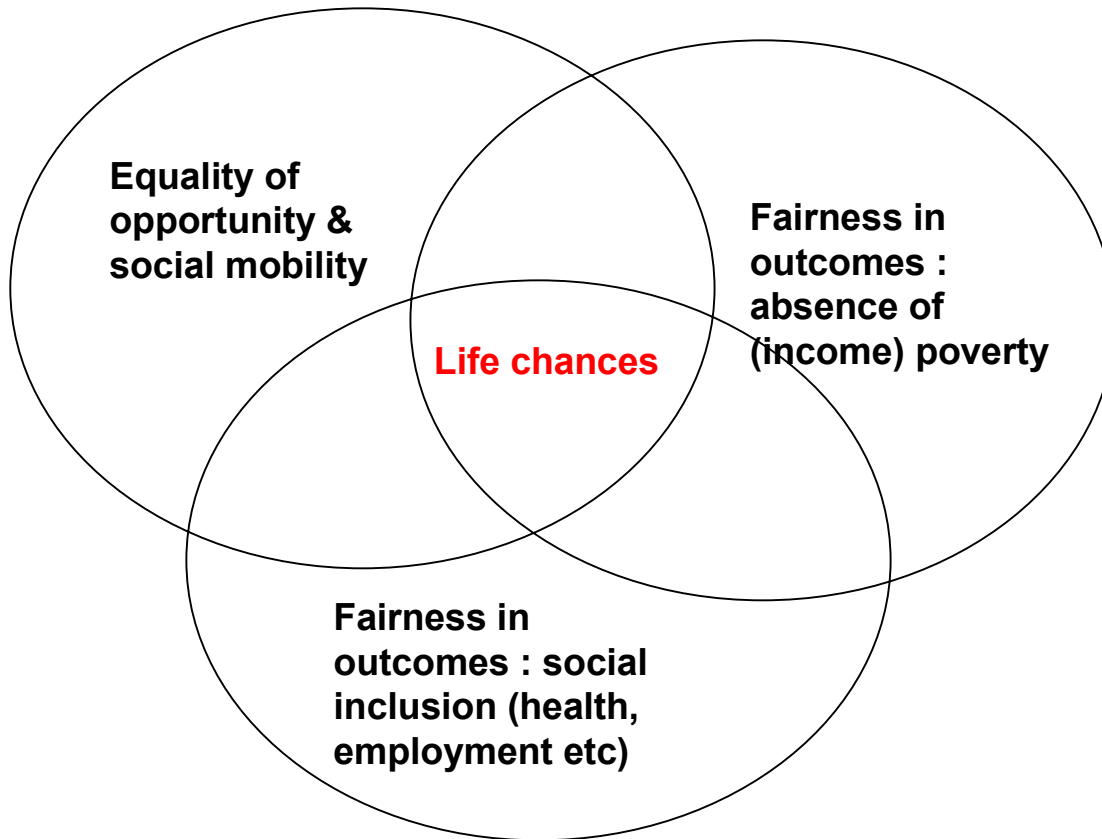
2. What are the facts about life chances in Britain?

3. What are the main determinants or drivers of life chances?

4. What are the implications for Government policy?

5. Issues for discussion

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LIFE CHANCES AND SOCIAL MOBILITY?



But note (very important): life chances may have to be balanced against other possible societal goals e.g. promoting prosperity, individual freedom & responsibility etc

Social mobility describes the movement or opportunities for movement between different social groups and the advantages and disadvantages that go with this e.g. income. Opportunities for social mobility are one dimension of an individual's life chances.

Life chances refer to the opportunities open to individuals to better the quality of life of themselves and their families. Other dimensions include the absence of poverty and social inclusion.

A life chances approach focuses attention on the life cycle and not just creating a level playing field at birth as equality of opportunity might do.

Both life chances and social mobility can be considered intra- and intergenerationally.

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1. What do we mean by life chances and social mobility?

2. What are the facts about life chances in Britain?

- Incomes and employment
- Health
- Vulnerability to crime
- Other aspects of quality of life

3. What are the main determinants or drivers of life chances?

4. What are the implications for Government policy?

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DIFFERENCES IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE ENJOYED BY DIFFERENT GROUPS ARE APPARENT IN A RANGE OF INDICATORS

Quality of life varies with:

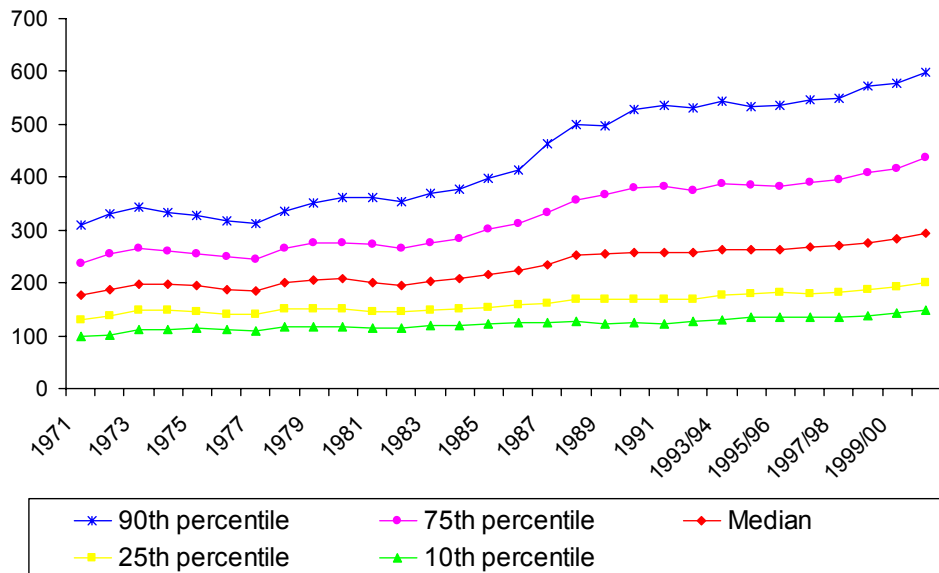
- socio-economic status or social class**
- ethnic group**
- gender**
- geography (where you live)**

This is reflected in indicators such as:

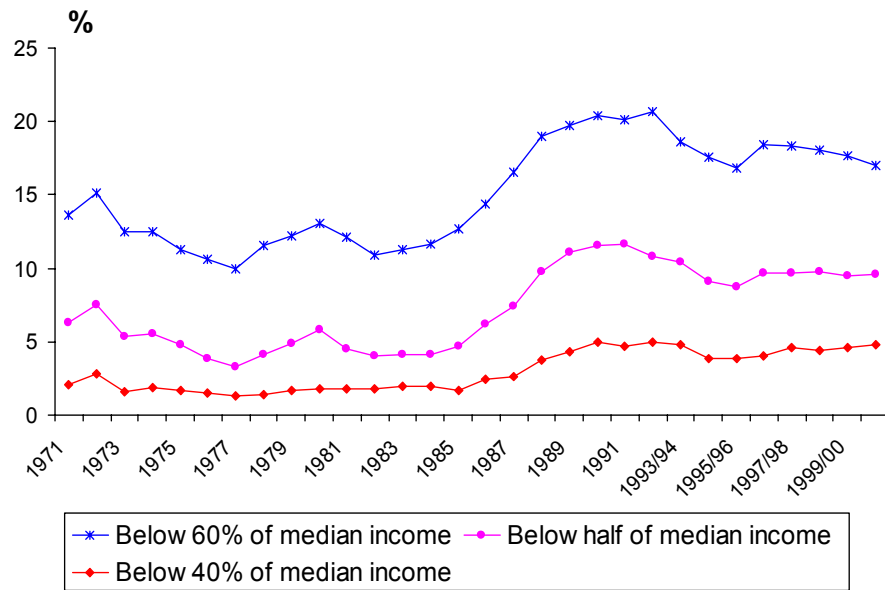
- levels of income and wealth**
- opportunities for employment / risk of unemployment**
- physical and mental health**
- the likelihood of being a victim of crime**
- and various other indicators of quality of life**

OVER THE PAST 20-25 YRS THE INCOMES OF THE BETTER-OFF HAVE RISEN FASTER THAN OTHER GROUPS RESULTING IN INCREASING NUMBERS EXPERIENCING RELATIVE POVERTY

**Growth in real household disposable incomes before housing costs
£ per week, 2001 prices**



Proportions of households with incomes below 40%, 50% and 60% of the median



Source: Social Trends / Institute for Fiscal Studies. Data for 1994/95 onwards exclude Northern Ireland.

– In 1976 incomes at the 90th percentile were 2.9 times those at the 10th percentile
– Twenty five years later, the ratio had risen to 4:1

Between 1976 and 2001, the number of households with incomes below
– 40% of the median rose 220%
– 50% of the median rose 146%
– 60% of the median rose 60%

THOSE AT THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF THE INCOME DISTRIBUTION ARE LESS LIKELY TO MOVE BETWEEN INCOME GROUPS THAN THOSE IN THE MIDDLE

Where in the income distribution individuals spent the majority of their time over the period 1991-2000

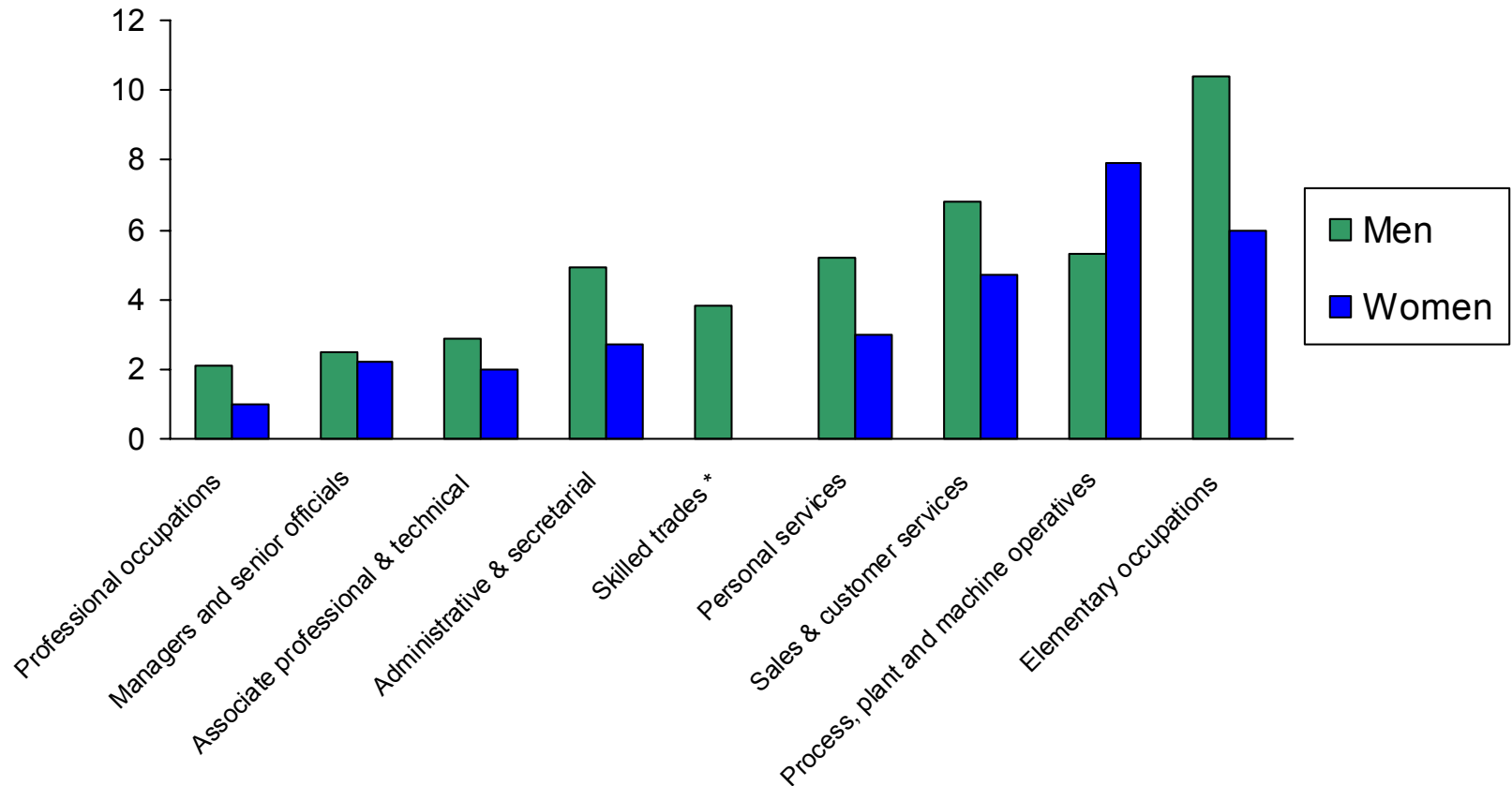
% of individuals	Original position 1991					All individuals
	Bottom Quintile	Second Quintile	Third Quintile	Fourth Quintile	Top Quintile	
All years in same quintile as 1991	10	2	2	2	20	7
Majority of years in same quintile as 1991	40	27	22	28	38	31
Majority of years above 1991 quintile	39	28	22	12	...	20
Majority of years below 1991 quintile	...	12	22	29	35	19
None of the above	11	31	32	29	8	22
All individuals	100	100	100	100	100	100

