

# MOVING ON UP

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A BCS analysis of  
social mobility in IT

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# Foreword

Looking back on 40+ years in the IT industry gives me a perspective denied to the hipster evangelists of TechCity. Back then, we communicated with computers using 80-column punched cards and computers couldn't communicate with each other at all! Happily, though the technology was primitive, the people were anything but. In my alma mater – IBM – men and women worked side by side for the same pay and while customers wore three-piece suits and demanded to be addressed as Mr or Mrs, we wore shirtsleeves and called each other by our first names.

And we were on a mission – while those outside the industry regarded us as geeks, we knew that we were in the vanguard of a revolution to change the way the world operated. For example, while the world marvelled at the human elements of the Moonshot, we quietly congratulated ourselves on the information technology that made it possible.



It all seems very different to today. Or is it?

Growing up in Nottingham in the 1960s, IT played an important part in my own journey – the industry's disinterest in race, religion, or ethnicity wasn't the result of a liberal political philosophy, but rather a hunger for talent. And that is as true today as it was when I began my Gap Year in 1970.

The list of fledgling sectors within IT is breath taking. To take three – AI, quantum computing and the Internet of Things, each have the potential to dwarf today's industry providing jobs and applications which will transform the world for the better. And the hunger for talent will outstrip the negative pressures of the social prejudices found in so many professions, even now.

Put simply, the next wave of entrants into digital jobs will continue the work of re-engineering our entire society. So what's the problem? The answer is simply that this message isn't being heard loudly enough in schools and colleges across the land where young people are making life-defining choices about their careers.

*'We all must hope that we can reflect society in the people who will define it in the future.'*

It is therefore of prime importance that we do not repeat the mistakes of previous generations in casting society in a narrow image. For justice and fairness, for our culture and values, we all must hope that we can reflect society in the people who will define it in the future. No profession will do so more than digital technology, as is evidenced across our screens week in, week out.

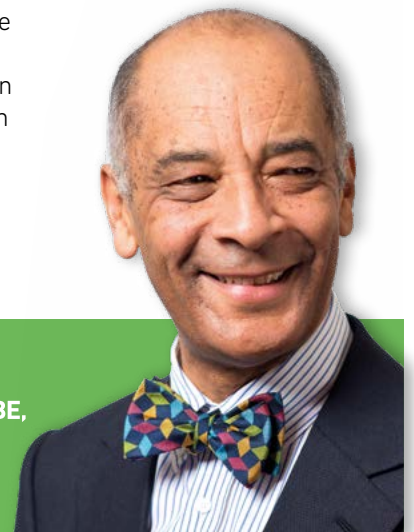
We need our young people – and those who advise them – to realise that in the world of digital, social mobility is practically frictionless.

Parents, teachers, politicians and employers all need to appreciate the amazing range of powerful, human-centric and creative roles available in the digital marketplace.

The IT profession is still young and discovering its own relationship with wider society. It is clear that it must do more to play a definite and informed role in educating not just those who are naturally enthused and engaged by it, but also those young people who are harder to reach. This includes those whose home life or heritage has denied them sight of the doors and career paths that it can open; from sports boot design to film animation, from healthcare to online retail, the opportunities are endless.

I began my computing career in the 6th Form when I opted to spend each Friday afternoon writing programs on an Atlas mainframe at Nottingham University. The reason for my choice? The alternative was cross country running! Let's work together to help the children of today to make better, more informed career decisions to join in the technology revolution based on something more inspiring than the avoidance of rain and pain!

**Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE,  
CStJ, FRSA, FBCS**



# Executive Summary

Analysis of education and profession datasets clearly show that the IT profession, in its widest sense, presents opportunities for social mobility. A young person from a less advantaged background will find a career path more open to them in IT than some of the longer-established professions. Given the growth in size, importance and impact of digital, it is vital that our profession is reflective of wider society, and that the UK's talented young people are encouraged to take a leading role.

