



Does Team Scotland have the right players?

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Summary

In 2015 the David Hume Institute published *Elitist Scotland?* in partnership with the Social Mobility Commission, examining the education diversity of the top decision makers in Scotland.

Five years on we increased the scope of the analysis to investigate gender and ethnicity of the top 708 people in key leadership positions. The analysis showed there has been progress in some sectors but others are still lagging behind.

It is now well established that diversity of thought improves an organisation's performance. The challenges Covid-19 brings mean we need to ensure diversity of thought across all decision making so Scotland is as strong as possible for whatever is the new normal.

If change continues at the current rate it will be at least 2065 before people in leadership positions in Scotland are representative of the population.

Introduction

In Scotland, the last five years have seen tangible steps to improving social mobility, including duties on public bodies to reduce socio-economic disadvantage.¹ Students from Scotland's most deprived neighbourhoods are entering further education at the higher rate of 13.3%, 3.3% more than in 2015.²

In 2015 we found that Scotland's decision makers were unrepresentative of the wider population, with disproportionate numbers of alumni from fee-paying schools and top universities. The report found that the percentage of those in these leadership positions who were educated at a fee-paying school stood at 23% or nearly one in four. In the last five years this percentage has marginally decreased to 21.3%, with a slight increase in Oxbridge attendance from 5% in 2015 to 5.8% in 2020.

With private school students making up just 6% of the Scottish senior school population³ Scotland's top leaders continue to be disproportionately made up from the alumni of fee-paying schools.

1 Social Mobility Commission, 2019. Social mobility in Great Britain – state of the nation 2018 to 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-in-great-britain-state-of-the-nation-2018-to-2019>

2 UCAS, 2019. End of cycle report 2019. 2 <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2019-end-cycle-report>

3 17,820 pupils in senior fee-paying schools in Scotland or 5.8% in 2019, [ISC Census and Annual Report](#) and also see [Pupil Census 2018](#)

Figure 1: Percentage of Scotland's top leaders who were educated at fee-paying schools