Around half the individuals in the bottom quintile of the income distribution in 1991 spent all or the majority of years in that quintile from 1991-2000

Around 40-50% of those disadvantaged at age 23 (as measured by social class, income, housing tenure etc) remain so at age 33

PEOPLE IN UNSKILLED OR SEMI-SKILLED OCCUPATIONS ARE AT MUCH HIGHER RISK OF UNEMPLOYMENT THAN THOSE IN PROFESSIONAL AND MANAGERIAL OCCUPATIONS

Unemployment rates by previous occupation 2002, %

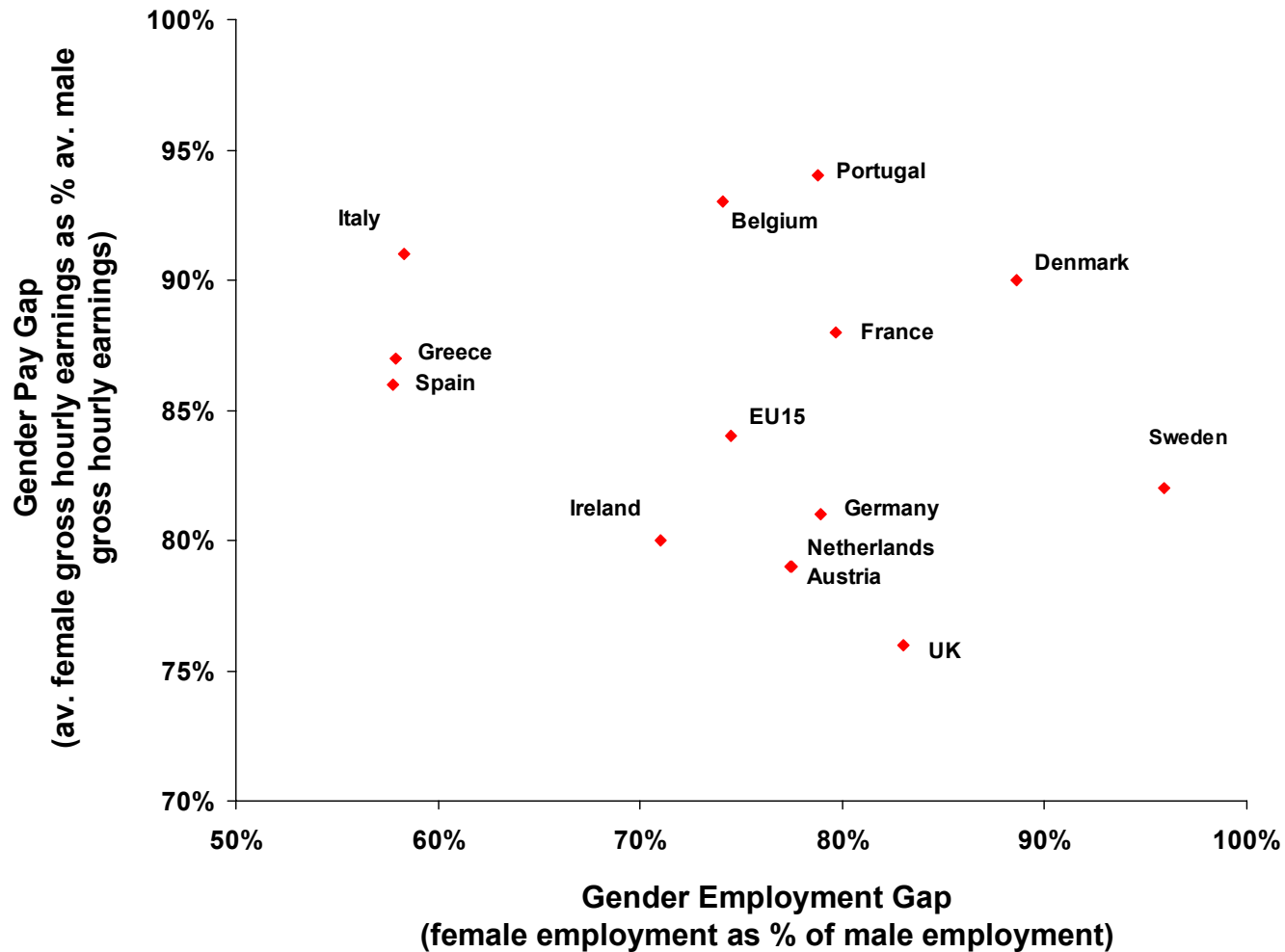


*Skilled trades sample size for females too small for reliable estimate

Source: Labour Force Survey ONS

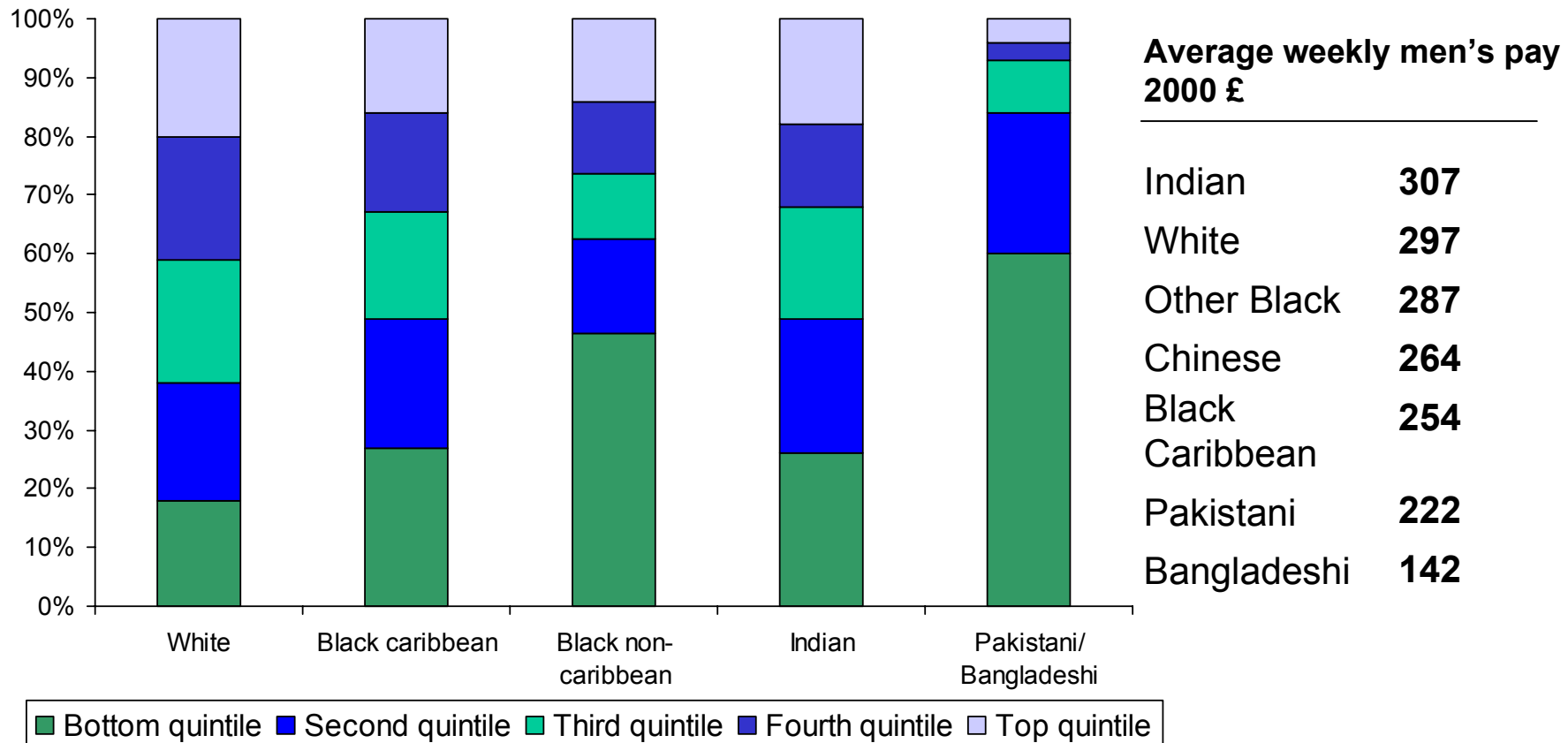
THE UK HAS HIGH RATES OF GENDER INEQUALITY COMPARED WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

Gender inequality: pay and employment “gaps”



ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE LOWER INCOMES

Distribution of equivalised disposable income* of head of household by ethnic group, 2000/01

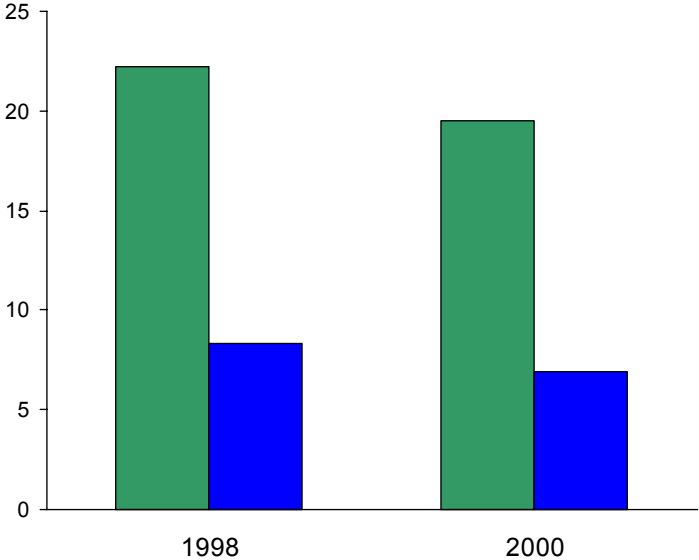


*After deduction of housing costs

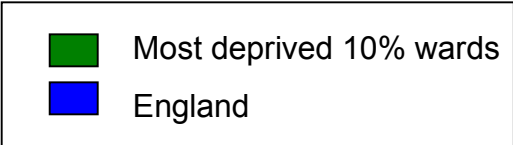
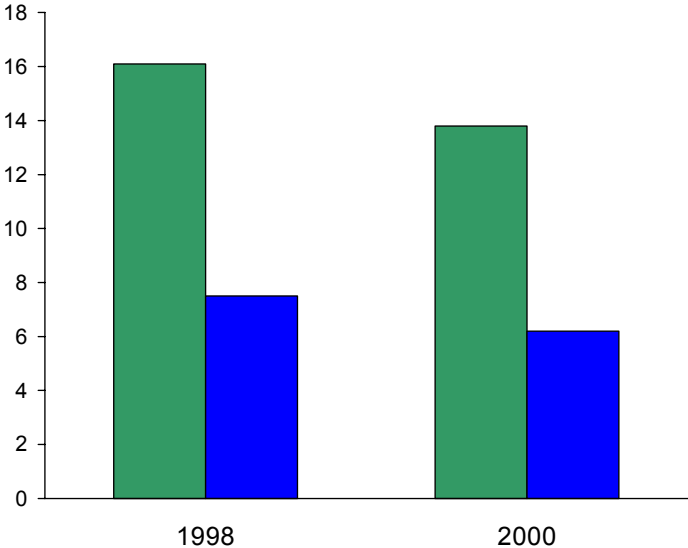
Source: Households below average income, DWP