## Key findings:

- IT as a profession offers more social mobility than medicine and law.
- IT offers comparable social mobility to the business and accountancy professions.
- IT offers more routes to entry and a far lower cost for obtaining qualifications and skills than medicine and law.
- 75% of those in the IT profession have experienced upward social mobility compared to their parents social class.
- 80% of IT project/programme managers have experienced a higher grading of social mobility than their parents.
- 18% of IT professionals have experienced 'long-range social mobility'.
- IT occupations are associated with the second-highest level of long-range social mobility, being only marginally behind managers and directors in business.

BCS believe the IT profession can – and should – help to tackle the divisions in British society. Following our ['Diversity in IT 2017'](#) report, we have undertaken further work that shows that people from lower income backgrounds can progress to better income levels much quicker in IT than more traditional routes such as medicine or law.

*'A young person from a less advantaged background will find a career path more open to them in IT than some of the longer-established professions.'*



*'75% of those in the IT profession have experienced upward social mobility compared to their parents social class.'*



# Our vision:

IT education, particularly in schools, is understood as a driver of social mobility and embraced by educators, parents and students in Opportunity Areas and beyond.

The IT sector<sup>1</sup> understands the important role it can play in driving social mobility and directs its resources accordingly.



## Recommendations:

- IT teaching resources need to be accessible, designed and prioritised for the context where they are most needed.
- Everyone building such resources should set their design criteria accordingly and review existing material where this has not been incorporated.
- Every IT education programme in schools and communities, on a national or regional basis, should incorporate policy objectives around social mobility.
- Regional and local social mobility plans need to highlight digital opportunities specifically, and actively seek partnerships and programmes that can bring people together to encourage and support growth in digital education and skills.
- School leadership teams should be given specific support and encouragement around the adoption of IT, and in turn should encourage their teachers to participate in national networks and programmes.
- Research and monitoring is needed to understand the barriers and solutions to increasing IT as a tool of social mobility.
- Teachers, careers advisers and parents need to be provided with the full breadth of information about digital professional careers; with a particular emphasis on the human-centric aspects, entrepreneurial opportunities, and the array of exciting industries where digital professionals operate.

All of the above recommendations apply nationwide and should have a particular focus in Opportunity Areas.

## What do we mean by social mobility?

When we talk about social mobility, we mean the movement of individuals, families, households, or other categories of people within or between social strata.

Or, to put it in terms used by Prime Minister, Theresa May in September 2016:

*“I want Britain to be the world’s great meritocracy – a country where everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and their hard work will allow.”<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> In this report, references to IT and the IT profession are taken to mean the entire portfolio of roles available within the discipline.

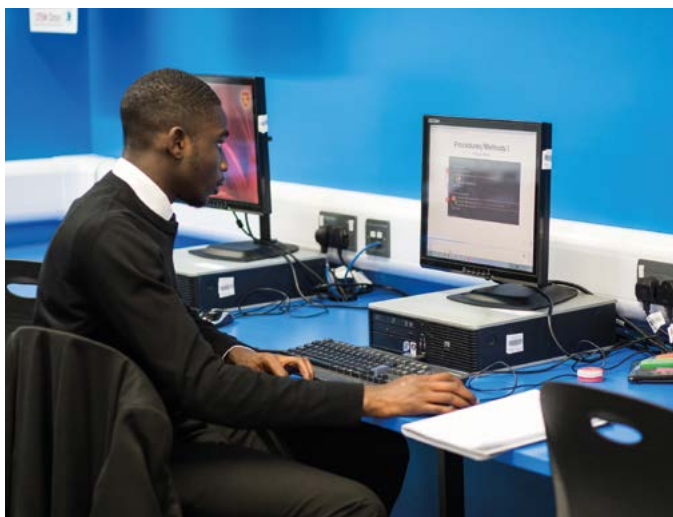
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/britain-the-great-meritocracy-prime-ministers-speech>

# IT and social mobility: the opportunity

The government report, '[State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain](#)'<sup>3</sup> stated that 'Britain is a deeply divided nation. Those divisions take many forms; class, income, gender, race.'

