



accenture

# A fair chance to advance

The power of culture to break socioeconomic barriers  
in the workplace

## Stigma in the shadows

### How has your upbringing shaped your career?

The answer is (probably) more than you think. The schools we go to; the areas we grow up in; what our parents or guardians do; our friends – these factors heavily influence both the career opportunities open to us and our trajectory once in the workplace.

But the importance of socioeconomic background sits in stark contrast with its visibility. In the workplace, it is often largely hidden; as Accenture's recent research reveals, about half of employees from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (SEB) do not feel completely safe being open about their background at work. And the challenges they face remain in the shadows.

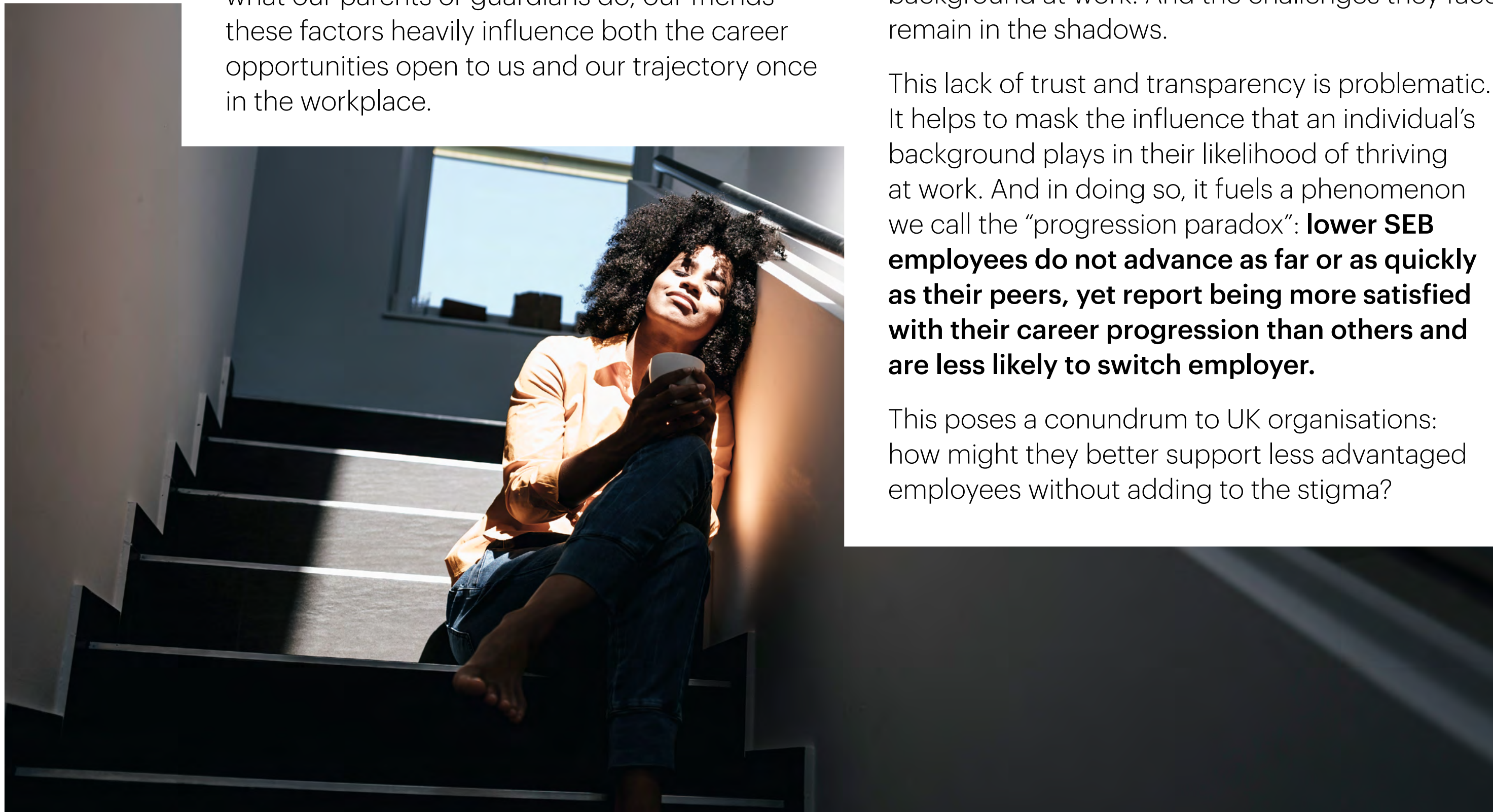
This lack of trust and transparency is problematic. It helps to mask the influence that an individual's background plays in their likelihood of thriving at work. And in doing so, it fuels a phenomenon we call the "progression paradox": **lower SEB employees do not advance as far or as quickly as their peers, yet report being more satisfied with their career progression than others and are less likely to switch employer.**

This poses a conundrum to UK organisations: how might they better support less advantaged employees without adding to the stigma?

There is certainly work to be done. Our analysis suggests that employers often dramatically overestimate how welcoming the workplace is for lower SEB employees. As such, few are taking tangible action:

Just one in six executives view improving socioeconomic workforce diversity as a top priority, while fewer than a fifth have published a related target or goal.

In this report, we explore the critical role culture must play in the solution. We explore the three challenges – **socioeconomic taboo, the progression paradox and corporate inertia** – in turn. And we show how, by committing to building more inclusive workplace cultures, companies can bridge intent-action gaps and establish a level playing field in the UK workplace.



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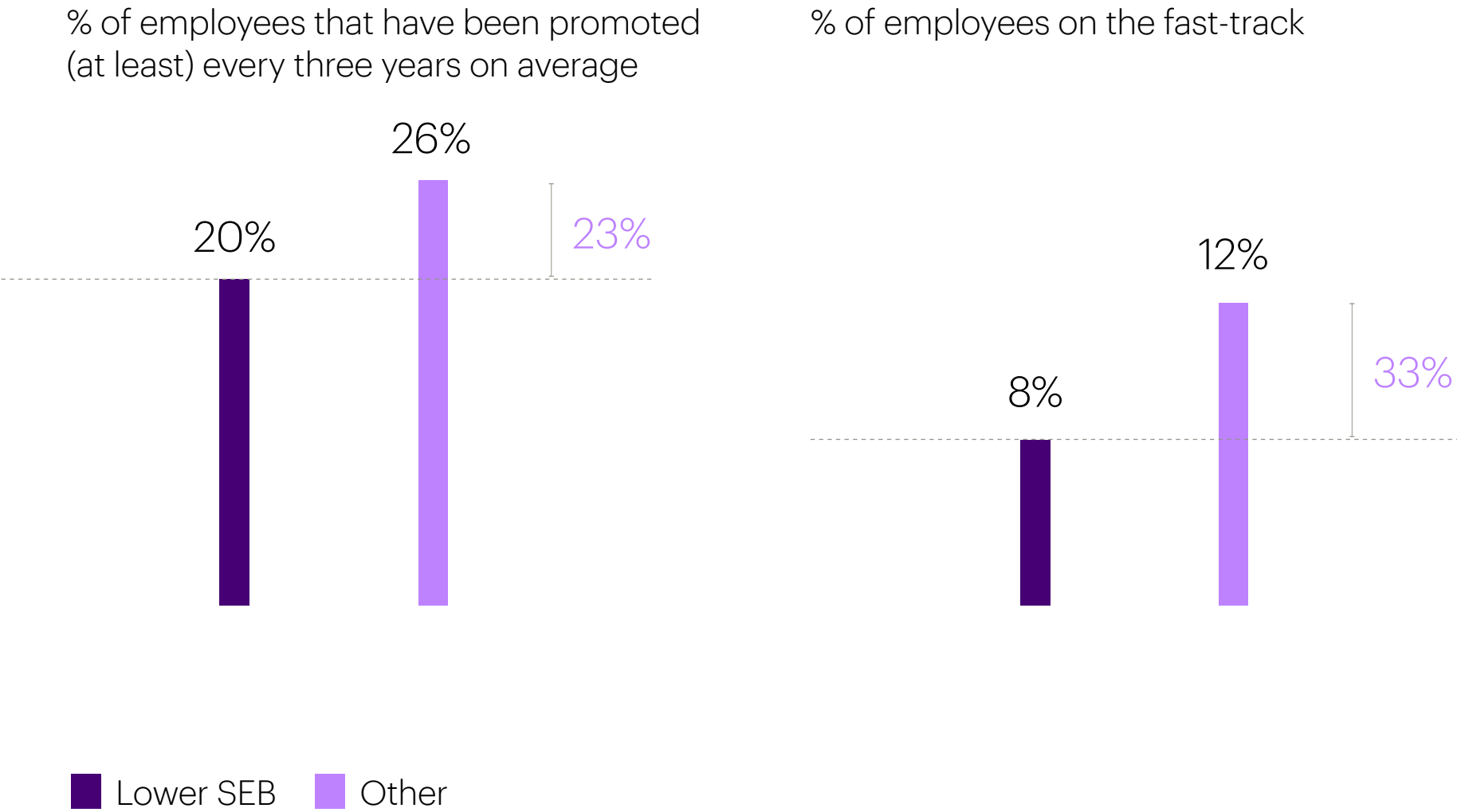
# Progression and privilege