DEPRIVATION TENDS TO BE CONCENTRATED IN CERTAIN GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

% Households claiming Income Support and Job Seekers' Allowance



Unemployment rate, %

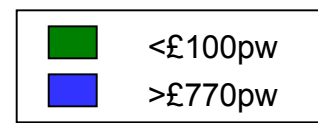
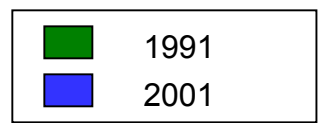
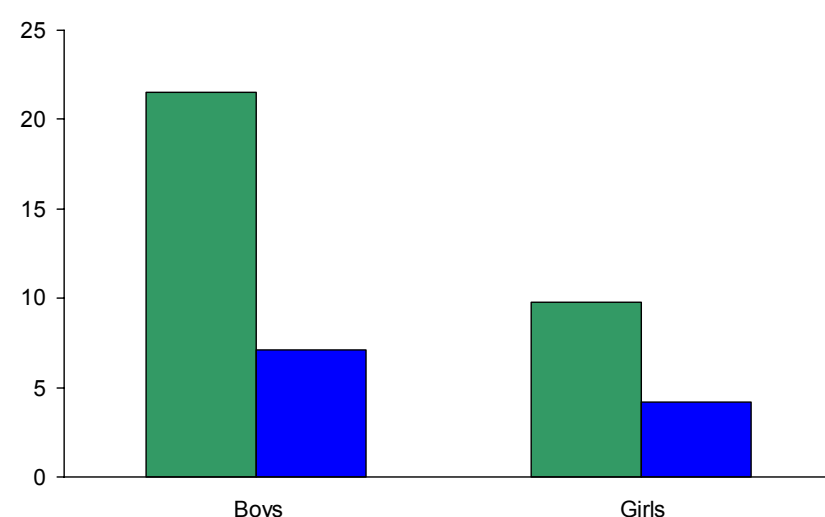
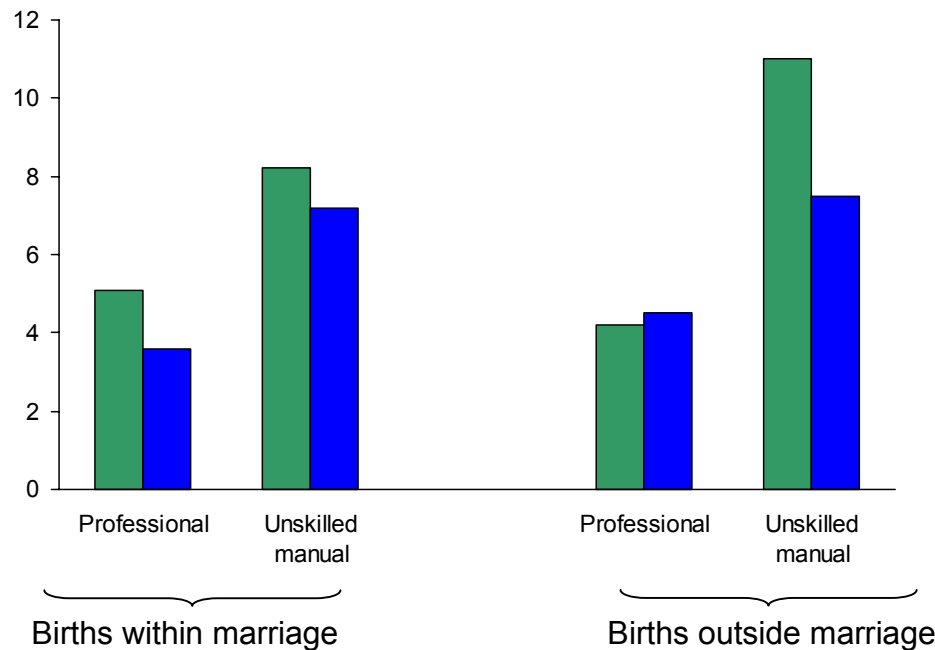


Source: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE AND THE INCIDENCE OF CHILDHOOD MENTAL ILLNESS ARE HIGHER IN UNSKILLED AND LOWER INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Deaths within one year of birth per 1000 live births

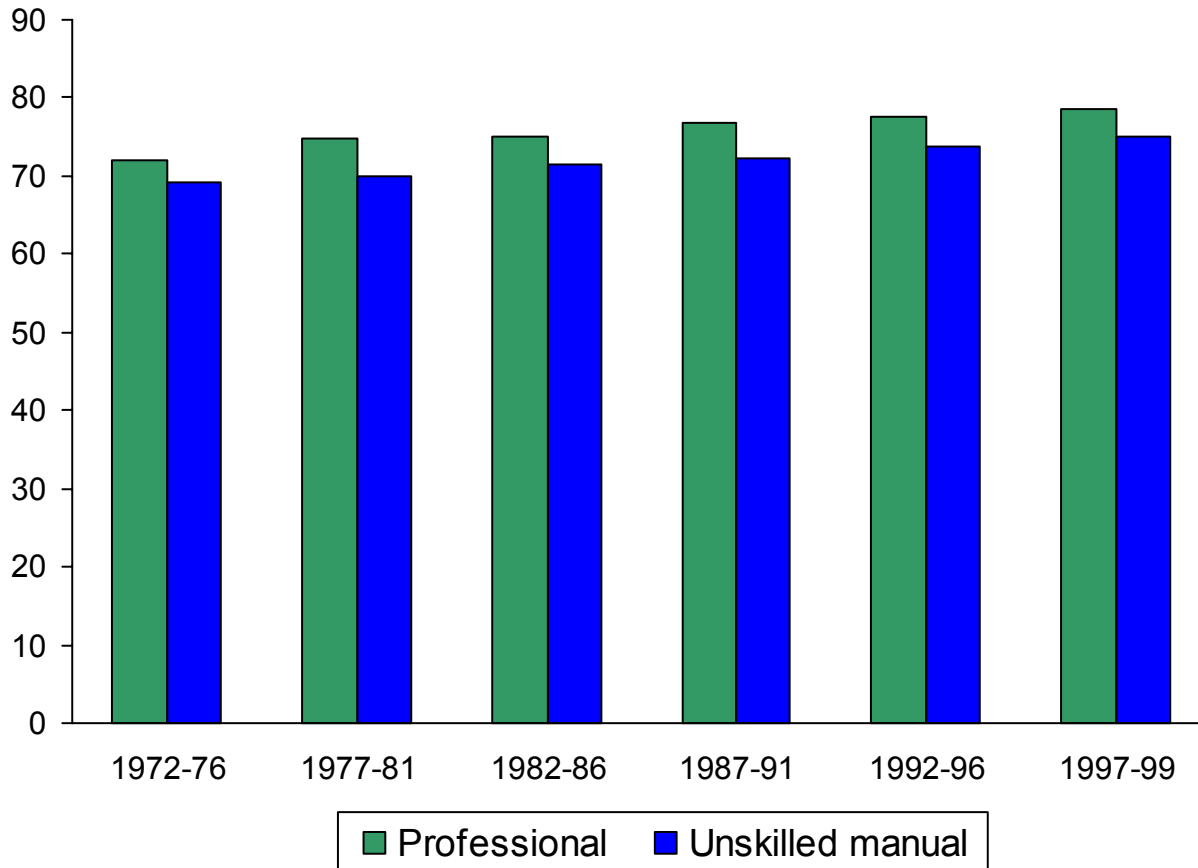
% children (5-15yrs) experiencing mental disorders



Source: Social Trends 33, ONS; *The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in Great Britain, 1999*, ONS

THERE HAS BEEN NO NARROWING OF DIFFERENCES IN LIFE EXPECTANCY BY SOCIAL CLASS OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS

Life expectancy - men - yrs



Male life expectancy

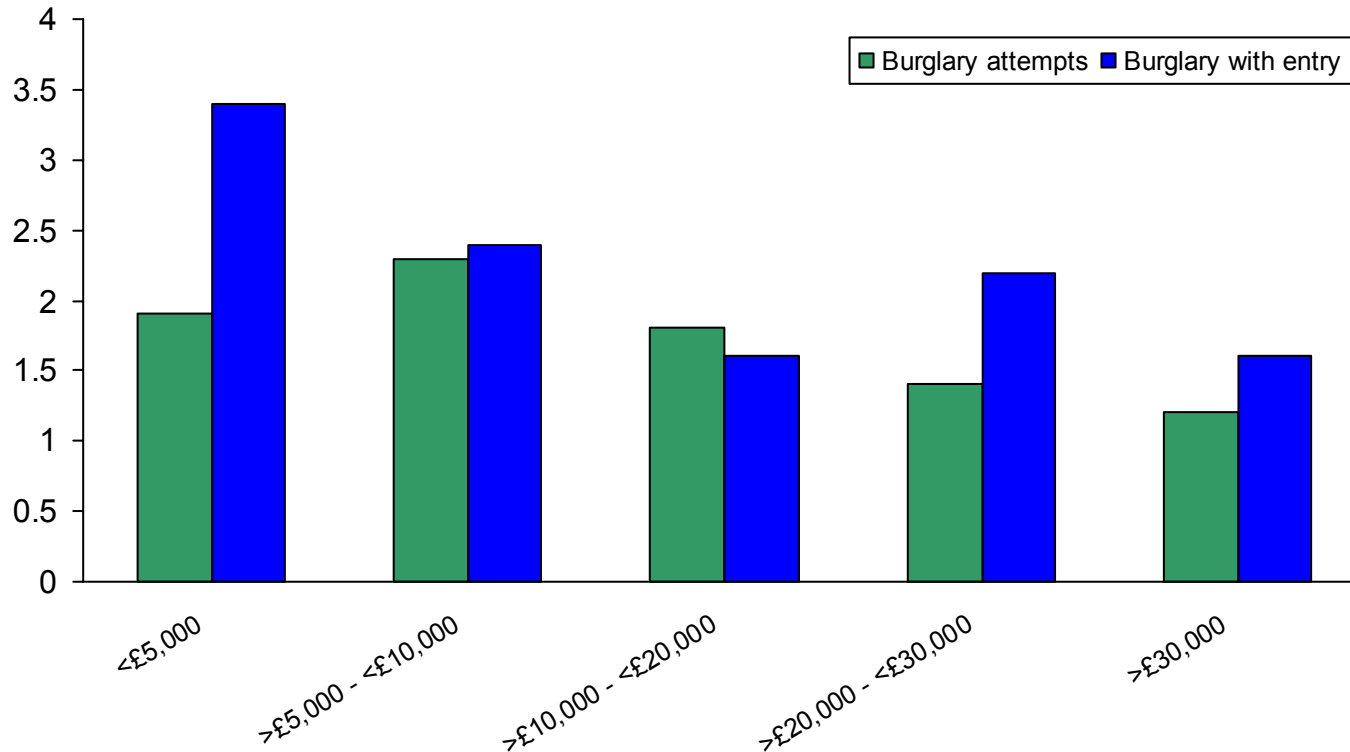
	1972/76	1997/99
Professional	72	79
Unskilled manual	69	75

Female life expectancy

	1972/76	1997/99
Professional	79	83
Unskilled manual	74	77

HOUSEHOLDS ON LOWER INCOMES ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE VICTIMS OF CRIME - AND LESS ABLE TO PROTECT THEIR PROPERTY FROM THEFT