The BCS '[Diversity in IT 2017](#)'<sup>4</sup> report showed how a balanced approach to diversity in gender, age, ability/disability and ethnicity could contribute a great deal to narrowing the much-lamented IT skills gap. In our report, we highlighted the disparity in the levels of representation for certain key ('minority') groups working in IT positions in the UK. The report showed that the IT sector fares poorly when compared with the wider labour market and within society as a whole, but there is a significant opportunity to change this situation.

The strategic needs for IT education and for social mobility are different but compatible. As the expansion of IT education undergoes a step-change, and with a renewed focus on social mobility more generally, our data strongly suggests an opportunity exists. If every IT educational activity had social mobility interwoven into its approach, and if every social mobility programme understood and leveraged the digital opportunities, both would be more effective, and society as a whole would benefit.



An outstanding IT education for every child is vital for the future of the UK, as was recently underlined by the [Royal Society's report on computer education in UK schools](#)<sup>5</sup> which argued that this is necessary for our future prosperity, as well as individual empowerment. In addition, understanding of algorithms and their impact is necessary 'to develop children's critical awareness and resilience' in a world of social media, according a recent [report by the Children's Commissioner](#)<sup>6</sup>.

***'If every IT educational activity had social mobility interwoven into its approach, and if every social mobility programme understood and leveraged the digital opportunities, both would be more effective, and society as a whole would benefit.'***

Increasingly, the future of work will involve digital skills, with over 90% of jobs expected to require them within the next 20 years<sup>7</sup>. With digital skills becoming increasingly ubiquitous, a diverse, fair and representative technology profession is necessary for a fair society and to get the best results out of digital technology. Social mobility underpins all of this, supporting a greater breadth of talent for our economy and a fairer sharing of wealth and autonomy.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills report, 'The Returns to Higher Educational Qualifications'<sup>8</sup> identified that degrees in computer science tend to give high levels of financial return, to both the individual and the UK Exchequer. This is bettered only by degrees in medicine and veterinary science, both of which are longer in duration and relatively expensive<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, there are fewer barriers to enrolling in a computer science degree: many more courses spanning the breadth of the digital subject matter are available, and the required attainment at A Level is lower.

***'An outstanding IT education for every child is vital for the future of the UK.'***

Digital apprenticeships, while still at an early stage, are showing excellent promise; employer engagement and the employability of those successfully completing an apprenticeship are anecdotally very good. This route also has the advantage that apprentices have an income during their courses and do not accumulate debt at the same level as university students, but can end up with a degree-level, sought-after qualification, alongside valuable practical experience.

In this context there is only one possible conclusion: it is essential that policy around social mobility and IT is tightly knit.

IT cannot be solely for children of highly-educated and wealthy parents with the awareness and means to prioritise this; it needs to be standard and integrated. Collectively, we all have a responsibility to ensure that all children, especially those in the most disadvantaged areas, have access to and are inspired by the opportunities that IT can deliver.

*'It is essential that policy around social mobility and IT is tightly knit.'*



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<sup>3</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/662744/State\\_of\\_the\\_Nation\\_2017\\_-\\_Social\\_Mobility\\_in\\_Great\\_Britain.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf)

<sup>4</sup><http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/diversity-report-2017.pdf>

<sup>5</sup><https://royalsociety.org/~media/policy/projects/computing-education/computing-education-report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Childrens-Commissioner-for-England-Life-in-Likes.pdf>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy/2-digital-skills-and-inclusion-giving-everyone-access-to-the-digital-skills-they-need#fn:2>

<sup>8</sup>*ibid*

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/32419/11-973-returns-to-higher-education-qualifications.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32419/11-973-returns-to-higher-education-qualifications.pdf)



# Our findings

## Mobility overview

As shown in Figure 1 below, we know from the ONS Labour Force Survey data that:

- Just over one half (52%) of individuals in 'elite' occupations come from managerial and professional backgrounds.
- 29% of those in elite occupations come from elite backgrounds.
- 20% of individuals in 'lower managerial' occupations are from lower managerial backgrounds.
- Almost three quarters (73%) of individuals from 'lower level' occupations stated that their parents would also have been from this socio-economic group.