The UK workplace is not a level playing field. Just 10% of people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds make it into higher skilled, managerial or professional occupations.<sup>i</sup> In fact, compared with lower SEB peers, people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are 60% more likely to secure professional roles.<sup>ii</sup> Moreover, they are paid 18% (or £6,000) more per year on average in such roles.<sup>iii</sup> And across the UK, **people from a lower socioeconomic background are 28% less likely to hold management roles.**<sup>iv</sup>

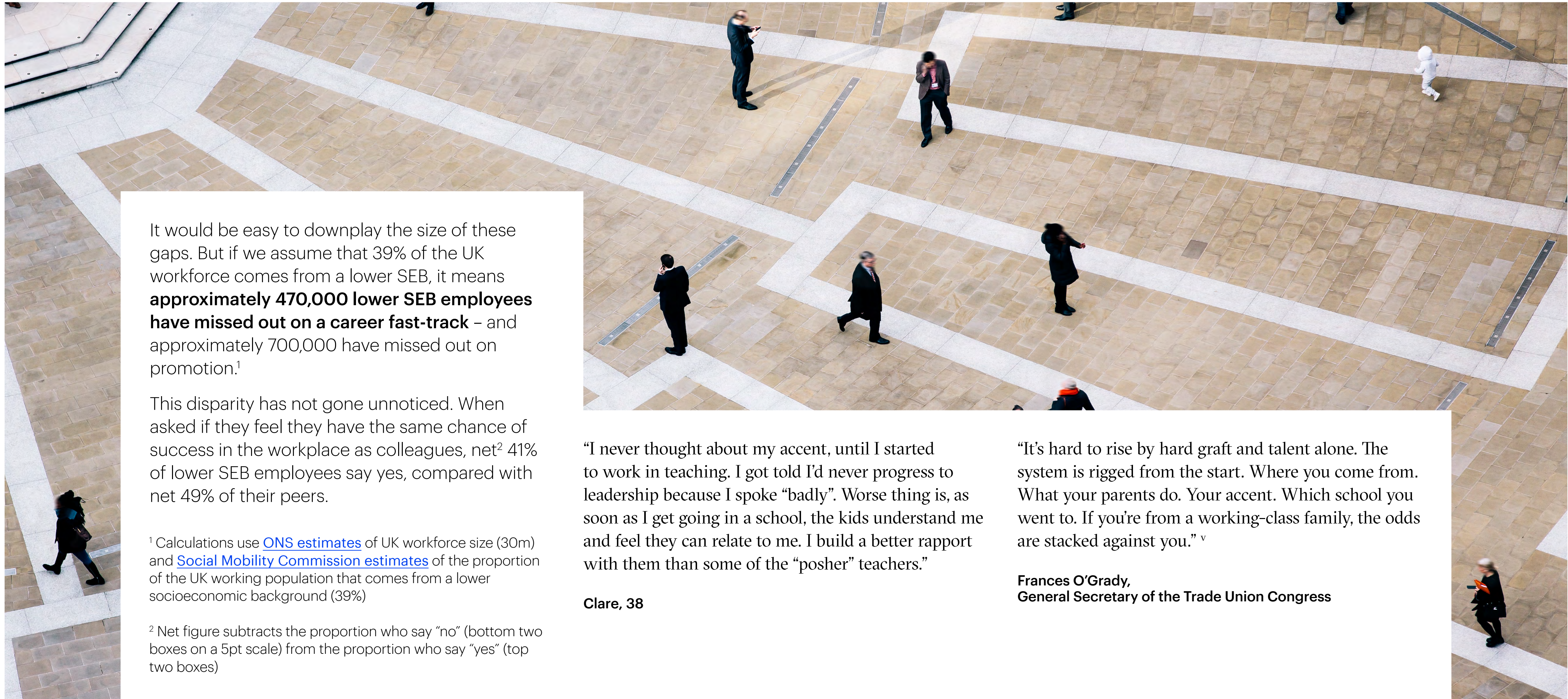
To better understand what helps and hinders people in the workplace, we surveyed 4,000 UK employees. **Our analysis confirms that lower SEB employees do not tend to progress at the same rates as their peers.** We found that on average, 20% of lower SEB employees are promoted at least every three years compared with 26% of other employees. And lower SEB employees are a third less likely to be on a career “fast-track”, which we define as reaching managerial level or above by the age of 37.

**Lower SEB employees:**  
 We define lower SEB employees according to their eligibility for free school meals and parent/guardian occupation(s) at age 14. See **About the research** for more details.

**Fig 1. Lower SEB employees tend to progress more slowly than their peers**



**Source:** Employee survey; Lower SEB N=2,046, Other N=1,956  
**Notes:** “Fast-track” refers to employees that reached at least managerial level by the age of 37



It would be easy to downplay the size of these gaps. But if we assume that 39% of the UK workforce comes from a lower SEB, it means **approximately 470,000 lower SEB employees have missed out on a career fast-track** – and approximately 700,000 have missed out on promotion.<sup>1</sup>

This disparity has not gone unnoticed. When asked if they feel they have the same chance of success in the workplace as colleagues, net<sup>2</sup> 41% of lower SEB employees say yes, compared with net 49% of their peers.

<sup>1</sup> Calculations use [ONS estimates](#) of UK workforce size (30m) and [Social Mobility Commission estimates](#) of the proportion of the UK working population that comes from a lower socioeconomic background (39%)

<sup>2</sup> Net figure subtracts the proportion who say “no” (bottom two boxes on a 5pt scale) from the proportion who say “yes” (top two boxes)

“I never thought about my accent, until I started to work in teaching. I got told I’d never progress to leadership because I spoke “badly”. Worse thing is, as soon as I get going in a school, the kids understand me and feel they can relate to me. I build a better rapport with them than some of the “posher” teachers.”

**Clare, 38**

“It’s hard to rise by hard graft and talent alone. The system is rigged from the start. Where you come from. What your parents do. Your accent. Which school you went to. If you’re from a working-class family, the odds are stacked against you.”<sup>v</sup>

**Frances O’Grady,  
General Secretary of the Trade Union Congress**

## Darren's story

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Darren\* grew up on a council estate in South London. His dad was an electrician and his mum stayed at home; the family often struggled to make ends meet. Darren went to "a rough school in a rough area", where "the smart kids would get picked on in the corridors, so you had to hide your intelligence".