Victims of burglary by household income, 2001/02, %



Source: British Crime Survey, Home Office

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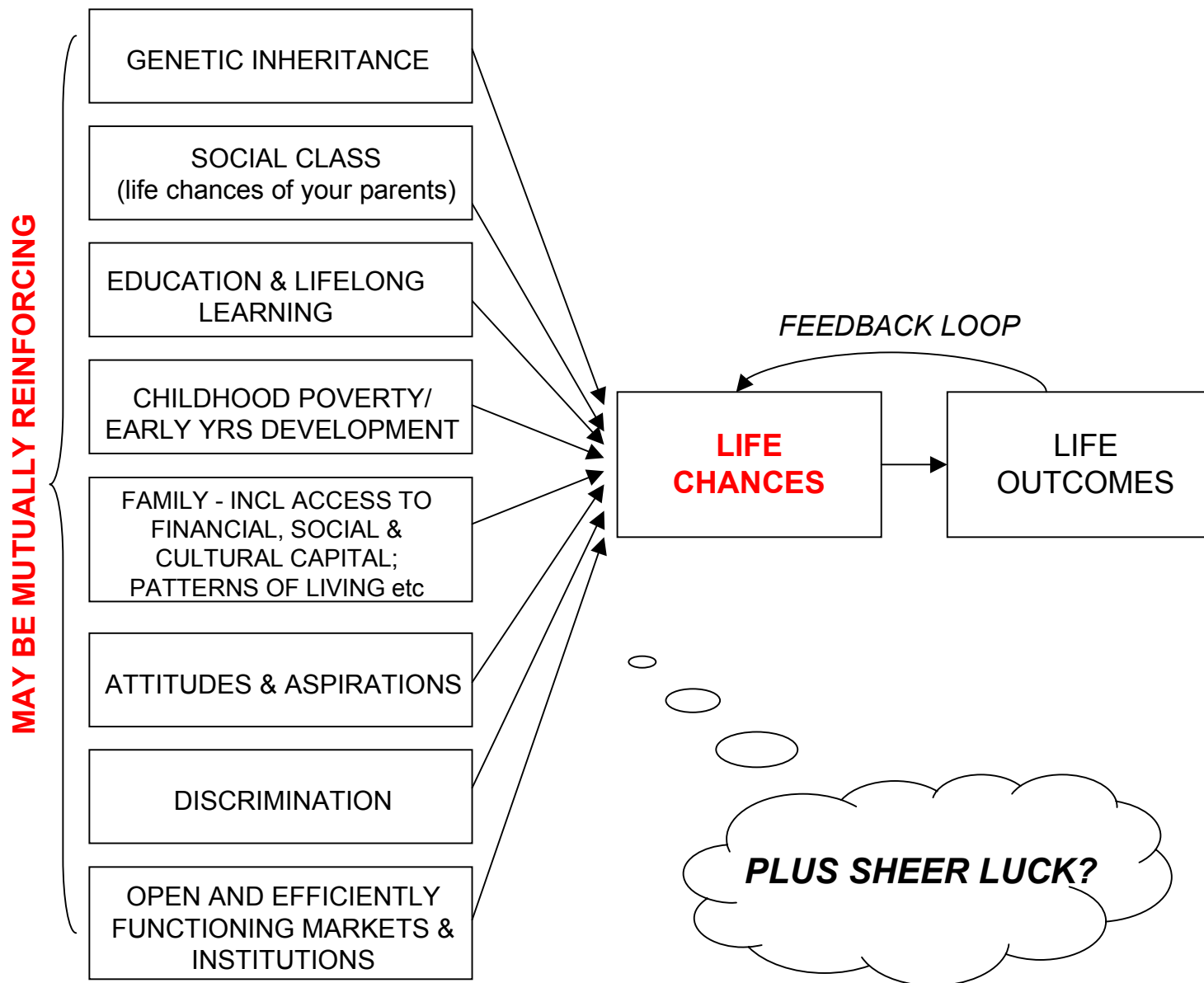
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- Genetic inheritance
- Social class
- Education & skills
- Childhood poverty and early years development
- Family structure and other influences
- Attitudes & aspirations
- Discrimination
- Open & competitive markets

4. What are the implications for Government policy?

5. Issues for discussion

WHAT ARE THE MAIN DETERMINANTS OR DRIVERS OF LIFE CHANCES & SOCIAL MOBILITY?



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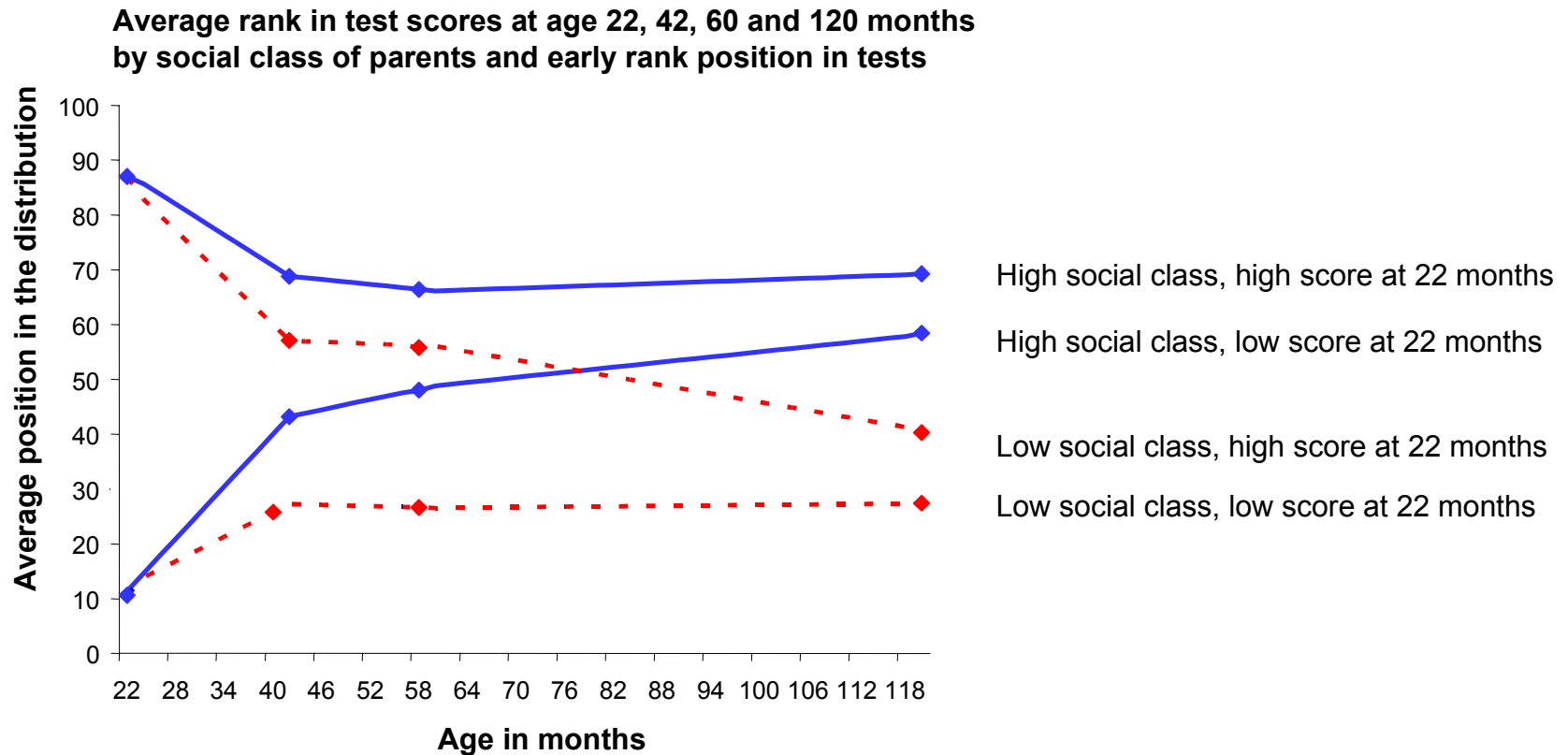
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THE EXTENT TO WHICH INTELLIGENCE IS INHERITED AND CAUSALLY RELATED TO LIFE CHANCES IS HOTLY CONTESTED

- **Estimates of the extent to which intelligence is inherited range from zero to 80%**
- **However recent work suggests genetic and environmental factors are not independent determinants of intelligence and life chances but interact in complex ways to determine IQ. This interaction may in turn underlie the significant long run rise in IQ scores in industrialised countries**

THAT NURTURE MATTERS IS POWERFULLY ILLUSTRATED BY CHILDREN'S EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT BY SOCIAL CLASS AND IQ



Source: *Inequality in the early cognitive development of British children in the 1970 cohort* by Leon Feinstein, *Economica*, February 2003

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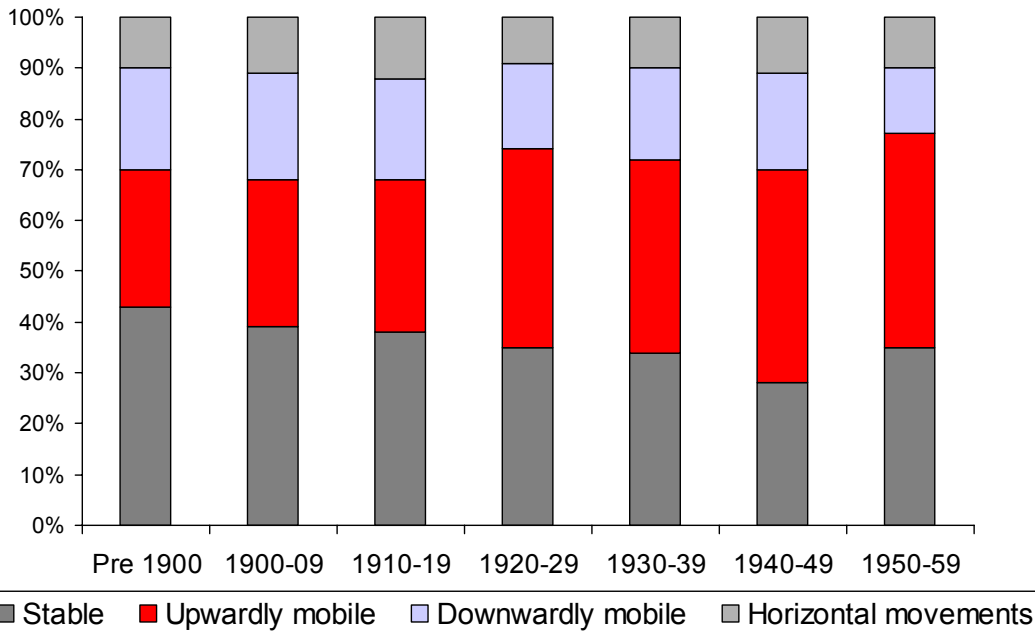
5. Issues for discussion

THE EXTENT TO WHICH SOCIAL CLASS IS A DRIVER DEPENDS ON HOW IT IS MEASURED

- Sociologists make a distinction between absolute social mobility and relative social mobility
- **Absolute social mobility** refers to the absolute number or proportion of people who move from one social class position to another
- **Relative social mobility** refers to the chances people in a particular social group have of making it to another social group e.g. the probability of a working class child making it into the middle class

THERE HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF ABSOLUTE SOCIAL MOBILITY IN BRITAIN

Trends in the absolute social mobility of men during the 20th century (by age of birth)



Why?

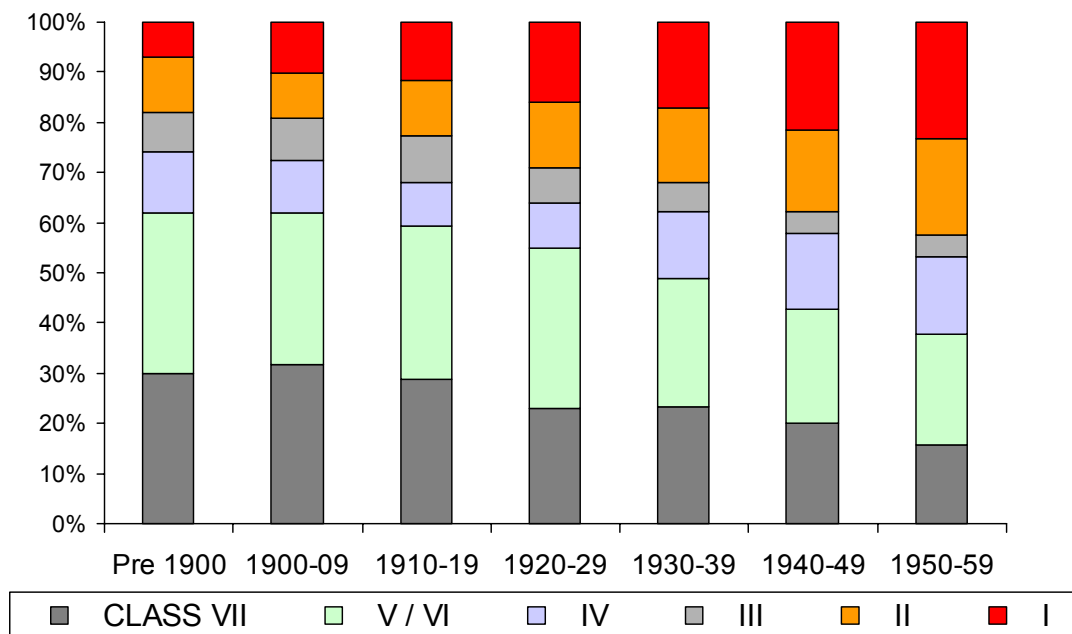
More room at the top:

- The middle class has expanded in size whilst the working class has declined in size - reflecting structural changes in the economy and society brought about by economic growth
- As in other countries, this has resulted in increasing numbers of children enjoying upward social mobility and greater life chances compared to their parents

But note: the expansion of the middle class appears to have slowed or been halted in recent decades

'ROOM AT THE TOP' HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED OVER THE PAST CENTURY

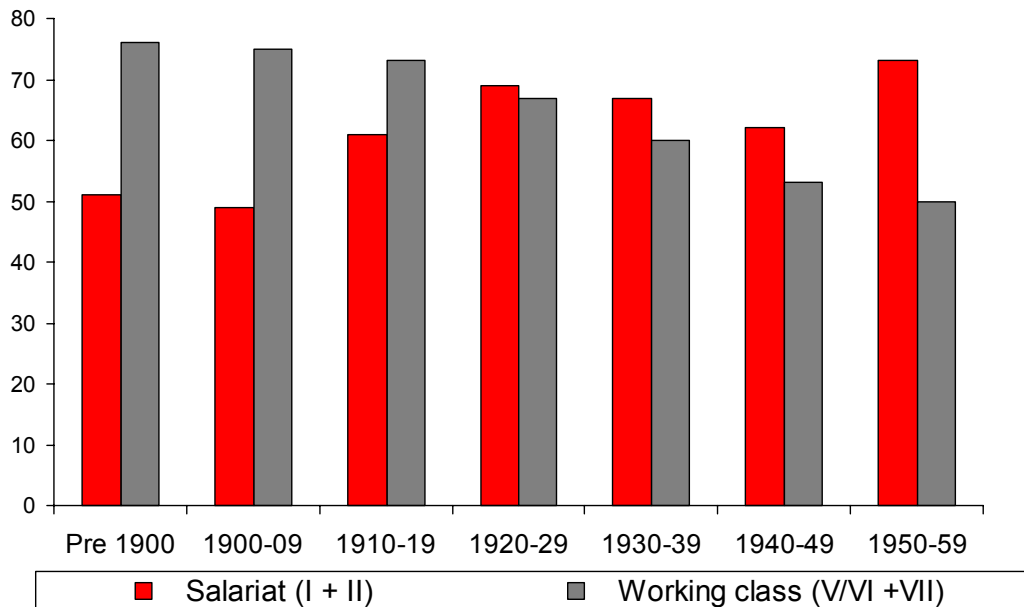
The changing class structure of Britain - 'more room at the top'
(by age of birth)



- At the beginning of the 20th Century the middle class made up 18% of the population whilst the working class made up nearly 62%
- By the end of the 20th century the middle class accounted for over 42% of the population whilst the working class made up under 38%

HOWEVER RELATIVE SOCIAL MOBILITY - THE ODDS DIFFERENT GROUPS HAVE OF MAKING IT TO PARTICULAR SOCIAL CLASS POSITIONS - HAS BEEN MORE STABLE

Trends in intergenerational mobility (% men remaining in the same class as their father by birth cohort)



Why?

- 'More room at the top' has allowed increasing numbers of children whose parents were in the higher social classes to remain in the middle class - there is now less downward social mobility as well as more upward social mobility

- Consequence: the relative chances of children from middle class and working class backgrounds making it to the middle classes have changed little

- The odds of a child from a middle class background making it to the middle class - as opposed to the working class - relative to the same odds for a working class child are of the order of 15:1 across modern societies

ECONOMISTS HAVE APPROACHED SOCIAL MOBILITY FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE TO SOCIOLOGISTS

- Whereas sociologists focus on movement between social classes or occupational groups, economists tend to focus on **income and income mobility**
- There are pros and cons to both approaches:
 - The characteristics of social classes may not remain constant over time. What it means to be middle or working class today may be quite different from what it was a century ago. Income measures may better capture this difference
 - On the other hand, income provides only a snapshot at a point in time of an individual's circumstances. Social class measures may give a better indication of life chances.

THERE APPEARS TO BE A SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN PARENTS' POSITION IN THE EARNINGS DISTRIBUTION AND THE POSITION OF THEIR CHILDREN

- For the UK **correlations of between 0.4 and 0.6 have been found between fathers' earnings and sons' earnings**, and between 0.45 and 0.7 for daughters. (A correlation of zero would imply complete income mobility between generations; a correlation of one complete immobility.)
- The correlation between parents' and children's earnings has risen over time (comparing the 1958 NCDS birth cohort with the 1970 BCS birth cohort) i.e. income mobility has fallen. This appears to be the result of the expansion of higher education primarily benefiting those from wealthier backgrounds
- Consistent with the sociological literature it appears that the highest proportion of sons in the same quartile of the earnings distribution as their fathers is to be found at the top of the earnings distribution. In other words, upward mobility from the bottom is more likely than downward mobility from the top

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL LITERATURE PRESENTS MIXED EVIDENCE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CLASS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

- **Estimates of the correlation between parents' and children's incomes and earnings range from**
 - around 0.2 in countries such as Canada, Sweden and Finland
 - to 0.3-0.4 in Germany
 - to 0.4-0.6 in the UK and the US
- **on the other hand, the sociological literature suggests that for much of the 20th century relative rates of social mobility have been comparatively stable over time and very similar between countries.**
However:
 - there appears to be a more open and fluid group of countries including Australia, Japan, Sweden, the Netherlands and the USA, and a less fluid group including France, Germany, Italy and Ireland - with Britain somewhere in between
 - social fluidity has tended to increase in recent decades, particularly in France, Sweden and the Netherlands (though not in Britain)
 - differences in perceptions of social mobility are greater. Americans are much more likely to believe they have equal opportunities to get ahead than citizens in other countries

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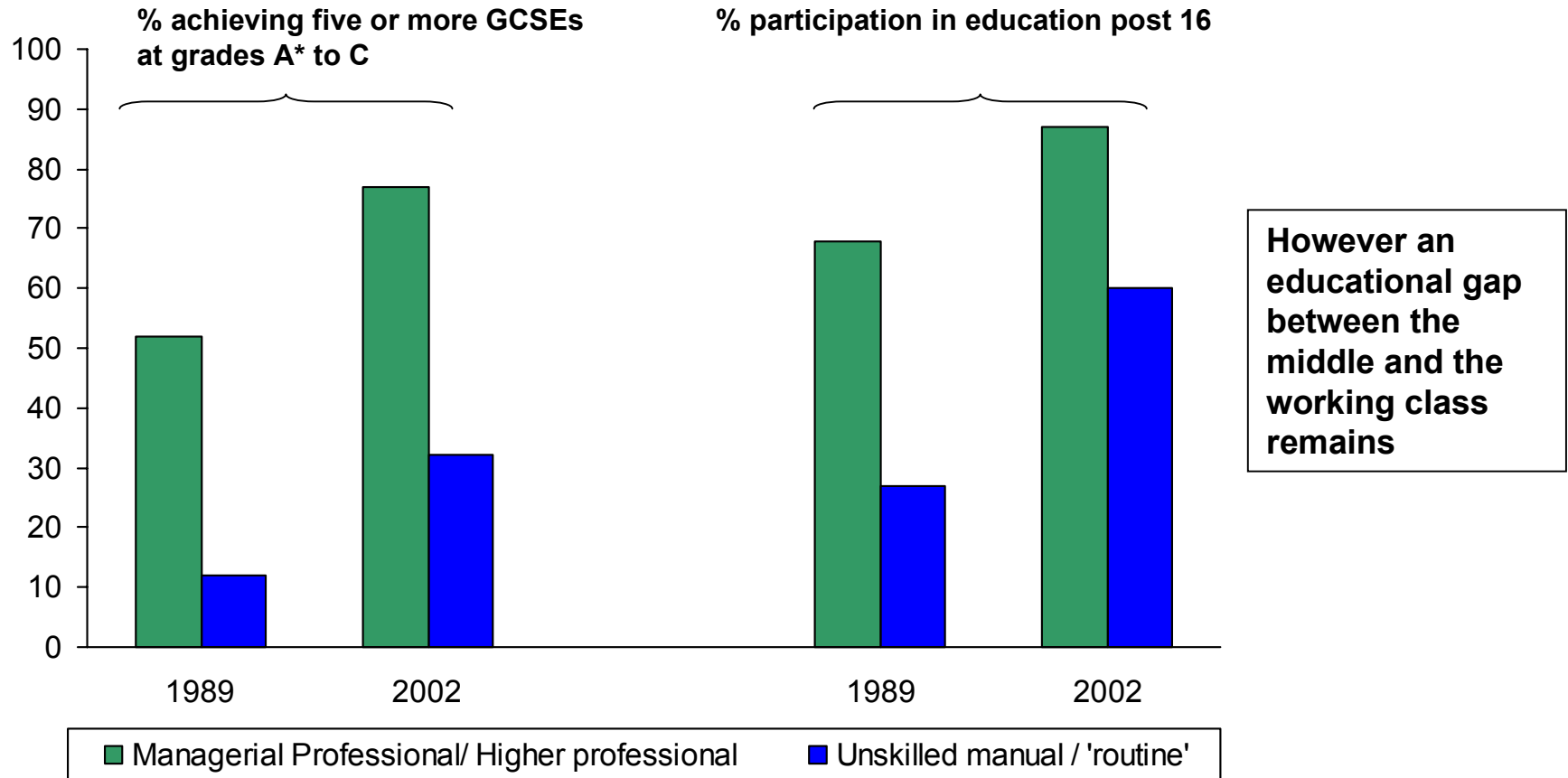
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EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IS A MAJOR FACTOR - PROBABLY THE MAJOR FACTOR - IN WEAKENING THE LINK BETWEEN CLASS ORIGINS AND CLASS DESTINATIONS

- **A decline in the association between class origins and educational attainment appears to lie behind the rise in social fluidity in France, Sweden and the Netherlands in recent decades.**
- **Educational attainment appears to be especially important for long range upward mobility e.g. from the working class to the salariat. It explains much less well the intergenerational immobility (lack of downward mobility) within the salariat.**
- **But there is some evidence that education has played a (modestly) diminishing role in determining class destinations in recent decades e.g. as softer skills such as personal style and team working ability have become more important to employers**

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND PARTICIPATION HAVE INCREASED FOR ALL GROUPS IN THE UK OVER THE PAST 10-15 YEARS



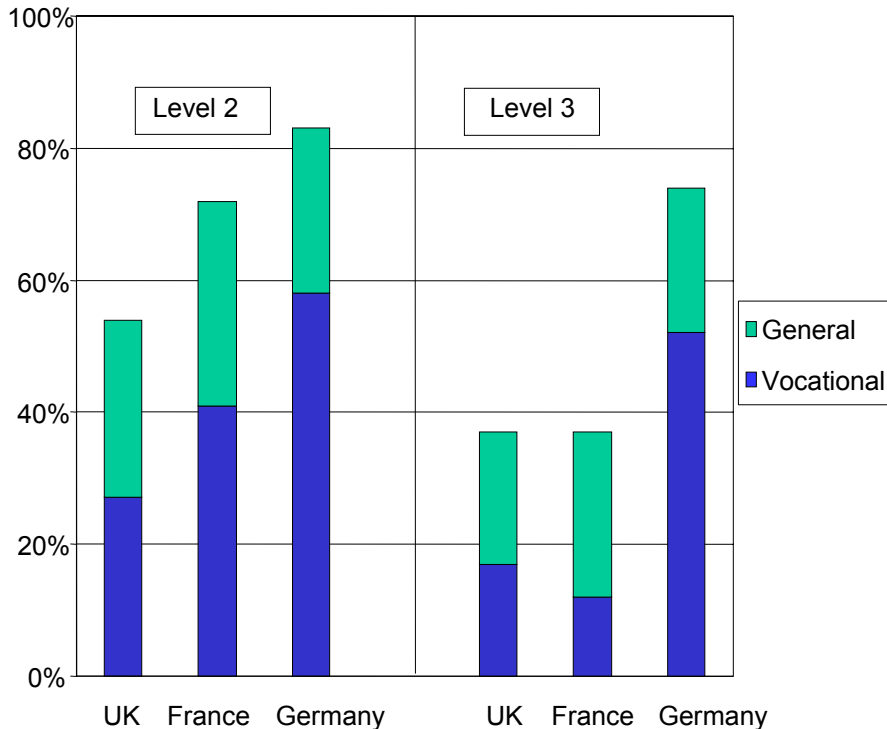
Source: Youth Cohort Study. Note classification of social class changed between 1989 and 2002

BUT OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE AT THE TOP CONTRASTS WITH UNDERACHIEVEMENT AT THE BOTTOM

A weak stock ...