Please see the note at the end of this report on methodology for more details.

*'73% of individuals from 'lower level' occupation stated that their parents would also have been from this socio-economic group'.*

*\*Figure 1: Class Origins and destinations, overview*

	1 All higher	1.1 Higher managers	1.2 Higher professionals	2 Lower managers & professionals	3 -7 Other workers
Higher managers and professionals (parent NS-SEC 1)	29%	28%	30%	21%	12%
Lower managers and professionals (parent NS-SEC 2)	23%	21%	23%	20%	13%
Intermediate and clerical (parent NS-SEC 3, 4 & 5)	31%	32%	31%	35%	39%
Routine & semi-routine (parent NS-SEC 6 & 7)	16%	18%	16%	23%	35%

*\*Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey*





# Mobility and IT

Looking deeper into this, we further examined the level of social mobility amongst IT specialists and other workers in 'elite occupations', and our findings are presented in Figure 2 below according to the level of social movement demonstrated. We see that:

- IT as a profession offers more social mobility than medicine and law.
- IT offers comparable social mobility to business and accountancy professions.
- 75% of those in the IT profession have experienced upward social mobility, compared to their parents' social class.
- 18% of IT professional have experienced 'long-range social mobility'.
- IT occupations are associated with the second-highest level of long-range social mobility, being only marginally behind managers and directors in business.

*\*Figure 2: Social mobility by elite occupation, IT and others*

	Upwardly mobile		
	Short range mobile	Mid range mobile	Long range mobile
Information technology	25%	32%	18%
Medical practitioners	25%	22%	7%
Law	20%	24%	9%
Business professionals	23%	31%	17%
Accountants	22%	34%	16%
Managers & directors in business	21%	34%	19%

**\*Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey**

## Short-range mobility

*Short-range upwardly mobile refers to movement from one job to another and resulting in similar socio-economic benefits.*

## Mid-range mobility

*Mid-range mobility refers to when an individual moves from a lower social background to a moderately higher social status.*

## Long-range mobility

*Long-range mobility occurs when an individual moves from a lowly social background to a high-status occupation.*

Breaking down different sectors of the IT profession, we can see that social mobility is higher still amongst individuals working as IT project/programme managers.

- 80% of IT project/programme managers have experienced a higher grading of social mobility than their parents.

It is also clear that those working in the highest-level IT positions (i.e. directors) show a much higher incidence of social (class) stability than IT specialists as a whole, and many other well-known professions.