He now works for a major advertising firm in New York, USA, reporting directly into the C-suite. But his journey has been challenging: "In my first IT job, I felt really out of place. Everyone else had a degree, they were from nice polite families, and they spoke better than me. With my accent, I couldn't hide my background. I stood out."

\*Not his real name

"I was almost fired because I'd spoken to one of the senior partners, to help them with an issue they were having. And even though I'd done a good job, they said I sounded like a "chav" and "rudeboy". My boss tried to get rid of me."

**Darren subsequently went to extraordinary lengths to fit in: paying for elocution lessons to help, saving up to buy a smart suit and watch, and changing his hair style.** "My parents asked me why I was changing the way I speak and the way I looked. But I would never be where I am now if I hadn't taken those steps. This was the only way that I could start to feel more like one of them"

Now, when Darren is hiring, he proactively seeks candidates with varied experience, such as those who have completed training or work placements, rather than just university graduates. But he would love to see more initiatives to help people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds thrive in the workplace: "You see lot of support for certain underrepresented groups – but not really for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. It's an area which needs more discussion and resources to redress the balance."



Challenge 1:

## Socioeconomic taboo

While companies have taken clear action, and indeed made some progress, on supporting women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and the LGBT+ community, the challenges faced by lower SEB employees is still taboo.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination and harassment on the grounds of nine protected characteristics, such as age, sex or disability, at all stages of employment including recruitment processes, rates of pay and access to promotion and training. But socioeconomic background does not benefit from the same protection.

Our survey reveals a lack of transparency in the workplace. **Just half (52%) of employees say they feel “completely safe” being open about their socioeconomic background in the workplace.** And 13% – more than one in eight – do not feel safe.

“I’ve been made to feel unwanted and not needed in my workplace. The staff have all been there for a long time and they click in groups, and they make me feel like I shouldn’t be there. They talk about me, and I feel uncomfortable about being there. It’s one of the things that makes me not want to be in that department anymore.”

Neil, 41

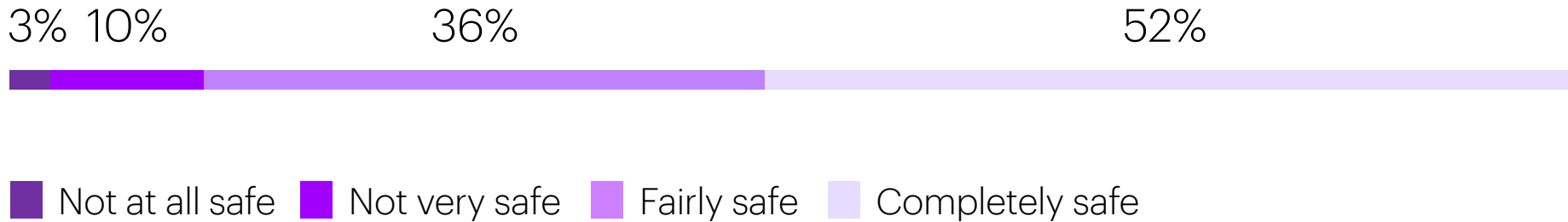
“I felt out of place I guess; I was never really accepted. I was made to feel less qualified than I actually was. It made me feel uncomfortable and not really part of the team.”

Zoey, 24

This lack of transparency is exacerbated by a lack of open dialogue: our survey suggests that just one in five companies have an employee resource group specifically for lower SEB employees, while just 19% of 1,359 executives we surveyed have spoken publicly about social mobility.

**Fig 2. Some employees do not feel safe opening up about their background**

To what extent do you feel ‘safe’ to be open about your socioeconomic background in your organisation?



Source: Employee survey, Overall N=3,560 (Respondents who answered ‘Don’t know’ were excluded)

Challenge 2:

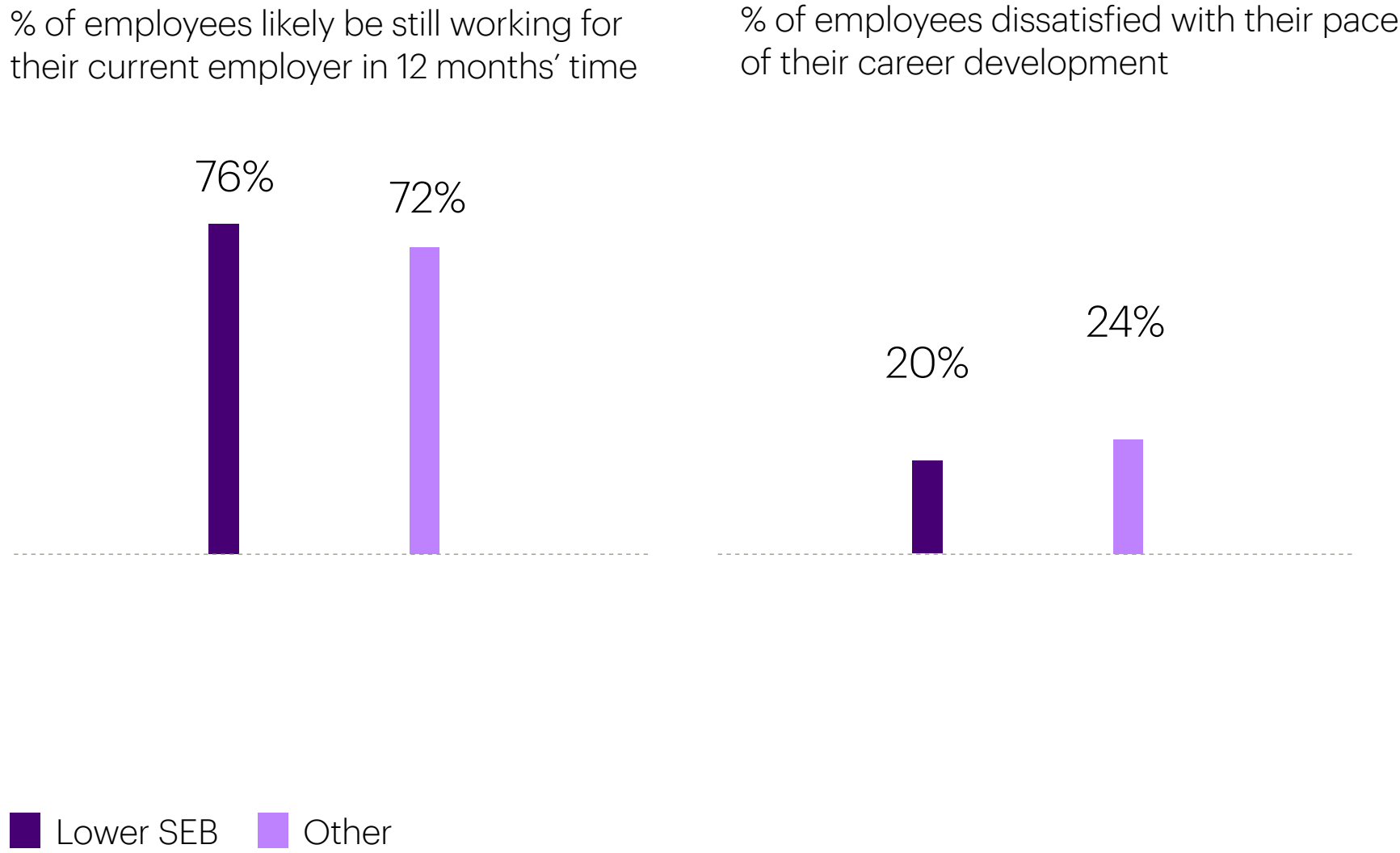
## The progression paradox

Lower SEB employees tend to progress more slowly than their peers. You might therefore expect these employees to be less satisfied at work and so, less loyal. However, the opposite is true.