... but better flow

% of adults who have reached level 2 and level 3



Combined reading scores

Social class quartile	0%-25%	25%-50%	50%-75%	75%-100%
Finland (1)	524 (1 st)	535 (1 st)	555 (1 st)	576 (3 rd)
Korea (2)	509 (2 nd)	524 (3 rd)	531 (8 th)	542 (16 th)
Canada (3)	503 (3 rd)	529 (2 th)	545 (3 rd)	570 (6 th)
UK (7)	481 (9th)	513 (7th)	543 (4th)	579 (1st)
USA (15)	466 (13 th)	507 (9 th)	528 (9 th)	556 (9 th)
Germany (21)	427 (24 th)	471 (22 nd)	513 (14 th)	541 (17 th)

A legacy of low skills and intermediate qualifications (level 2 and 3 in international comparison)

... but outstanding performance at the top end (some is due to private schools) combined with weaker performance at the tail.

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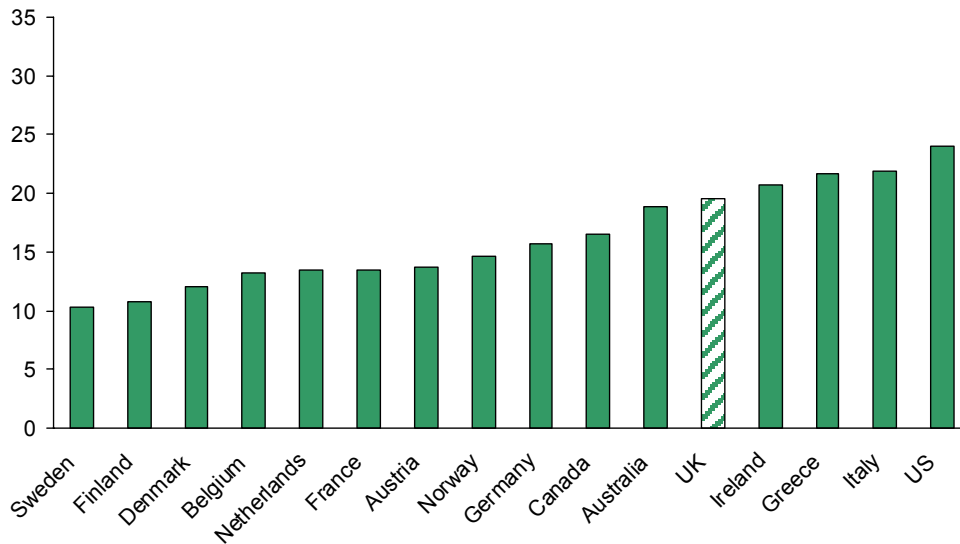
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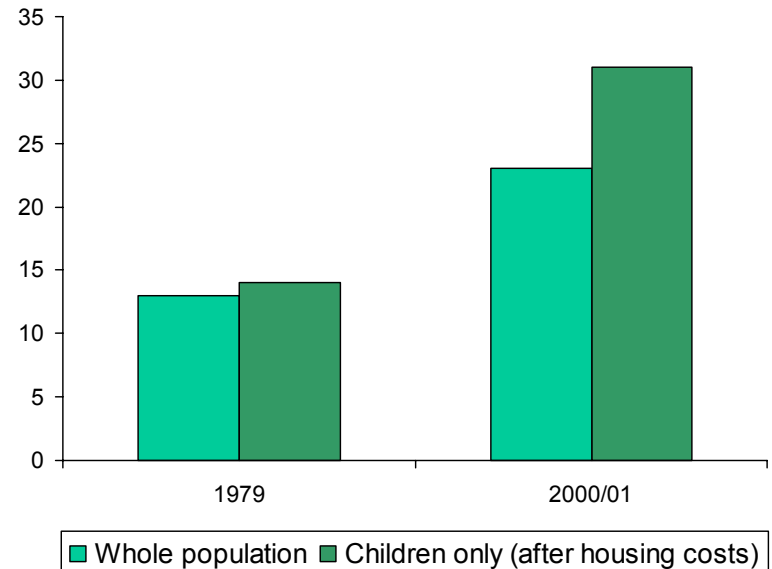
5. Issues for discussion

THE UK HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF RELATIVE POVERTY IN EUROPE - INCREASINGLY CONCENTRATED IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

% in households with incomes below 60% of median (various years 1993-1995; UK 1995)



% in households with incomes below 60% of median



Childhood poverty may affect outcomes in later life through:

- the impact of poverty on diet and thus brain development (physical effects)
- the impact of poverty on feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence etc (psychological effects)

However, there is some evidence that low parental incomes *per se* may be less important than education, the development of social skills in early childhood and other factors in determining outcomes in later life

WORKLESSNESS IS A MAJOR CAUSE OF POVERTY

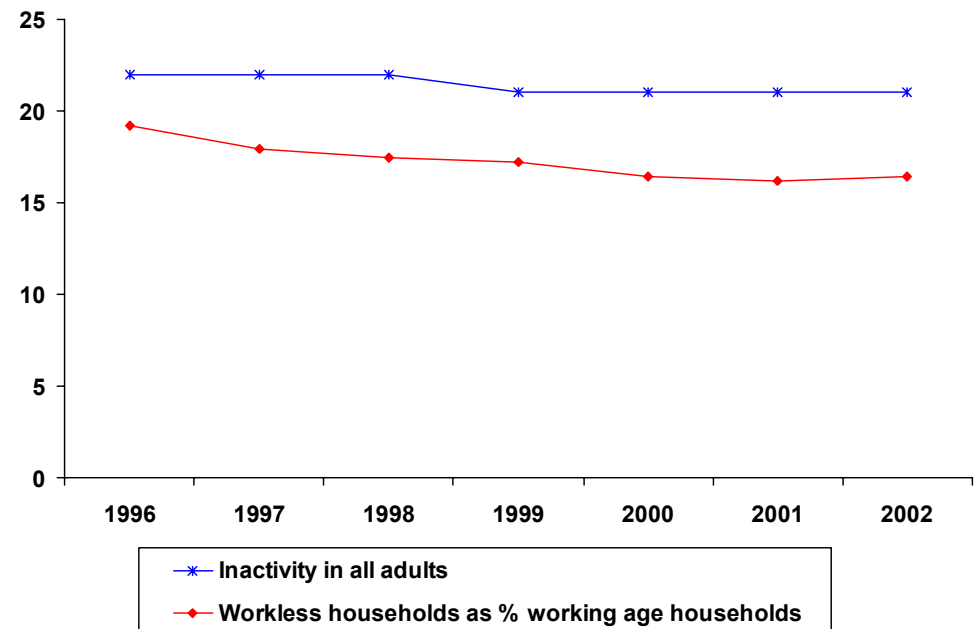
Nearly two thirds of income poor households have nobody in work. The number of people of working age who are neither in work nor looking for it but who report that they would like to work has remained stable at around 2.5m and the proportion of households of working age none of whose members are in work has fallen only from 18% to 16% in recent years.

Worklessness particularly affects:

- the disabled (2.5 times more likely to be out of work than non-disabled people);
- lone parents (despite the increasing number in work);
- people in their 50s;
- some ethnic minority groups (e.g Bangladeshi men are 4 times more likely to be unemployed than white men);
- and people with low skills and qualifications.

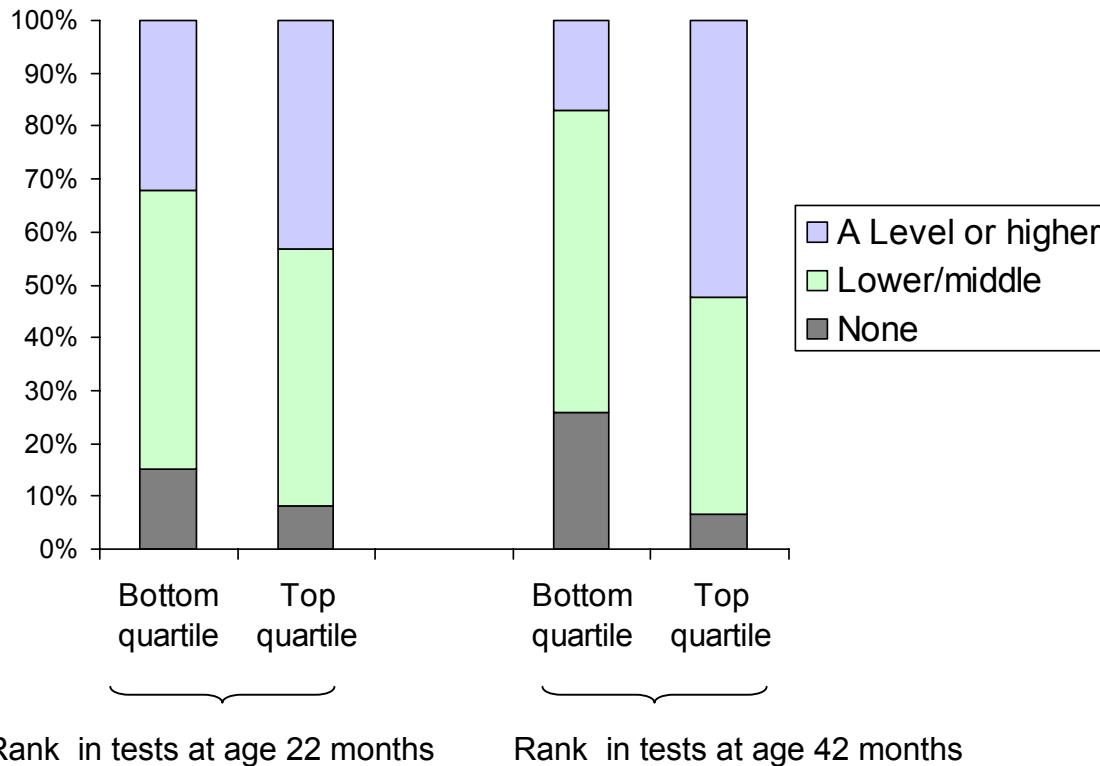
A quarter of poor children live in households with 1 or more disabled adults.

Inactivity rate and proportion of workless households have remained largely stable



THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT IS STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN LATER LIFE

Highest educational qualification at age 26 years by test performance at 22 and 42 months



- Performance in tests at age 22 and 42 months is a strong predictor of later educational outcomes
- Children in the bottom quartile at age 22 months are significantly less likely to get any qualification than those in the top quartile
- Three times as many of those in the top quartile at age 42 months as those in the bottom quartile go on to get A level qualifications or better
- **Significant differences in life chances are apparent even before children enter the education system**

Notes: (i) These findings relate to a sample of children in the 1970 British Cohort Survey
(ii) The differences between the bottom and top quartiles at age 22 and 42 months are statistically significant
(iii) The tests at age 22 and 42 months covered intellectual, emotional and personal development

Source: *Inequality in the early cognitive development of British children in the 1970 cohort* by Leon Feinstein, *Economica*, February 2003

THERE IS EVIDENCE TOO THAT CHILDHOOD POVERTY AND EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT AFFECT LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

- **Young people in low income households at age 16 are more likely to be unemployed in their early 20s than young people from higher income households**
- **Young people from poor backgrounds are disproportionately observed at the lower end of the earnings distribution where they are in work**
- **At age 26 young adults in the 1970 British Cohort Survey experience an earnings penalty of 9% if they were brought up in a household with an income below half the average (after controlling for educational attainment)**

Sources: *From Childhood Poverty to Labour Market Disadvantage: a widening gulf between the prospects of rich and poor kids* by A McKnight, LSE (undated working paper)