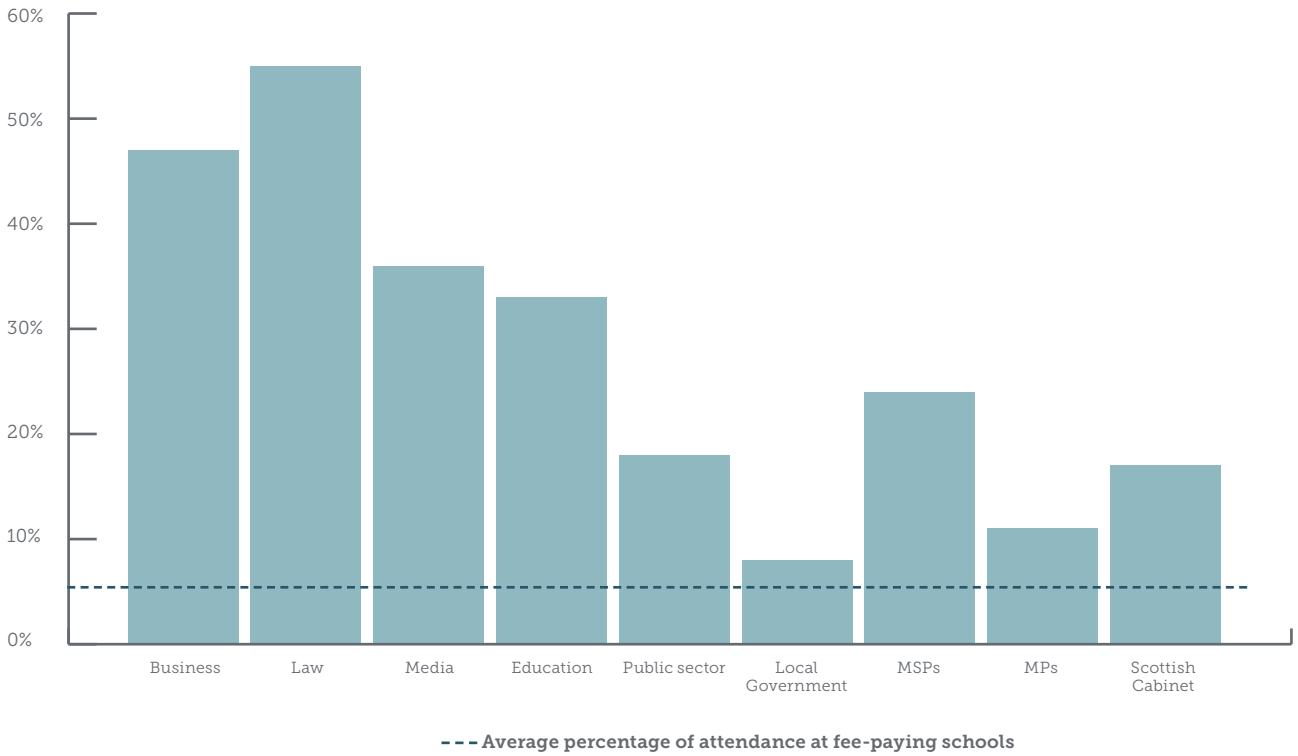
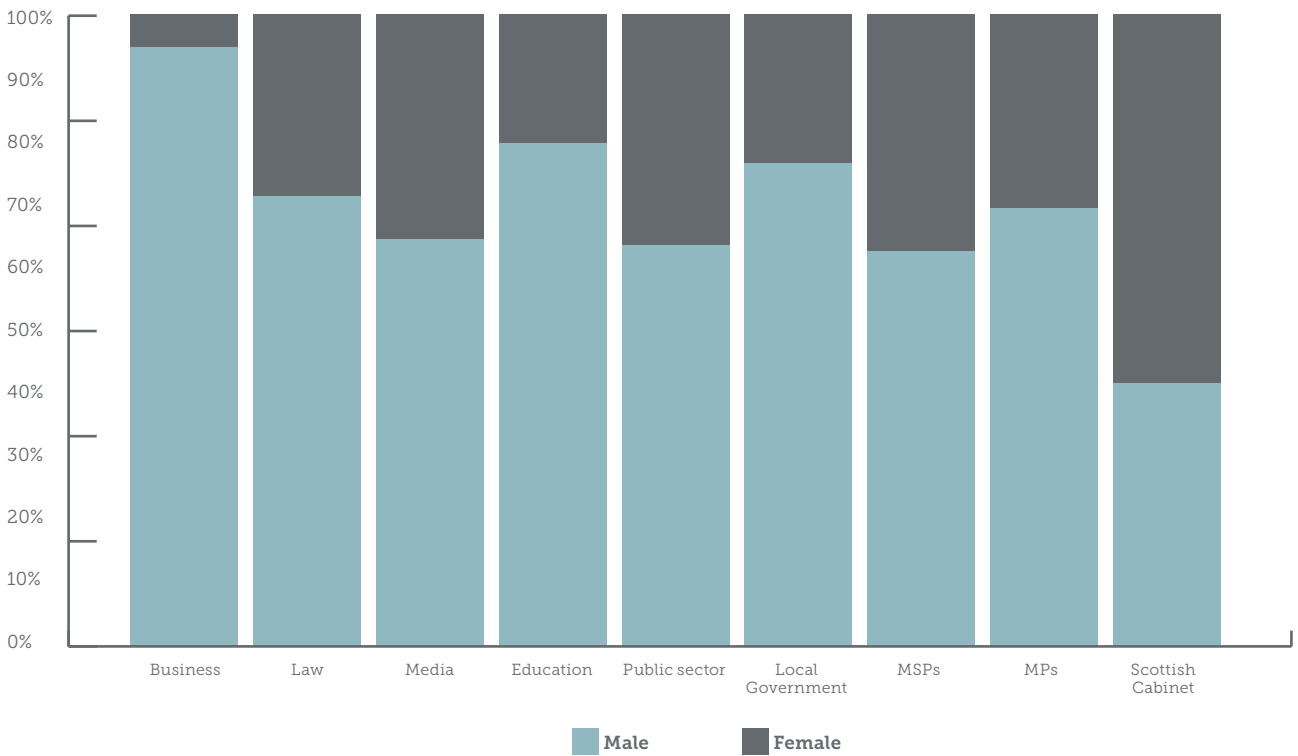


Figure 2: Gender representation across Scotland's top leaders



Since 2015 there has been a growing commitment across sectors to improve inclusive and diverse recruitment, with many recognising the complex risks of executive teams that do not reflect the diversity of the communities or customers they serve, or the wider experience of their staff.