*\*Figure 3: Social mobility by elite occupation, IT explored*

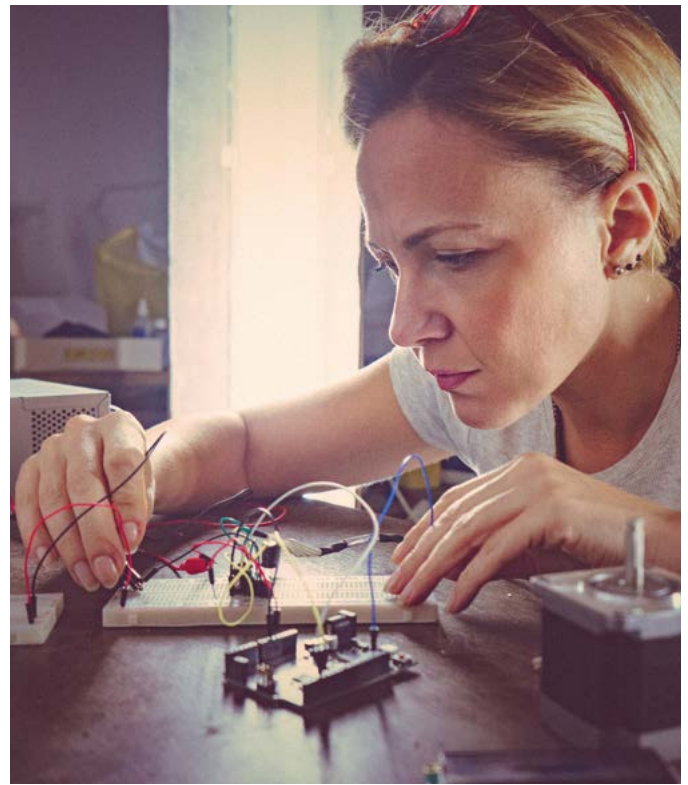
	Upwardly mobile			
	Short range mobile	Mid range mobile	Long range mobile	All
Information technology	25%	32%	18%	75%
IT directors	19%	27%	17%	64%
IT project & programme managers	28%	29%	24%	80%
IT specialist managers	25%	36%	16%	77%
Programmers/ software developers	27%	31%	18%	76%
IT business analysts/architects/ systems designers	25%	37%	15%	77%

**\*Source: BCS analysis of data from the ONS Labour Force Survey**

# Making a difference

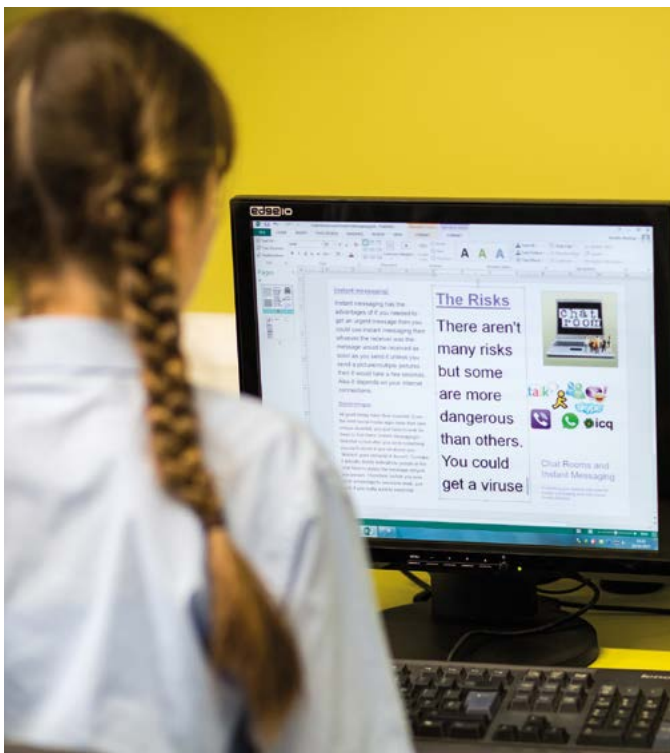
At a policy level, the wider focus on social mobility and the Government's own 12 educational Opportunity Areas<sup>10</sup> needs to be fully integrated into education. On the ground, those working in Opportunity Areas, and those running programmes and volunteering on IT in schools and communities, there is a new partnership to be made. Success would mean both national policy integration and evidence of organic localised linkages between digital programmes and Opportunity Areas.

This does not require radical altering of plans, but an informed view as domain challenges are tackled. For example, the scale and pace of change in IT, and the relative infancy of it being taught, means there is a confidence gap across schools<sup>11</sup>. The resources already planned should be directed first and foremost where they can maximise the benefit from the social mobility opportunity. Confidence and mutual support amongst IT teachers is therefore particularly important across Opportunity Areas.