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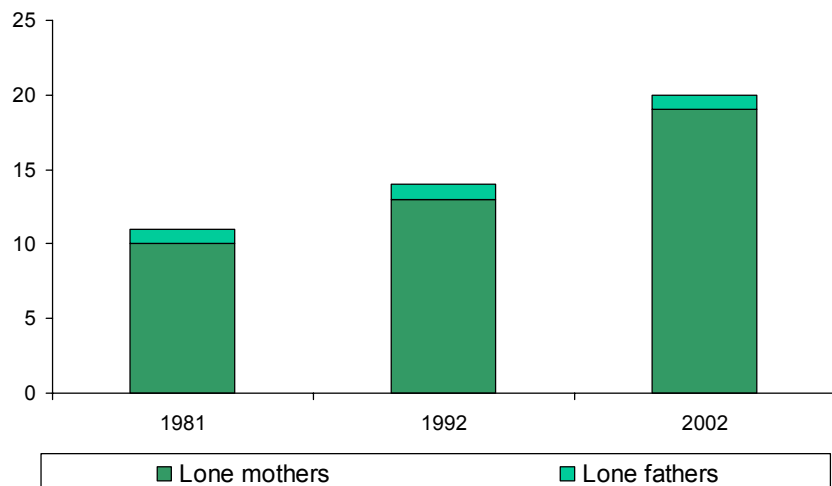
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FAMILY STRUCTURES HAVE CHANGED CONSIDERABLY OVER THE PAST 30-40 YEARS

Proportion of children living in lone parent families, %



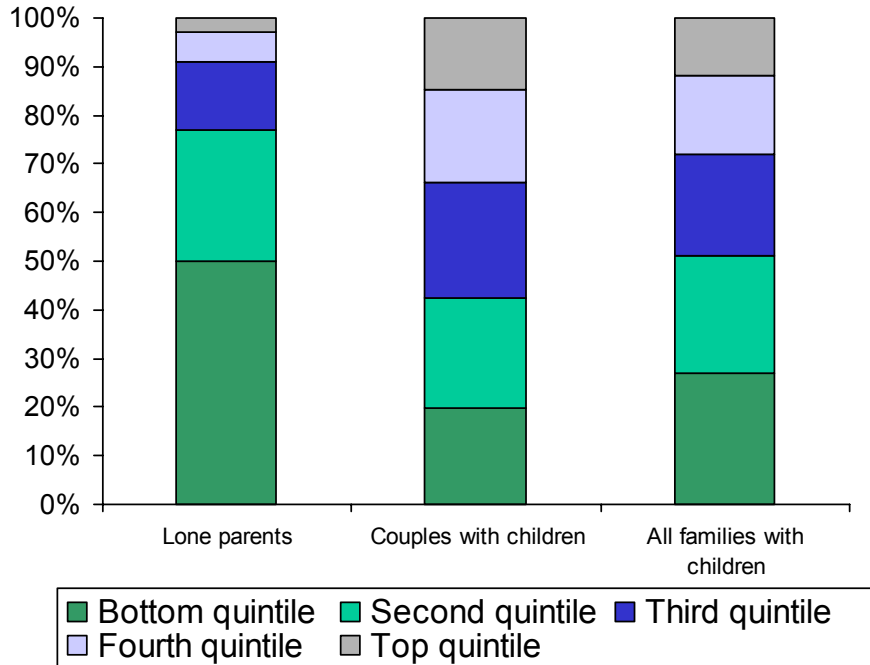
Divorces per 1000 married population



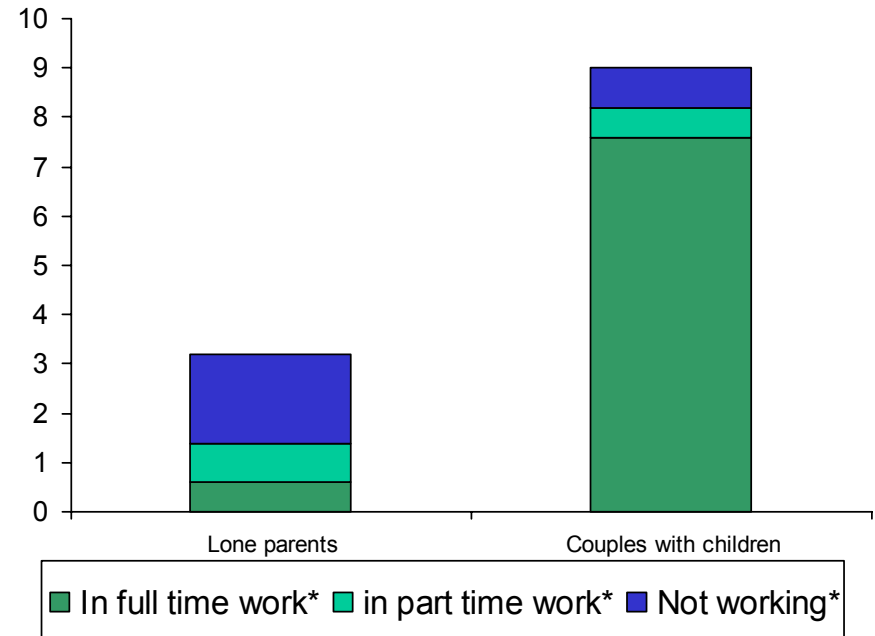
- Increasing numbers of children are being brought up in step families or in lone parent families
- Provided they are brought up in a loving and caring environment, family structures per se may not affect children's life chances
- But some family structures - such as lone parenthood - may increase the risk of childhood poverty and the negative consequences that flow from this.

THERE IS A HIGH LEVEL OF CHILD POVERTY AMONGST LONE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS WHICH SUFFER GREATER RISK OF ECONOMIC INACTIVITY

Distribution of income by family type, 2001/02



Children by type of household, 2001/02, millions



* In couple households chart shows proportions: where at least one parent is in full time work (including self-employed); one or more parents in part time work and no one in full time work; and both parents not in work

HOW A CHILD IS BROUGHT UP AFFECTS THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES IN LATER LIFE

- **There is evidence that psychological characteristics (such as feelings of self-esteem and the sense of control over one's destiny) and behavioural qualities (such as anti-social behaviour, peer relations, attentiveness and extraversion) at age 10 are strongly associated with social class background**
- **This is in part a reflection of different material circumstances but differences in child rearing abilities, parental interest in education and psychological support (which impact on the self-confidence of children) appear to matter too and these may also vary by social class**
- **Psychological characteristics and behavioural qualities at age 10 affect labour market outcomes in later life. For example, children with higher scores for self-esteem experience shorter spells of unemployment and enjoy higher wages in adulthood**

THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT CULTURAL CAPITAL IS IMPORTANT FOR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- **Cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in a society and especially the ability to understand and use ‘educated’ language**
- **Families play a key role in disseminating cultural capital through books in the home; the consumption of a high culture such as the theatre and concerts; and intra-family discussion of cultural matters**
- **Cultural capital may be important for children’s cognitive and motivational development. These are reflected in turn in, for example, children’s reading and TV viewing habits. Reading quality literature and watching of quality TV are associated with higher attainment in GCSEs.**
- **Cultural capital may also be important in later life. Unfamiliarity with particular types of music or cuisine or sport or art may serve as a barrier to social mobility and life chances. Schools and universities as well as the family may play a role in passing on cultural capital**

THE FAMILY IS ALSO IMPORTANT IN PROVIDING ACCESS TO SOCIAL NETWORKS

- **Social capital consists of social connections in their broadest sense and attendant norms and values, including aspirations**
- **Families are a key source of social capital. Middle class families may have greater access to social capital than working class families:**
 - **The social networks of the middle class tend to be more diverse than those of the working class. In particular the middle class have more extensive weak ties with e.g. former colleagues, acquaintances and friends of friends**
 - **Middle class parents can give their children access to these networks of weak ties and associated information and other support**
 - **Middle class children have further opportunities to develop social networks at university and elsewhere**

THE FINANCIAL CAPITAL PROVIDED THROUGH FAMILIES IMPACTS ON LIFE CHANCES IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

- **Material circumstances in early childhood affect both physical and mental development**
- **The greater a family's financial capital, the greater its capacity to invest in the human capital of children (in the broadest sense of the term)**
- **There is evidence that access to modest amounts of financial capital at an early age can have significant impacts on outcomes in later life e.g. the likelihood of setting up one's own business. This is the rationale for baby bonds**

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2. What are the facts about life chances in Britain?

3. What are the main determinants or drivers of life chances?

- Genetic inheritance
- Social class
- Education & skills
- Childhood poverty and early years development
- Family structure and other influences
- Attitudes & aspirations
- Discrimination
- Open & competitive markets

4. What are the implications for Government policy?

5. Issues for discussion

ATTITUDES AND ASPIRATIONS MAY PLAY A KEY ROLE

- **Poverty of ambition** may act as a barrier to upward social mobility. It may, for example, result in perceptions of the opportunities open to people being more pessimistic than the true position
- **Peer effects** may play a key role in transmitting values and behaviour, and thus aspirations and attitudes. For example, it is well established that peer groups have significant impacts on attainment at school.
- Evidence of significant **neighbourhood effects** is less robust - though Chicago's Gautreaux programme found the children of black families re-located to middle class suburbs were less likely to drop out of school and had considerably higher rates of college attendance, employment and good pay than black residents who remained in districts with public housing

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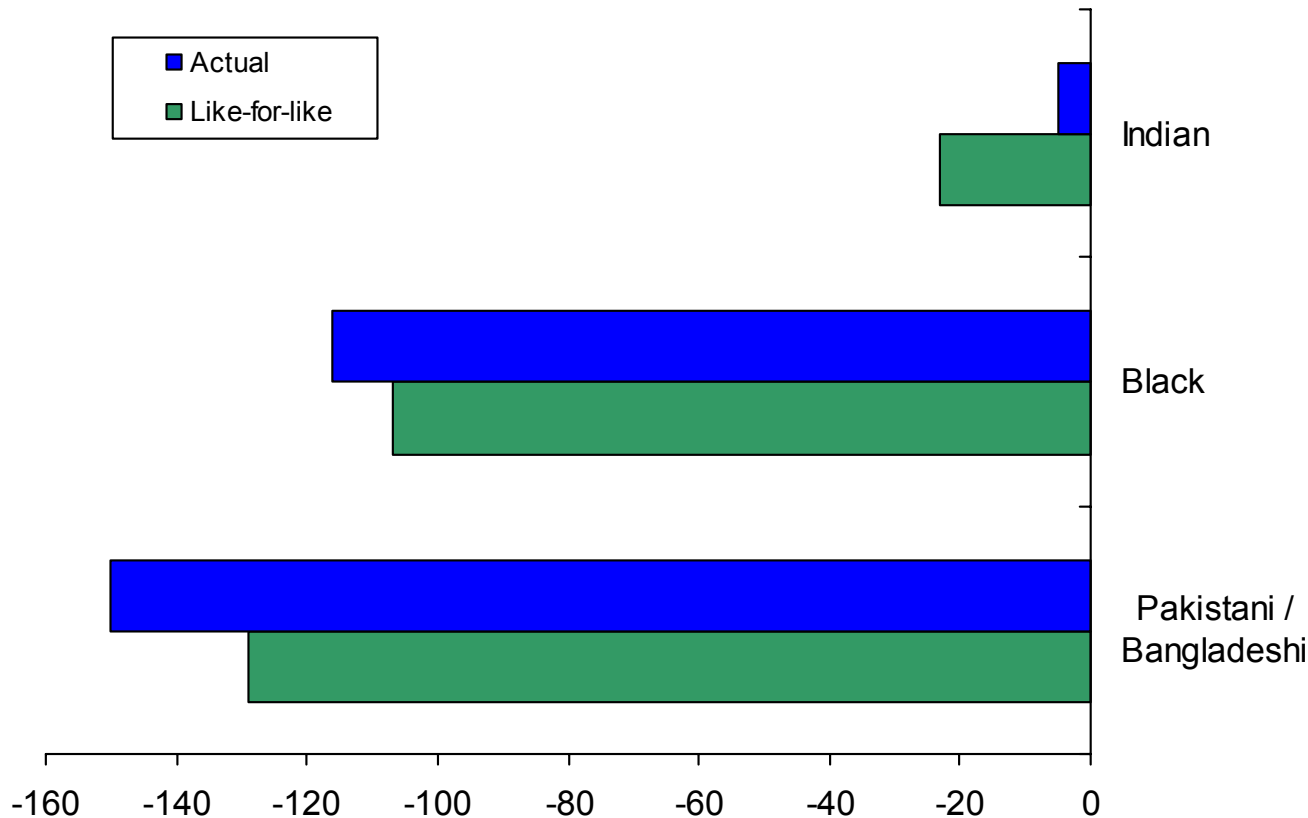
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FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT DIFFERENCES IN LIFE CHANCES REMAIN, EVEN WHEN FACTORS SUCH AS SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT ARE HELD CONSTANT

Weekly Male Earnings Relative to White Counterpart, £



Analyses such as these need to be treated with a degree of caution in view of data, methodological and other limitations

But they suggest that, even after allowing for differences in educational attainment and other quantifiable causal factors, ethnic minorities still earn less than their white counterparts

Various reasons may underlie this, one of which may be discrimination

Note: Figure combines the effects of unemployment and of pay

Source: SU *Ethnic Minorities in the Labour Market Report 2003* drawing on R. Berthoud 'Ethnic Employment Penalties in Britain', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26:389-416, 2000

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OPEN AND COMPETITIVE MARKETS HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN OVERCOMING CLASS BARRIERS

- **Anti-competitive practices and unnecessary barriers to some jobs (such as professional qualifications or cost of training) may act as a potential barrier to social mobility**
- **It is suggested, for example, that the changes associated with the reform of the stock exchange as part of the 'big bang' in the 1980s helped to open up the financial sector to new talent**
- **Efficiently functioning labour markets are important for maintaining high levels of employment (and thus for providing a route out of poverty); efficiently functioning housing markets are important for geographical mobility (a potential precursor to social mobility) and so on.**

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- 5. Issues for discussion and next steps**

WHY DO LIFE CHANCES MATTER?