Work by the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls, Changing the Chemistry and commitments from the Scottish Government have contributed to a changing landscape for diversity. However, there continues to be a “double disadvantage” of class, ethnicity, gender and disability⁴, which has been overwhelmingly clear in the results of this research.

In 2015 the paper did not investigate or comment on the ethnic or gender diversity of Scotland’s decision makers. As we revisit this paper in 2020, failing to do so would be a glaring omission.

Across the 708 individuals identified as part of this study, this double disadvantage is unmistakable. Currently only 1% of the top leaders in Scotland are people of colour. 32% of those in this study are women, and only 2 are women of colour (0.3%). No subjects were identified with a disability.

The largest BAME minority group in Scotland is the British Asian population who make up 2.7% of the population but account for just 0.9% of Scotland’s top leaders.

4 Social Mobility Commission, 2019. Social mobility in Great Britain – state of the nation 2018 to 2019



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Methodology

Data from 708 of Scotland's top leaders spanning politics, the media, the business sector, education, law and the public sector was analysed. We draw comparisons using the Sutton Trust's UK-wide study from 2019, and the Social Mobility⁵ Commission's 2019 annual report that tracks progress at a UK-wide level. Job titles vary across these sectors but in general we have categorised top decision maker to mean Director, Chair or Chief Executive level for businesses and the public sector, High Court judges and University Principals, MSPs, MPs, Council leaders and Chief Executives.

The 2015 paper analysed data from 846 individuals in Scotland; the sample used in this research reflects a smaller media and business sector sample size. Across all sectors we have identified at least 70% of the data to be able to draw reliable conclusions.⁶

A top university is defined as Oxbridge, one of Scotland's four ancient universities (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and St Andrews) and the Russell Group institutions (in addition to Edinburgh and Glasgow). Further categories include other UK institutions and international institutions.

We use the term fee-paying school throughout this report; this includes schools which may define themselves as independent, private, public or boarding, and includes those that offer scholarships. State funded schools include academies, grammar schools, religious schools and comprehensives.

We note the caveat that there is a small minority of those educated at fee-paying schools who come from less advantaged backgrounds and were eligible for scholarships. Similarly, many of those who attend state schools are from highly advantaged social backgrounds. This social capital has not been captured as part of this study.

It should also be noted that university attendance is not a good proxy for social background and entry to the top universities is, in general, meritocratic as those who get very good Highers or Advanced Highers who apply to the most selective universities tend to get in. However, the social profiles of those at the top universities are narrower than the country as a whole. In 2018-19 the average entrants from a state school at a non-elite institution was 92%. By comparison 63% of new students at Oxbridge came from a state secondary school, for Scottish ancient universities this was 75%, and for other Russell Group institutions 79%.⁷

5 Social Mobility Commission, 2019. Social mobility in Great Britain – state of the nation 2018 to 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-in-great-britain-state-of-the-nation-2018-to-2019>

6 See Appendix 1

7 Higher Education Statistics Agency. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/widening-participation/chart-2>

Influential women

Women continue to be underrepresented in positions of influence across Scotland. Whilst there is positive change in the gender balance of the Cabinet and Ministers in Scottish Parliament, across the wider political sector men outnumber women by two thirds (33% women to 67% men).

Business is by far the least inclusive sector in terms of gender equality, with just 5% of leaders in the top 25 companies in Scotland being women. This is comparable to the 4% of female leaders of the top 350 FTSE companies. New research on FTSE 350 companies shows better performance when women make up at least a third of the executive team – being up to 10 times more profitable⁸ than all male boards – making action on building diversity in this area highly recommended.

Covid-19

The impact of Covid-19 on social mobility is complex and likely to be long-term. School closures are particularly damaging for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with children being less likely to have dedicated study space, equipment or internet connectivity to study remotely than their wealthier peers. It is also more likely that parents with lower-income jobs will have experienced job loss during the crisis, with these combined stresses interfering with emotional and mental health and learning.⁹

A decade of weak income growth following the 2008 financial crisis means that low and middle income households were in the most vulnerable position when the recession hit, with less scope to reduce their spending on non-essential items when their income fell.