## Recommendations:

- IT teaching resources need to be accessible, designed and prioritised for the context where they are most needed.
- Everyone building such resources should set their design criteria accordingly and review existing material where this has not been incorporated.
- Every IT education programme in schools and communities on a national or regional basis should incorporate policy objectives around social mobility.
- Regional and local social mobility plans need to highlight digital opportunities specifically, and actively seek partnerships and programmes that can bring people together to encourage and support growth in digital education and skills.
- School leadership teams should be given specific support and encouragement around the adoption of IT, and in turn should encourage their teachers to participate in national networks and programmes.
- Research and monitoring is needed to understand the barriers and solutions to increasing IT as a tool of social mobility.
- Teachers, careers advisers and parents need to be provided with the full breadth of information about digital professional careers; with a particular emphasis on the human-centric aspects, entrepreneurial opportunities, and the array of exciting industries where digital professionals operate.



<sup>10</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas>

<sup>11</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/483275/DFE-RR493\\_Teacher\\_voice\\_omnibus\\_questions\\_for\\_DfE\\_-\\_June\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/483275/DFE-RR493_Teacher_voice_omnibus_questions_for_DfE_-_June_2015.pdf)

# Conclusion

Walk out into the street this afternoon and ask a hundred people whether they want to grow up in a country where everyone should be able to be the best that they can be. My guess is that everyone will say 'Yes'. That's how it should be. We all want the best for our children, our families and our friends; It's only natural. However, as we all know, there are a wide range of economic, societal, structural and historic factors which make that dream a far-off reality for many children.

But the good news is that, as this report shows, there is hope on the horizon.

The digitization of almost every aspect of our lives means that there will be an insatiable demand for skilled IT professionals at all levels, and across all parts of the country. From coders to programmers, developers to sound engineers, animators to digital marketers, on to as yet undiscovered areas of technology, our sector will be the one that grows.

*'For social mobility to become a reality for a new generation, we all have a role to play.'*

If you're a young person living in a deprived part of one of the UK's Opportunity Areas, with parents who didn't have the chance to go to university, you no longer have to accept the fact that your opportunities will be restricted as in your parents' generation. Our research proves conclusively what many of us have felt for some time, that the IT profession can provide the life chances for all our young people, irrespective of their background, or that of their parents. This is great news, as talented young people are spread throughout the country, and not just confined to the job 'hot-spots' of London and the south-east.

However, for social mobility to become a reality for a new generation, we all have a role to play in making sure that we show young people the many great and new opportunities that are available to them. That means effective and visible role models, inspirational leaders, and amazing teachers to enthuse them about their digital futures. We need to both lift the aspirations of our young people to make them aware of the career openings available, but also develop and nurture their talents when they do come into the workplace.

This is important, not least because as research for [The Sutton Trust](#)<sup>12</sup> identified, the effect of improving social mobility scores are considerable for the UK economy, as well as the wider fabric of society. By improving the UK's score to align with the European average, we would see our economy boosted by around 9%, or £2,620 per person – a total £170 billion (in 2016 prices).

Our research shows that three-quarters of people in our profession today are better off when compared to their parents, and for some job roles, it's as high as 80%. These are absolutely life-changing figures, and are an example of the amazing career opportunities that our sector is already creating here and now.

The introduction of modern apprenticeships in all aspects of business, but especially digital, has potentially opened even more doors for young people looking to develop a career in our sector. Our research shows that IT as a profession not only offers more social mobility than medicine and law; it offers more routes to entry and at a far lower cost than those two disciplines. As the report highlights, almost one in five IT professionals has demonstrated what's known as 'long range social mobility', in other words, they have moved from a low social background to a high-status occupation.

But none of these personal and economic benefits can happen unless individuals, organisations, schools and politicians act to bring about social mobility. As a country, we are facing a productivity challenge; taking advantage of the digital opportunities to improve social mobility, and tapping into the latent potential of our young people is not only a social requirement, it is an economic one as well.