- **Social justice (as well as economic efficiency) requires the absence of unfair, excessive or unnecessary barriers (such as social class or persistent poverty) to individuals' improving the quality of life of themselves and their families.**
- **The concept of life chances is not, however, a simple one but multi-dimensional:**
 - **It is affected by social (im)mobility; poverty; and social exclusion; and**
 - **It can be interpreted in both absolute and relative terms.**
- **Different weightings of social (im)mobility; poverty and social exclusion will have different implications for policy as will taking either an absolute or relative approach.**

FOR EXAMPLE, AN EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL MOBILITY - A MERITOCRATIC APPROACH - MIGHT DO NOTHING TO TACKLE POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION

- **A meritocracy is society in which the most able and committed people can succeed in attaining the most desirable, responsible and well-rewarded positions**
- **Such a society would be characterised by the absence of any association between class origins and destinations and by high rates of social mobility**
- **But:**
 - **it would not necessarily be characterised by reduced levels of poverty**
 - **high rates of upward and downward mobility alongside high levels of poverty could create unhappiness and resentment jeopardising social inclusion and cohesion**

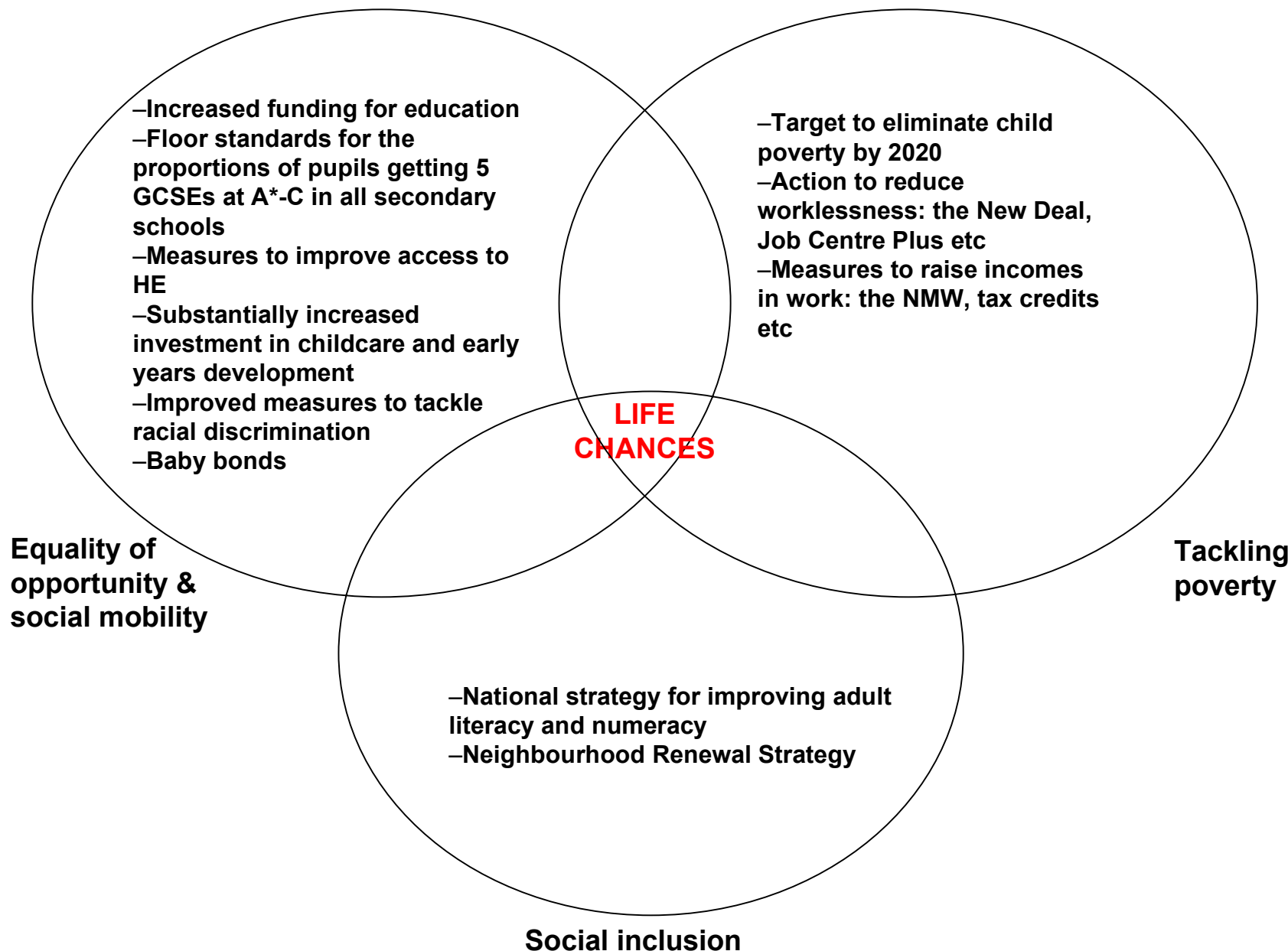
WHAT SHOULD BE THE OBJECTIVES OF GOVERNMENT POLICY?

- **Government has multiple and potentially conflicting policy objectives, not just between the different dimensions of life chances (equality of opportunity; the absence of poverty; and social inclusion), but between life chances and high levels of prosperity; life chances and individual freedom and responsibility; etc**
- **Interventions to promote life chances may conflict with, for example, conceptions (or goals) of individual freedom and responsibility in relation to parenting; children's pre-school development etc**
- **Ultimately a judgement is required about the best balance between the different dimensions of life chances and other objectives in terms of achieving shared prosperity or a good life for all. Exactly where this balance is pitched requires a political judgement.**

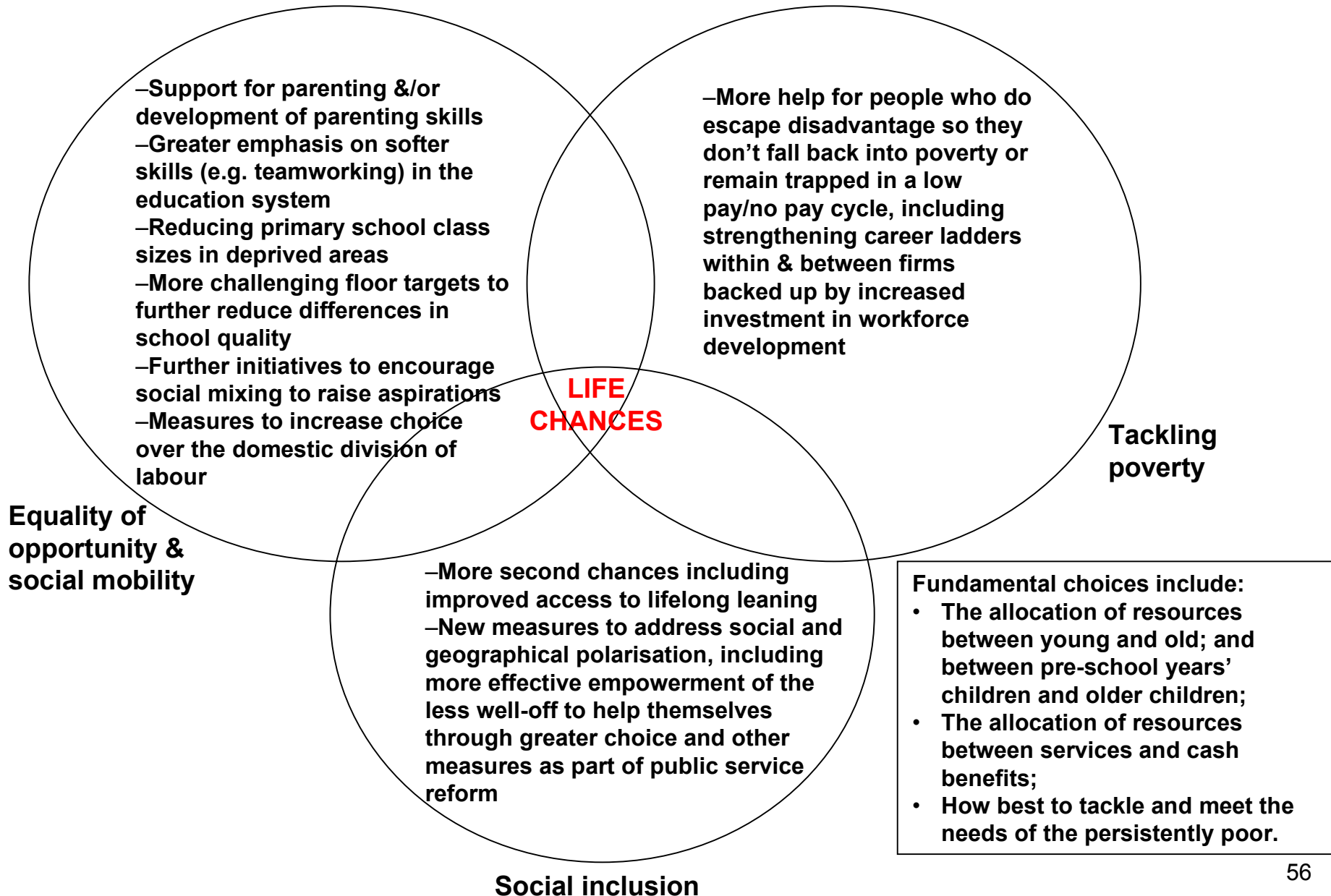
HOW EASY IS IT TO PROMOTE LIFE CHANCES AND SOCIAL MOBILITY?

- **Many of the determinants of individuals' life chances are not under Government's direct control and may not be susceptible even to indirect influence e.g. genetics, early upbringing, parenting skills, aspirations etc.**
- **Across developed nations there has been comparatively little variation in, for example, relative rates of social mobility during most of the last century. Relative rates of social mobility have also tended to be pretty stable over time.**
- **On the other hand:**
 - **some countries do show more social mobility than others**
 - **some have become more fluid in recent decades apparently because of a decline in the association between class origins and educational attainment**
 - **so, though realism is needed about the scale of the challenge, improving relative life chances between generations does not appear to be totally intractable. But programmes seeking to remove barriers to disadvantage need to tackle the full range of underlying causes; be high quality; adaptable to the diverse needs of different individuals; and able to address changes and transitions at various points in the life cycle (early years alone is not enough if impacts are to be sustained).**

WHAT POLICIES AND MEASURES ARE ALREADY IN PLACE TO BOOST LIFE CHANCES?



AREAS WHERE CURRENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES MIGHT BE DEVELOPED FURTHER?



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ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- **How useful is the concept of life chances?**
- **How should Government balance potential trade-offs between boosting life chances, promoting prosperity and maintaining individual freedom & responsibility?**
- **What are the main gaps in current policies and programmes bearing on life chances and social mobility?**
- **Where should Government put the 'marginal pound' to have maximum impact on life chances & social mobility? What (if any) policy measures are likely to be most (cost-) effective?**