With fee-paying schools being on average three times better resourced than state funded schools, with a higher teacher-to-pupil ratio and more resources to approach distance learning, this is likely to widen the privilege gap between fee-paying and state schools.¹⁰ These statistics shine a light on the complex debate regarding the benefits of fee-paying schools retaining charitable status.

There may be further implications for social mobility with potential changes in the sharing of resources between fee-paying and state schools which have often been developed to support the charitable status of fee-paying schools. 86% of fee-paying schools had partnerships with state schools in 2019, ranging from the use of sports facilities, workshops and staff secondment, music, drama and other extra-curricular activities.¹¹

8 The Pipeline Women Count 2020 report: <https://www.execpipeline.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Pipeline-Women-Count-2020-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

9 Economics Observatory, 2020. How will the pandemic and lockdown affect social mobility? <https://www.coronavirusandtheeconomy.com/question/how-will-pandemic-and-lockdown-affect-social-mobility>

10 F. Green and D. Kynaston, 2019. Engines of Privilege

11 ISC Census Report, 2019. https://www.isc.co.uk/media/4890/isc_census_2018_report.pdf

Business



95% male



5% female



68% White British
32% White International

This study looked at the CEOs and Chairs of the top 25 Scottish companies. This sector has the highest proportion of Oxbridge alumni, and the second-highest proportion of fee-paying school alumni at 53% of top decision makers. It is also the least representative in terms of gender and representation of ethnic minorities, with just 5% of the Chairs and Chief Executives at the top 25 Scottish companies being female, and none being a person of colour. Given the weight of evidence that companies with diverse leadership are more profitable, this is a significant cause for concern.

This sector also has the highest alumni of international institutions, which is perhaps unsurprising given the international composition of the business sector. Of those educated internationally, Harvard Business School is the leading international institution with 43%.



Just 5% of the Chairs and Chief Executives at the top 25 Scottish companies are female, and none are a person of colour

The legal sector



72% male



28% female



96% White British
2% Asian British
2% White International

Law continues to be the sector with the highest representation of fee-paying schools. 55% of the top legal leaders attended a fee-paying school, and 68% attended one of the Scottish ancient universities.¹² In addition 14% attended a state school, but went to Oxbridge or a Russell Group Institution (9% and 5% respectively).

In 2015 the David Hume Institute found that 45% of Scottish judges attended a fee-paying school, suggesting that in 2020 the very top of the legal sector is becoming even less representative than it was five years ago. The prevalence of alumni from the Scottish ancient universities could be linked to the devolved nature of the Scottish legal system, with non-Scottish university alumni having to retrain in Scottish law.

Recent research from the Law Society of Scotland found that in the wider legal profession 21% attended a fee-paying school, with 64% attending one of the Scottish ancient universities.¹³

¹² Excluding University of St Andrews which is the only ancient university not to offer Law

¹³ Law Society Scotland, 2018. Profile of the profession. <https://www.lawscot.org.uk/media/361498/lss-pop-report-final-december-2018.pdf>

The media



65% male



35% female



91% White British
4% Asian British
<2% Black British
<2% Mixed ethnicity
<2% White International

Two years after the BBC pledged to increase diversity and in line with its 2020 deadline and targets, ethnic diversity in the BBC's senior leadership team has increased.

80% of the BBC executive team was educated at a fee-paying school, and 33% went on to study at Oxbridge. Those that did not attend Oxbridge studied at Russell Group or Scottish ancient university (40% and 20% respectively). Whilst there is progress on gender and ethnic diversity, education background must remain a consideration in future shaping of the executive team.

Across the wider media 36% were educated privately, with 42% going on to a top university (10% to Oxbridge and 32% to Scottish ancients). Of all sectors ethnic diversity in the Scottish media was the most representative, with 9% of the media's top leaders coming from a non-white British background. This figure is expected to rise in the next 5 years as the BBC and wider media commits to invest in diversity across its content and production.¹⁴

The Sutton Trust highlight an overreliance on unpaid internships crowding out talent from underprivileged backgrounds¹⁵ in the media and creative industries. However recent campaigns are beginning to bring change in this area.