**Our research suggests that lower SEB employees are more satisfied with the pace of their career development – and slightly more likely to be planning to stay with their employer. We call this the “progression paradox”.**

But what’s driving it? One explanation may be that lower SEB employees enter the workforce with lower expectations – or that their expectations are diluted when they come face to face with a workplace culture in which they feel excluded. **We find that just 38% of lower SEB employees aspire to be promoted, compared with 50% of their peers.** And just 15% aspire to a senior leadership position, compared with 22% of their colleagues.

**Fig 3. Lower SEB employees are more loyal and more satisfied with their career progression**



Source: Employee survey; Lower SEB N=2,046, Other N=1,956



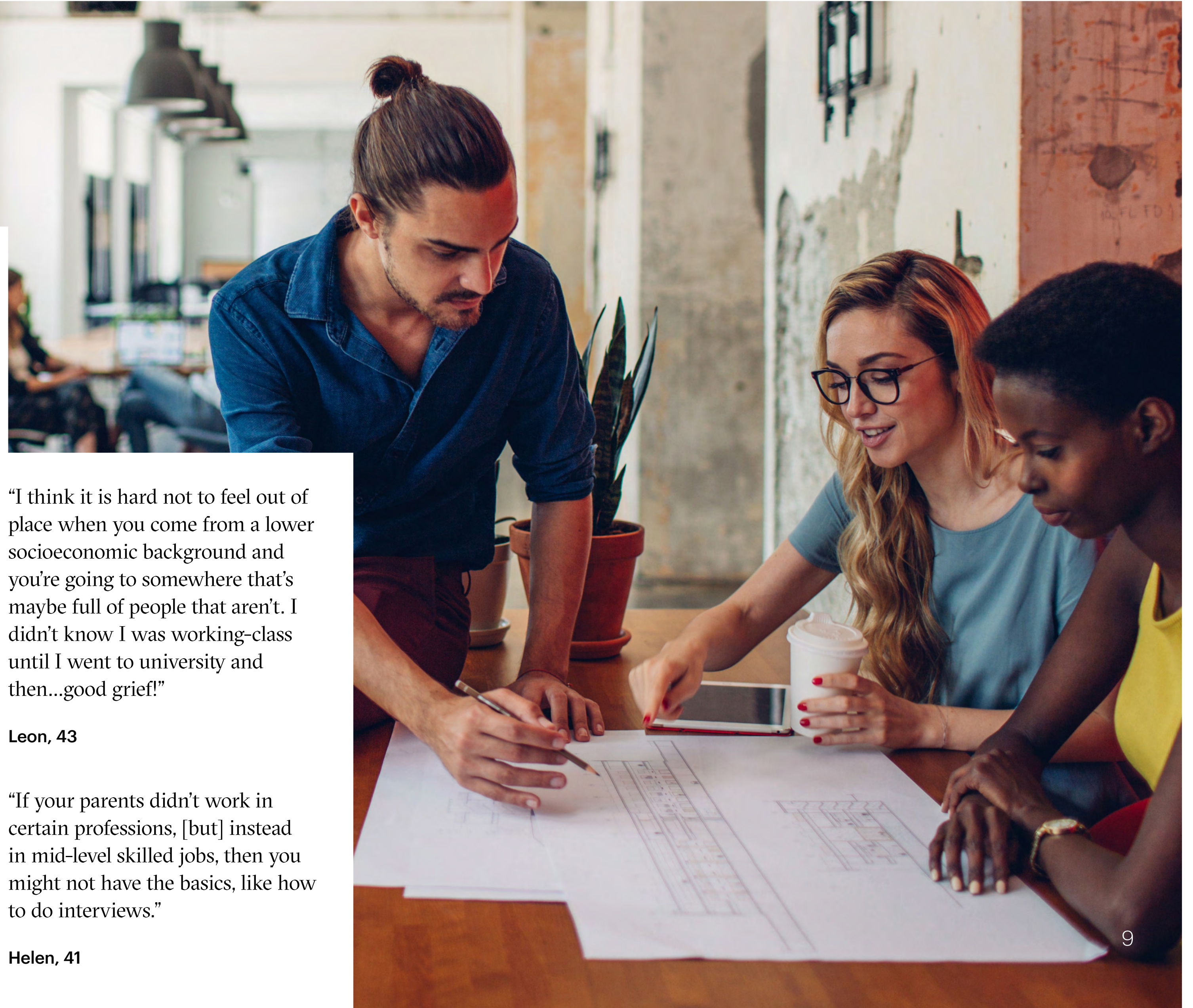


The paradox might also be explained by risk. The lack of a financial safety net, in the form of savings or family wealth, drives different behaviours. For example, it makes jumping ship to another employer a far riskier option. It could also be a result of lower exposure to advice and guidance around careers options. As Clare, 38, told us: **“I got very little career information at school or uni. So, when I finished my degree, I was clueless. I didn’t know what jobs existed. But I knew about teaching, so that’s where I ended up.”**

It’s important to address justifiable concerns leadership teams might have about upsetting this status quo. If lower SEB employees are more satisfied with the way their careers are panning out, then what’s the incentive to change?

The first counterargument is moral: all else being equal, it’s not fair for lower SEB employees to earn less than their peers.

The second is commercial: fewer lower SEB employees reaching leadership means the organisation is starved of the diverse perspectives they bring, which could weigh on growth [[see How inclusive cultures boost business performance](#)].



“I think it is hard not to feel out of place when you come from a lower socioeconomic background and you’re going to somewhere that’s maybe full of people that aren’t. I didn’t know I was working-class until I went to university and then...good grief!”

**Leon, 43**

“If your parents didn’t work in certain professions, [but] instead in mid-level skilled jobs, then you might not have the basics, like how to do interviews.”

**Helen, 41**

Challenge 3:

## Cultural inertia

In many companies, the issues faced by people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds go largely unnoticed – and if a problem isn't recognised, it's unlikely to be addressed.

**Executives often overestimate how inclusive and welcoming their company culture.** Our research found that 87% of executives believe lower SEB employees feel included in the workplace – only slightly behind their estimate for all employees (89%). However, in reality, just 44% of lower SEB employees feel included; executives are twice as optimistic as they should be.

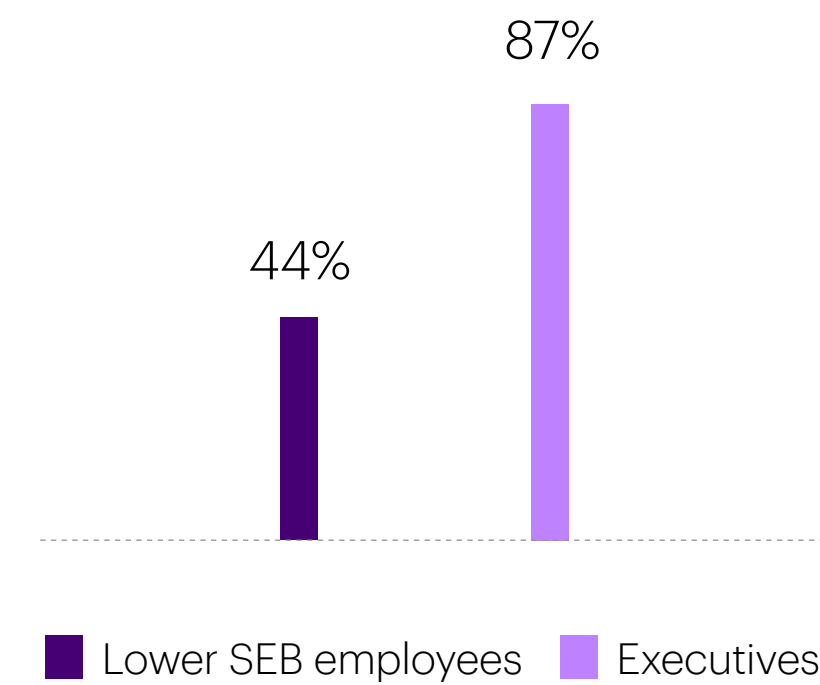
It's important to note that the inclusion levels of more privileged employees are only marginally higher (46%). However, **because lower SEB employees enter the workplace on the back foot and then face discrimination as they try to progress, executive overconfidence hits relatively harder.**

For one thing, it breeds inertia. Three-quarters (77%) of lower SEB employees say that their employer has failed to make any progress on attracting, retaining and progressing people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds since they joined.