**Rebecca George**  
OBE, Vice Chair,  
Public Sector Lead  
at Deloitte; Vice-  
President, BCS  
Organisation and  
Employers Board



<sup>12</sup>[https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Oxera-report-WEBSITE\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Oxera-report-WEBSITE_FINAL.pdf)



# Case study: A BCS member's experience of social mobility

In 1982, my parents moved from war-torn Sri Lanka to Newham, then a deprived inner-city London borough. They were immigrants with no higher education supporting four children.

There was no doubt in my mind that we were working class, immigrants and outsiders. This was further solidified when, aged 11, I won a scholarship to a prestigious private school. Being taught in this environment provided access to a quality of education beyond that provided locally, and served to remind me daily of the difference in my social standing when compared to my peers.

I became interested in IT from an early age. My father bought my eldest brother a ZX Spectrum when I was three; I found it mesmerising to watch my brothers typing in games in BASIC from a manual and seeing the results of these instructions on the TV screen. Over the years, I began to experiment with creating programmes myself and aged 16, I created my first open-source software and discovered a true passion for creating software to solve problems.



*'Being in IT has offered me a fantastic career full of opportunities. At its best, it genuinely operates as a meritocracy.'*

Although I started down the traditional higher education route, it wasn't for me and, with an impending wedding, I began to look for a job to support my new wife and myself. With only A-levels, my choices were limited but, an opportunity came up within a Linux User Group I was on. I went to the interview wearing an ill-fitting suit and black trainers – I didn't have any formal shoes that were presentable. Luckily, the interviewer looked past this, and my lack of experience, and offered me a role purely based on my interview presentation.

This experience typifies what the technology sector means for me. Throughout my career there have been people who have taken time to know me as an individual and see my potential. As an immigrant without higher education there's no doubt that I have often felt the object of discrimination. However, there are a number of wonderful people who have seen past any limitations I felt I had, and have afforded me the opportunity to have a challenging and rewarding career. Fundamentally, being in IT has offered me a fantastic career full of opportunities. At its best, it genuinely operates as a meritocracy.

This requires all of us to be supportive of individuals we meet and encourage them to take steps to fulfil their potential, regardless of background. To this end, I'm now working to encourage people from non-traditional education and more diverse backgrounds to get into IT, so they too can benefit as I did. Ultimately, through methods like this, we can create a more equal and diverse technology workforce for the future'.

**Tim Ebenezer MBCS**  
is Technology &  
Solutions Director  
at Civica Digital



# The purpose of our research

## The question that we set out to explore was:

Can IT contribute to opening doors for all people, regardless of where they were born, their background, or other factors that have been the basis for social exclusion?

The report, '[State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf)'<sup>13</sup>, found the country to be "a deeply divided nation. Those divisions take many forms: class, income, gender, race." Barriers to people moving from a working-class background to the middle and upper classes are manifold, including – amongst other factors – family background, education, the academic attainment of parents, and geographical location. There is even evidence that where people from a lower-class background have achieved certain qualifications in higher-level professions, their pay is not the same as that of people from a higher social class.

Britain has often been satirised for its class system, and research shows that class inequality persists in exerting a pernicious effect on our society<sup>14</sup>. The income and social class of a child's parents still have a huge bearing on that child's life chances. People whose background is working class or lower middle class continue to find it hard to climb up the social ladder.

In 2011, the government commissioned a report, "Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility"<sup>15</sup>, identifying, amongst other salient findings, that:

- Almost one in five children were from a family whose circumstances qualify them for free school meals, and yet this same demographic group accounted for fewer than one in a hundred students entering Oxford and Cambridge Universities<sup>16</sup>;
- Only 7% of British children attended a private school, whereas the privately educated accounted for more than 50% of the top level of most professions – as much as 70% in the case of high-court judges, and 54% in the case of CEO's of FTSE 100 companies<sup>16</sup>.