¹⁴ BBC, 2020. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2020/creative-diversity-commitment>

¹⁵ The Sutton Trust, 2018. <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Pay-As-You-Go-1.pdf>

Education



80% male



20% female



**83% White British
17% White International**

The Principals of the 15 Scottish universities were included in the study because of their important role in shaping the agenda and vision of our institutions, widening participation and inclusivity, and representing Scotland's universities at home and overseas.

In general, this sector has a diverse educational background. 20% were educated at a fee-paying school, with 7% completing their first degree at Oxbridge. 93% are educated to PhD level with 13% attending Oxbridge for their subsequent degrees.

Of those that did not attend Oxbridge, a further 34% attended a Scottish ancient university, and 13% attended other Russell group institutions.

The university sector is under-representative of females and ethnic minorities more generally, with just 17.5% of senior academic positions in the UK are held by women.¹⁶ The lack of ethnic diversity in top roles is likewise reflected in the wider profession with just 16% of academic staff coming from a BAME background in the UK.¹⁷

¹⁶ <https://ocean.sagepub.com/blog/what-are-the-key-challenges-facing-women-in-academia>

¹⁷ <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10360/Black-academic-staff-face-double-whammy-in-promotion-and-pay-stakes>

Police Scotland



78% male



22% female



100% White British

Across the force 30% of all staff are female¹⁸ but in the most senior levels this sits at just 22%, and all are from a white British background. Data on their educational background was not available in full but showed that at least 11% were educated at state schools, and none listed attended Oxbridge.

The lack of ethnic diversity in the senior leadership must be addressed alongside gender diversity. Recent data shows that just 1.4% of officers are from a BAME background.¹⁹

The Public Sector



64% male



36% female



99.6% White British
>1% Asian British

The public sector in Scotland crosses various functions including local authority Chief Executives, Director Generals of the Civil Service, non-Departmental Public Bodies, Health Bodies and other significant national bodies. Of this diverse sector, 17% came from a fee-paying school, and 59% attended a top university, of which 6% attended Oxbridge.

Whilst gender equality across the public sector overall remains outweighed by men, there are areas where progress has been made. Chief Executives are 53% female and NHS heads are 41% female.

¹⁸ <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/meet-female-police-officers-shattering-13077781>

¹⁹ <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/cops-shamed-over-diversity-only-22226516>