The evidence backs up their concerns: just 18% of the organisations we surveyed have published a specific target or goal on increasing socioeconomic diversity. And just 16% of executives see increasing workforce diversity as a top priority.

**Fig 4. Executives overestimate how included lower SEB employees feel**

Proportion of executives who believe lower SEB employees feel included vs proportion of lower SEB employees who actually feel included



**Source:** Employee and executive surveys; Lower SEB employees; N=2,046, Executives N=1,359

“The problem is, if you've got people at the top that are already very well off and from very plush backgrounds, they don't want to make any changes and they're probably quite ignorant to it all. So, there is always going to be a gap.”

**Jia, 38**

## Why culture is key

So how can organisations mitigate these challenges? We studied the workplace environments in which lower SEB employees are more likely to be thriving: where their aspirations, their sense of belonging and their progression rates match those of their peers.

### How do we define thriving?

We say employees are “thriving” when the following is true:

- **Aspirational:** Employees aspire to be promoted.
- **Belonging:** Employees feel included and love their jobs.
- **Advancing:** Employees are promoted at their preferred pace.



## Blueprint for socioeconomic workplace inclusion

Our analysis identifies five practices that are positively and significantly correlated with lower SEB employees thriving in the workplace.

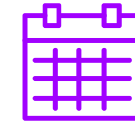


### Role models:

It's hard to be what you cannot see. To boost aspirations and mitigate the progression paradox it's vital for lower SEB employees to see people from a similar background who have "made it" to the top.

"In the construction industry, certain people have certain jobs. There is the elite group, who are your Oxbridge types, and they are in the client facing roles. Then people like me, who sit in head office but have to communicate with site workers, act as the middlemen."

**Norman, 35**



### Flexibility:

The ability to shape your working day – to decide when, where and how you can be most productive – is important for all employees, but especially for those juggling multiple commitments. This might include family care, additional training or travel.

"I've been lucky: I'm a single parent and my company has been flexible. But it really depends on your manager at the time. Some managers just are not flexible, they don't give people a chance that need it."

**Lisa, 47**

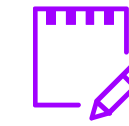


### Openness & transparency:

Bringing your "whole self" to work is associated with higher job satisfaction and performance. Lower SEB employees should not feel they need to hide their background or feel under pressure to act "differently" to fit in – for example in terms of how to speak or dress.

"It's still stigmatised to talk about the fact that I'm a working-class person. It's really annoying that we haven't moved forward from it, because it's probably not changed that much since I started working decades ago."

**Jia, 38**



### Anti-discrimination policies:

Organisations need concrete checks and balances to mitigate the bias – whether conscious or unconscious – that often weighs on the likelihood of lower SEB employees thriving and progressing in the workplace.

"I have faced a lot of discrimination. No-one is trying to get the working classes engaged and empowered. I'm not saying there isn't progress still to be made on race and gender, of course there is. But class stigma just isn't getting the airtime it should. Many people don't even seem to recognise it exists."

**Clare, 38**



### Trust & responsibility:

Lower SEB employees may enter the workplace with different, perhaps underappreciated skillsets. To harness this potential, and to help these employees feel included and empowered, organisations must provide them with the agency to take decisions and drive change.

"I feel that what's missing from the workplace environment is people not being given chances just because of their background and where they're from. But if they're qualified, give them a chance. They should have equal amount of chance as anybody else."

**Jason, 29**

## The power of culture

Lower SEB employees are much more likely to be thriving in the top tenth of adopters of this blueprint – what we call “more inclusive” cultures. For example, **where adoption is highest, 93% of lower SEB employees feel they have the same chance of success as their colleagues.** This compares to just 30% in the bottom tenth of adopters – what we call “less inclusive cultures” (see Fig. 6).

Lower SEB employees also exhibit higher aspirations and a greater sense of belonging in “more inclusive” cultures. And the average lower SEB employee working in a more inclusive culture is more than five times more likely to say they love their job compared with a peer in a less inclusive culture.

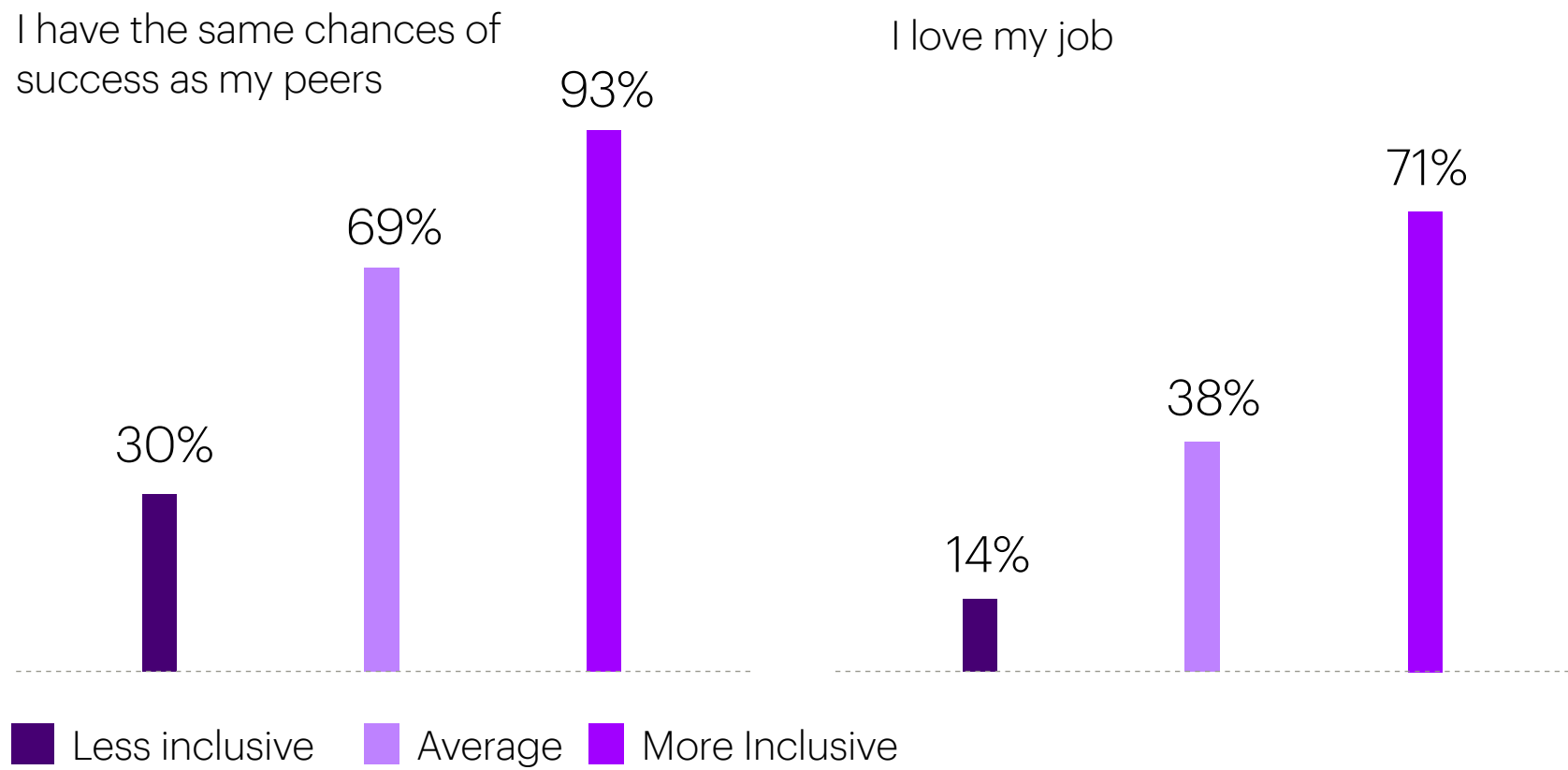
“We create an inclusive culture because if you create inclusivity, then the diversity follows. Whereas if you focus on the diversity, before you have the inclusion, you end up losing people’s hearts and minds, because culturally you are not aligned.”