***'People whose background is working-class or lower middle-class continue to find it hard to climb up the social ladder.'***



<sup>13</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/662744/State\\_of\\_the\\_Nation\\_2017\\_-\\_Social\\_Mobility\\_in\\_Great\\_Britain.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf)

<sup>14</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opening-doors-breaking-barriers-a-strategy-for-social-mobility>

<sup>15</sup>ibid

<sup>16</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/61964/opening-doors-breaking-barriers.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61964/opening-doors-breaking-barriers.pdf)

Using the Social Mobility Commissions's Social Mobility Index to assess people's prospects in education, employability and housing, the report picks up on geographical variations in social mobility, in what it describes as a 'postcode lottery'. Furthermore, some of the areas considered most affluent deliver, conversely, some of the worst outcomes for their disadvantaged children.

England now has twelve Department of Education designated Opportunity Areas (Blackpool, Bradford, Derby, Doncaster, Fenland & East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich, the North Yorkshire Coast, Norwich, Oldham, Stoke-on-Trent, and West Somerset), each having its own partnership board consisting of local representatives from education, business, government and the third sector<sup>17</sup>.

There are entrenched issues of social exclusion endemic in our society<sup>18</sup>. The lack of social mobility alienates individuals, defeating aspirations and leaving the country's economic potential unfulfilled.



*'The lack of social mobility alienates individuals, defeating aspirations and leaving the country's economic potential unfulfilled'.*

Improving life chances – striving for social inclusion – is not just something to which the government is turning its attention.

Most children of parents from lower socio-economic classes find it hard to break out of that class (or group), whereas children of higher socio-economic class have all the opportunities to remain there – for example, workers in medicine and law, where social class is most immobile generation to generation. It is also clear that those working at the level of director within IT show a much greater incidence of social class stability when compared with IT workers in general, and also when compared to many other popular professions – see Table 2.

<sup>17</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas>

<sup>18</sup><https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2016>



# Methodology note

## BCS methodology

In this report we employ data from the [ONS Quarterly Labour Force Survey](#)<sup>19</sup>, with extracts from the [ONS Virtual Micro Laboratory](#)<sup>20</sup>, to establish recent levels of social mobility amongst IT specialists and to compare the level of mobility in IT with other occupational groups.

The methodology we have followed for this analysis is broadly in line with that presented within a recent [LSE report: Introducing the Glass Ceiling: Social Mobility and Britain's Elite Occupations](#)<sup>21</sup> and, in essence, involves an analysis/ comparison of the occupation and socio-economic status of UK workers with that of their parents. By comparing generational changes in social class amongst IT and other workers in this way, we are thus able to provide an assessment of the relative levels of social mobility.

In keeping with the LSE methodology, we have presented our findings firstly in overall terms (all workers) and secondly with reference to 'elite' occupations, i.e. those identified as Class 1 of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC), which encompasses higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations and corresponds with 63 sub-groups identifiable by specific four-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes<sup>22</sup>.

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Data extracts are from the ONS Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Q3.16.



[www.bcs.org/socialmobility](http://www.bcs.org/socialmobility)  
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<sup>19</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/latest>

<sup>20</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/paidservices/virtualmicrodatalaboratoryvml>

<sup>21</sup>[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/62701/1/\\_lse.ac.uk\\_storage\\_LIBRARY\\_Secondary\\_libfile\\_shared\\_repository\\_Content\\_Friedman.%20S\\_Breaking%20class%20ceiling\\_Friedman\\_Breaking%20class%20ceiling\\_2015.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/62701/1/_lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_Friedman.%20S_Breaking%20class%20ceiling_Friedman_Breaking%20class%20ceiling_2015.pdf)

<sup>22</sup>In reality NS-SEC 1 corresponds with 60 such groups, however in this work we have elected to comply with LSE methodology and include three additional 4-digit SOC codes for consistency of approach i.e. taxation experts, information technology and telecommunications directors, and functional managers and directors not elsewhere classified.

**For further information please contact:**

BCS First Floor, Block D  
North Star House  
North Star Avenue  
Swindon  
SN2 1FA

**T +44 (0) 1793 417 417 | [www.bcs.org](http://www.bcs.org)**

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