Politics



67% male



33% female

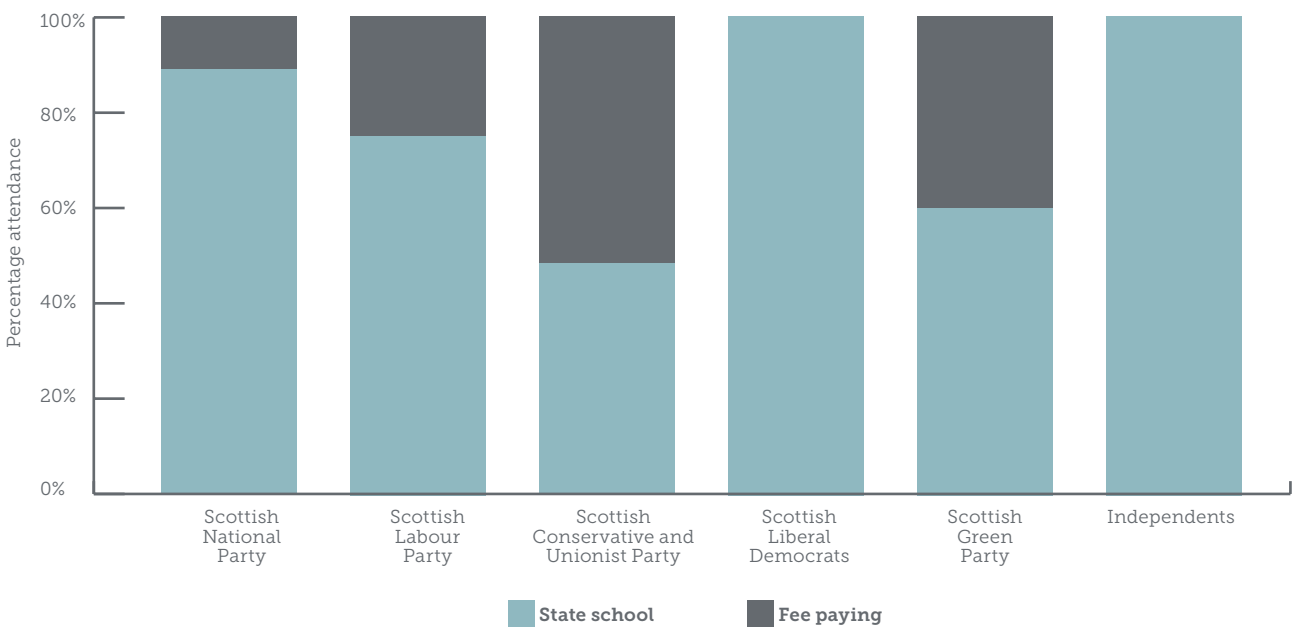


99% White British
<1% Asian British
<1% White International

The Scottish Cabinet has made progress in representation that spans gender, geographic and education diversity. 16% come from a fee-paying background, and 8% attended Oxbridge. This is an increase from 2015 where every Cabinet Minister in Holyrood was state educated and none were educated at Oxbridge, although 60% were educated at one of the Scottish ancient universities. At the UK level 39% of the UK Cabinet in 2020 is educated at a fee-paying school and 57% attended Oxbridge.²⁰

Across the wider political sector just 10.5% of Scottish MPs come from a fee-paying school, and none are Oxbridge alumni. Across Scottish local authorities 8% of leaders attended a fee-paying school, and none attended Oxbridge.

Figure 3: School education across political parties



20 Sutton Trust, 2019. Elitist Britain, page 4.

Conclusions

In 2020 analysis of Scotland's top leaders shows some sectors have made progress towards being more representative of the Scottish population. The Scottish Cabinet and local government Chief Executives are leading the way, however there is much more work to do to improve diversity, especially in the business and legal sector.

If change continues at the current rate it will be at least 2065 before people in leadership positions in Scotland are representative of the population.

The challenges Covid-19 brings mean we need to ensure diversity of thought across all decision making so Scotland is as strong as possible for whatever is the new normal.

Scotland cannot afford for the pace of change in its top team to continue at the current rate. More equal societies have higher productivity. And high productivity allows more investment to create more equal societies.

Scotland needs all of our current top leaders to actively champion diversity and proactively provide the opportunities to ensure faster progress.

The David Hume Institute is committed to equality and diversity of thought - and we know that what gets measured gets done. We will continue to measure this data with the aim of highlighting progress and celebrating those that want to help deliver change at a faster pace.

Appendix 1: data table

Chapter	Category	Fee-paying school	State school	Oxbridge	Scottish Ancient University	Other Russell Group	Other UK institution	International institution	Population	Known (University)
Politics	MSPs	24%	76%	2%	49%	4%	44%	2%	129	100%
	MPs	11%	89%	0%	47%	2%	49%	2%	59	97%
	Local government	8%	92%	0%	31%	0%	69%	0%	34	70%
	Cabinet	17%	83%	8%	58%	25%	0%	8%	10	100%
	Shadow cabinet	29%	71%	0%	46%	54%	0%	0%	14	100%
Media	BBC Executives	80%	20%	33%	20%	40%	6%	0%	19	73%
	STV Executives	34%	66%	0%	17%	17%	66%	0%	15	40%*
	Scottish media	35%	65%	9%	91%	0%	0%	0%	26	65%*
	Ofcom	22%		67%	0%	17%	0%	17%	9	67%*
Law	Court of Session judges	54%	46%	11%	67%	5%	14%	3%	38	95%
	Sheriff Principals			0%	60%	0%	40%	0%	6	83%
Public Sector	Council CEOs	19%	81%	0%	48%	0%	52%	0%	32	66%*
	All public sector	18%	83%	4%	27%	5%	24%	2%	275	71%
Education	University principals	21%	79%	7%	33%	13%	33%	13%	15	100%
Business	Top 25 Chairs & CEOs	47%	53%	19%	16%	14%	16%	35%	44	85%

*Below 70% target



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