**Helen Redfern, Group HR Director, Kier**

“I think the main way companies can solve this problem is through training of their current employees, and to raise awareness of discrimination in the workplace, and to provide workshops for their current employees regarding this. I think also to have a support system in place for any members of staff who are experiencing issues such as discrimination so that they always have a points of contact they can go to if they need any help.”

Victoria, 39

**Fig 6. The likelihood of lower SEB employees thriving is strongly associated with adoption of the blueprint for socioeconomic workplace inclusion**



**Source:** Accenture analysis

**Note:** ‘Less inclusive’ refers to the bottom 10% of inclusive cultures, ‘Average’ refers to the 50th percentile of inclusive cultures and ‘More inclusive’ refers to the top 10% of inclusive cultures.

## The link between culture and performance

The benefits of creating more inclusive cultures do not stop with employees. A workforce that reflects the socioeconomic make-up of society is critical to creating business value. Our research over the past four years has shown that where **employees feel included, they are more likely to be ambitious, engaged and innovative.**<sup>vi</sup> It follows therefore, that the organisations employing them are likely to see productivity and performance benefits.

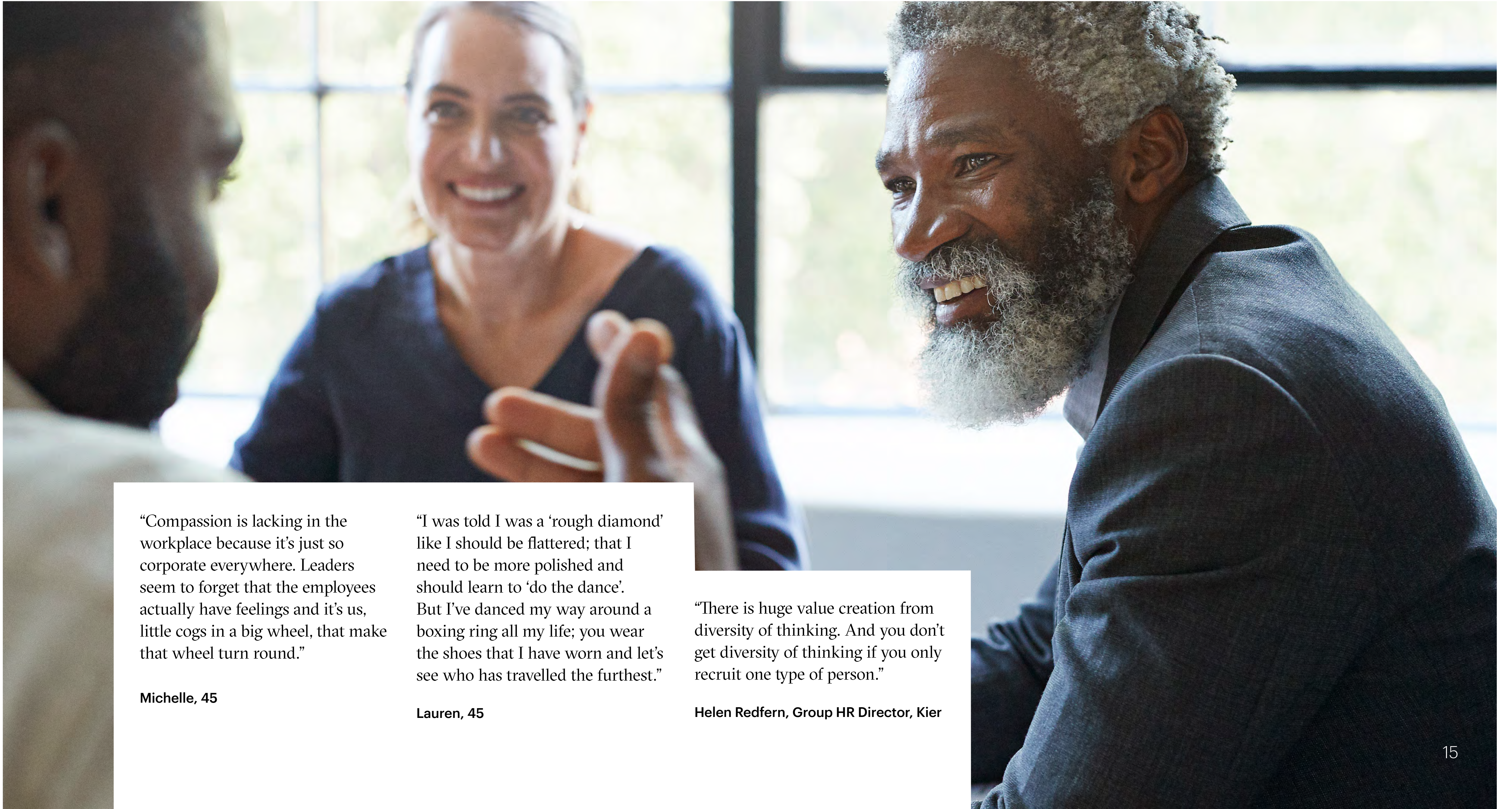
The relationship with lower SEB employees is no different. In fact, we find that **the profits of organisations focusing on social mobility are 1.4x higher than their competitors.** Put simply, companies which prioritise inclusion improve their talent pool: they broaden it, by bringing different attributes, skills and mindsets into the organisation; and they deepen it, by allowing more of their people, to be more productive, more of the time. Another Accenture study found that the innovation mindset of employees is significantly higher in more inclusive workplaces.<sup>vii</sup>

By improving social mobility, companies help unlock a vast pool of untapped talent and meet accelerating demand for technology skills.

**Fig 7. Companies focused on supporting lower SEB employees have seen profits grow faster than competitors (2016-2020)**



**Source:** Accenture analysis; Companies focused on socioeconomic inclusion N=222, Other N=1,088  
**Note:** Respondents asked to report the annual average EBITDA growth profile of their company



“Compassion is lacking in the workplace because it’s just so corporate everywhere. Leaders seem to forget that the employees actually have feelings and it’s us, little cogs in a big wheel, that make that wheel turn round.”

**Michelle, 45**

“I was told I was a ‘rough diamond’ like I should be flattered; that I need to be more polished and should learn to ‘do the dance’. But I’ve danced my way around a boxing ring all my life; you wear the shoes that I have worn and let’s see who has travelled the furthest.”

**Lauren, 45**

“There is huge value creation from diversity of thinking. And you don’t get diversity of thinking if you only recruit one type of person.”

**Helen Redfern, Group HR Director, Kier**

## How UK organisations are levelling the playing field

Encouragingly, a number of UK organisations already understand the importance of building more inclusive workplace cultures to deliver a step change on social mobility. Their experiences offer useful, transferable lessons.

As a first step, **we see these organisations formally making the recruitment, retention and progression of people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds a priority.** They are placing socioeconomic background on a par with age, gender, sex and other background characteristics to encourage the attention, investment and support necessary to bring this issue out of the shadows.

At some businesses, **we see leaders speaking out about the importance of social mobility to individuals, the organisation and wider society.**

Critically, they are then backing up their “talk” by ensuring that leaders throughout the business understand the range of specific barriers that lower SEB individuals may face in their careers.

Speaking with employees – either directly in focus groups, or indirectly through surveys – is a must. The issues that can hold people back are wide ranging. Accents can have an effect, as can hairstyles. So can clothing: When someone doesn’t have interview-appropriate clothing to wear, that may put them at a disadvantage during an interview, or even keep them from applying for a job or a promotion in the first place. A lack of transport, or a lack of funds to pay for travel to an interview are also key common obstacles.

On the next pages we show some examples of UK companies driving culture change to boost social mobility.







The UK construction industry is facing a chronic skills shortage. To aid recruitment and reduce attrition, Kier, which employs more than 20,000 people in the sector, has made diversity and inclusion (D&I) one of the company's top three priorities. It offers the real living wage to all its staff and runs an extensive apprenticeship programme to promote internal career progression. Currently, 7% of Kier employees are participating in one of the company's training development programmes.

In 2021, Kier also launched the "Expect Respect" campaign to reaffirm its zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment. As part of this campaign, the company has set up a number of employee networks; each is chaired by a member of Kier's executive committee. In 2022, the company is also introducing a reverse mentoring initiative, which will pair C-level executives with another employee working elsewhere in the company.

"Ten years ago, D&I was not on Kier's radar at all. Now it is at the front and centre of our strategy. It is not just of moral and ethical importance, but also a commercial imperative. We are on a journey and we do not get it absolutely perfect. At every touchpoint where we can, we are recording and analysing data. And it shows we are improving our employee experience, and this makes people want to work for us and stay with us."

**Helen Redfern, Group HR Director, Kier**



# Goldman Sachs

Goldman Sachs recently introduced Degree Apprenticeships as part of its efforts to level the playing field in UK financial services. The scheme offers people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds paid on-the-job training while studying for a degree in Applied Finance at Queen Mary University of London.

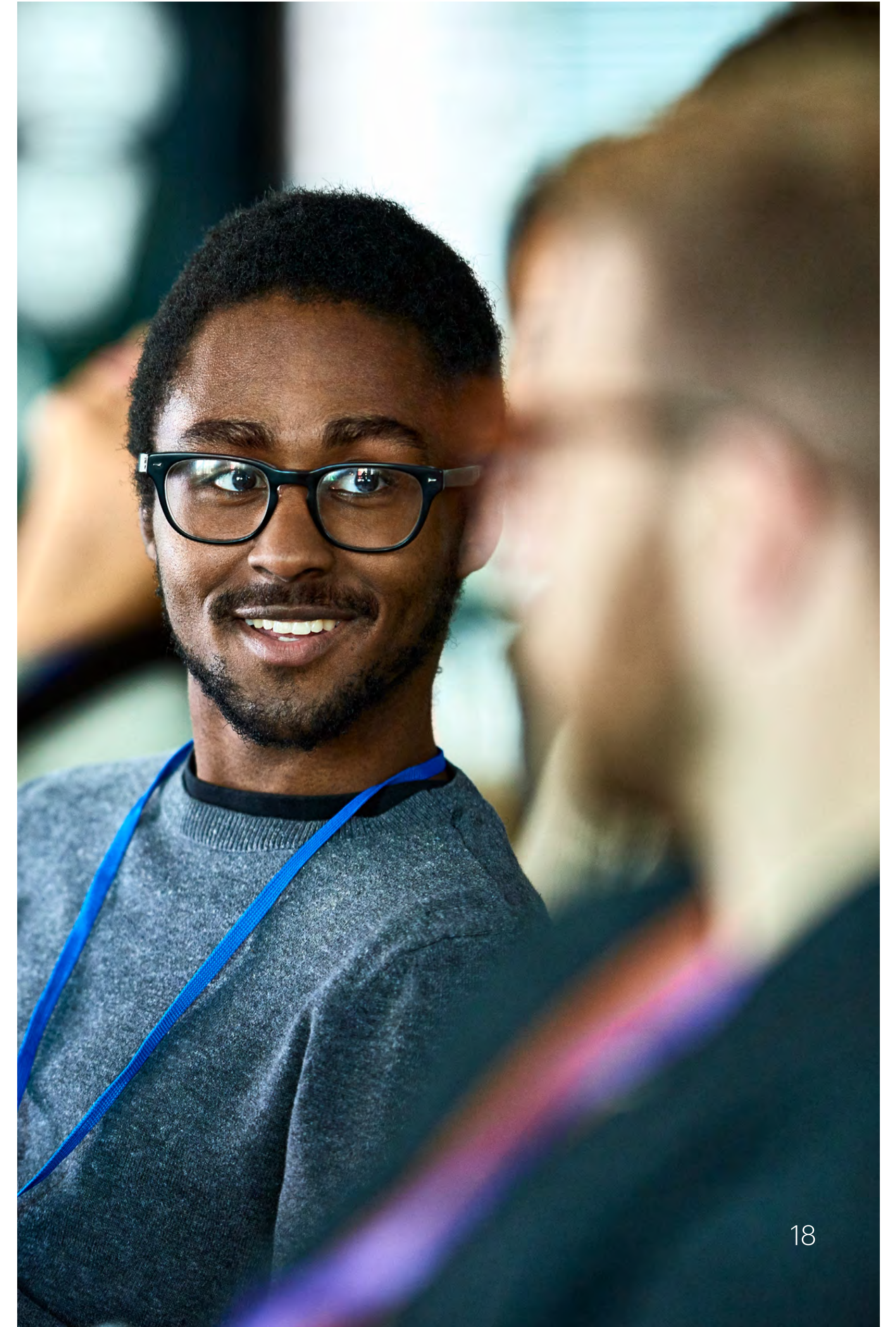
Over four years, apprentices work five days a week on the trading floor of the Wall Street giant. They will earn a salary – and even bonuses – with time allocated to complete their studies each semester. As part of the package, the bank is covering relocation costs to London, as well as equipment and university tuition fees.

Daniel Freckleton, Managing Director in Global Markets at Goldman Sachs, told *The Guardian*<sup>viii</sup>:

“As an industry, we are still not doing a good enough job at appealing to students from a more diverse socioeconomic background.”

“We want to attract the brightest and best students from as diverse a talent pool as possible – that’s diversity of socioeconomic background as much as anything else. Unfortunately, we’re currently missing out on a lot of this talent, either because students are put off by the traditional recruitment process, the financial barriers of university study, or simply because they are not aware of the kinds of jobs that Goldman has to offer them.”

The programme is one of the first to offer salaried roles on the trading floor of an investment bank. The first cohort of 10 students will start in September 2022 in the Global Markets division. Applications for future cohorts are open to students from all educational backgrounds but will be broadly targeted at people coming from state education.





The UK technology sector remains unrepresentative of wider society. At Accenture we believe a workforce that reflects the socioeconomic make-up of society is critical to creating business value. We are committed to removing barriers for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to succeed. And although we still have a long way to go, we are making progress. This was recognised by the Social Mobility Employer Index 2021, which ranked us in 7th place, up from 22nd the year prior.

A key area of focus is attracting more people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds into the sector and lowering barriers to entry. We offer a range of technology and consulting apprenticeships, where participants can earn a competitive salary while receiving on-the-job training and working towards a recognised IT qualification or degree. The most recent data shows that 24% of Accenture apprentices had previously been eligible for free school meals and 58% were “first generation” students.

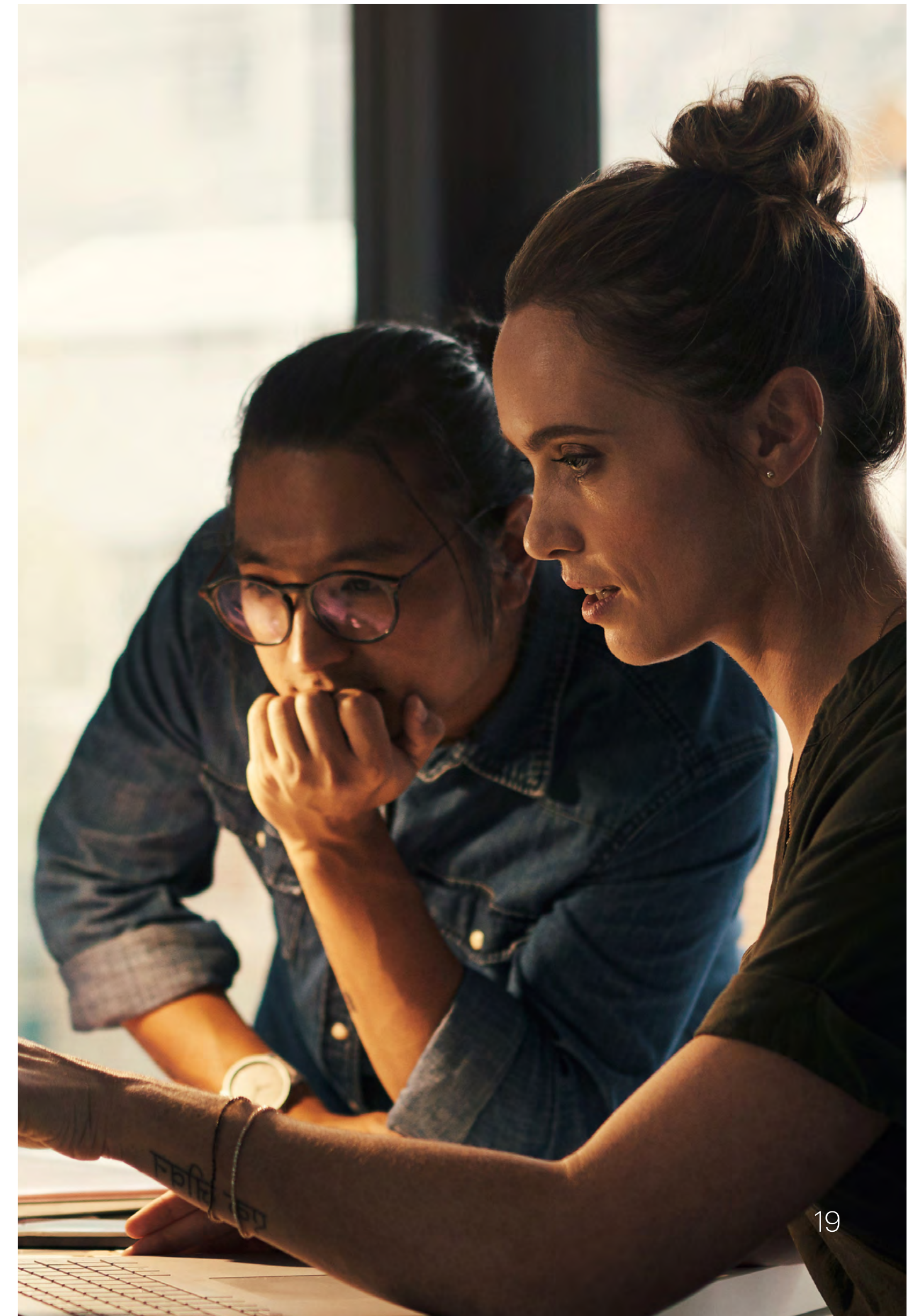
We also look inwards – and strive to create an inclusive, welcoming culture which celebrates socioeconomic diversity.

We held our first “Social Mobility Awareness Week” in November 2021 where we showcased the diverse backgrounds and career journeys of our people. This sparked a wide, ongoing conversation around how to increase opportunities for all across the business.

As part of this, we launched a six-part podcast series, called “Breaking the Mould”, which featured Accenture staff sharing their inspiring lived experiences and covered topics from non-typical career journeys to overcoming barriers in the workplace. The series was awarded 3rd place in the British Podcast Awards.

Lisa Slade, Associate Director, Technology and Social Mobility Lead for UK and Ireland said:

**“People from lower economic backgrounds don’t shout about who they are and often try to hide their background – so the issue remains in the shadows. We want to create a sense of belonging and to foster the right environment for people to thrive. For this, we need people to be open about their background and experiences, so that everyone can understand the challenges we face and how we can overcome them. Regardless of background you can be a hero of your own journey and empower others.”**





## Aim and deliver

**Boosting social mobility in the UK workplace is a moral and a commercial imperative.** The reality is that creating a level playing field for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in the UK will not happen overnight. But our “blueprint for socioeconomic workplace inclusion” provides a clear framework for change. Organisations should assess their performance across each of the five practices as they:

- establish a baseline
- set an ambitious yet attainable target
- pinpoint what needs to happen to achieve it
- make managers accountable for driving change and
- measure progress.

**The benefits of progress – which accrue not just to individuals and organisations, but to wider UK society and the economy – are too important to ignore.**

## Appendix

### About the research

#### Survey

The findings in this report are based on two online surveys fielded in the UK during August and September 2021. The executive survey was completed by 1,359 senior leaders (C-suite and direct reports) in companies with 5+ employees. The employee survey was completed by 4,002 respondents (2,046 from a lower socioeconomic background [SEB]) in companies with 5+ employees.

The questionnaires were constructed after extensive research (academic papers, literature search and drawing on Accenture's experience with clients) into the personal and workplace factors that are believed to be positively and significantly correlated with lower SEB employees thriving in the workplace.

#### How we defined "lower SEB employees"

We defined respondents as "lower SEB" if, at age 14,

- their parents/guardians were in technical and craft occupations, routine, semi-routine manual, and service occupations or long-term unemployed AND
- they were eligible for free school meals

If respondents met only one of the criteria above, they were included as "lower SEB" if, at age 14,

- their parents/guardians did not have a university degree AND
- they did not attend private school

#### Identifying the culture factors which make a difference

We used an econometric modelling methodology developed over the past four years of Accenture's Getting to Equal research series to quantify the relationship between 40+ workplace culture factors and the levels of engagement of lower SEB employees. We define engagement using the following variables from the survey:

- Aspire to more senior leadership positions
- Aspire to the next career level
- Advance at their preferred pace
- Love their job
- Believe they have the same chances of success as their colleagues

In addition to empirically connecting these outcomes to each of the culture factors, the modelling framework allows us to measure the links between these outcomes and employee exposure to more (in the top 10% of the distribution) and fewer (bottom 10%) factors that drive workplace inclusion (“More inclusive” and “Less inclusive” organisations). The model controls for a range of workplace and employee background characteristics such as organisation size, industry, age, gender and education, which could also impact the outcomes.

For more information see [“Getting to Equal 2020: The Hidden Value of Culture Makers.”](#)

## **Profitability analysis**

### **Step 1:**

We segmented our executive respondents based on their active focus on lower SEB employee inclusion. To qualify, respondents had to check “yes” to at least three of the following:

- Improving workforce diversity is an organisational priority
- Respondent has personally campaigned for or spoken publicly about social mobility
- Attracting, retaining and progressing people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is a personal priority
- Organisation has set a specific target/goal to increase the representation of individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
- Organisation has an employee resource group/network specifically for individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds

Through this exercise we identified N=222 respondents who are focused on lower SEB employee inclusion.

### **Step 2:**

We then calculated the average annual EBITDA performance (2016-2020) of the companies focused on lower SEB employee inclusion based on self-reported metrics provided by respondents. We compared this with the other organisations in the sample.

## **Employee interviews**

We conducted 30 video interviews with a broadly representative sample of people from a lower SEB working in the UK using the VoxPopMe platform. Respondents were asked about finding a job, their experience at work and how to help people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds thrive in the workplace.

We also undertook five phone interviews with people who identify as being from a lower socioeconomic background and wanted to share their experiences of succeeding in the workplace. All names have been changed for confidentiality.

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