

Impact across education and careers in law

	Early outreach	Admission to law school	Entry to the profession	Early career progression	Progression to partner
<p>Unequal social, economic and cultural capital</p> <p>What are some of the key factors and resources that differentiate people from higher socio-economic background (SEB) and lower SEB or with protected characteristics?</p>	<p>Target students from lower SEBs :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Typically don't know law graduates or legal professionals whom they could ask informally for information and advice. > Employers' outreach and work experience placements and universities' outreach provide important exposure and insight that wouldn't otherwise be available. 	<p>Applicants have unequal access to accurate information about entry requirements.</p> <p>This is because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The level of information available on law schools' websites about admissions requirements is variable. It is hard to find detailed and specific information. > Low-SEB students' schools and families are less likely to be able to fill the gap. <p>Nonetheless, low-SEB students with the required grades are equally likely to apply to the top law schools.</p> <p>However, low-SEB students may unknowingly be wasting UCAS choices on law schools unlikely to accept their qualifications.</p>	<p>Students from diverse backgrounds can be disadvantaged in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Knowing where to apply, how and when. > Being able to draw on social networks for advice and guidance. > Knowing how to make applications 'stand out'. > Facing pressure to succeed immediately – not being in a position to make applications across multiple years. > Confidence in interviews. 	<p>Early career law professionals from low-SEBs are likely to be disadvantaged by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Being less able to develop a strong professional social network. > Finding it harder to make positive connections with senior colleagues due to the lack of shared life experiences. 	<p>Law professionals from diverse backgrounds are likely to be disadvantaged in progressing to partner level by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Not 'fitting in' with the business culture. > Being unable to access diverse mentors. > Being unable to mobilise familial professional networks.
<p>Subjective judgements & unconscious biases</p> <p>What systems and processes are there that create space for bias and lead to unequal outcomes?</p>	<p>Employers tend to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Reach out to schools that are nearby, rather than those whose students could benefit most. > Ask schools to nominate young people to participate, which may lead to teachers selecting well-behaved rather than those from lower SEB and who would benefit the most. 	<p>Selective law schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Admit high-SEB students with lower grades than they require from low-SEB. > May be using applicants' schools as a proxy for quality and potential. <p>And were not generally able to refer to evidence for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > (Not) accepting Access or BTEC qualifications or some A-level subjects. > Their choice of additional admissions requirements (eg LNAT, interview, contextual information). 	<p>Employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Use university as a proxy for capability. > Consider who will 'fit in' and value 'polish' in candidates. > Favour 'traditional' educational pathways in which HSEB students are overrepresented. > Use assessment styles that may favour candidates from HSEBs or with particular characteristics. 	<p>Employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Use opaque criteria and informal social networks to inform work allocation and performance evaluation. > Line managers and senior staff with influence tend to trust people with a similar background. 	<p>Employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Give an informal 'tap on the shoulder' to those who are deemed to meet criteria. > Use non-transparent definitions of what constitutes talent.
<p>The experience of coming from a lower socio-economic and/or minority ethnic background</p> <p>How do people experience this inequality, what is the impact?</p>	<p>Students and early career lawyers say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Summer schools and work experience can help them make informed decisions about studying law and their career. > Work experience is helpful even when delivered online. > However, work experience does not always reflect the reality of working in the legal sector for people from a 'minority' background. > Mentoring is of very variable usefulness. 	<p>Our research in law suggests that low-SEB applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > May be feeling disadvantaged by the process. > May not know where to begin. <p>Our other research suggests that low-SEB law students may experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Imposter syndrome anxieties. > Social unease from first exposure to affluent peers and workplaces. 	<p>Our research suggests that low-SEB applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Face considerable financial barriers in entering the profession. > Can be misled in outreach about the kind of workplace the legal profession is. > Face a pressure to succeed because of an absence of a safety net. > Struggle to navigate complex pathways. 	<p>Our research found that early career lawyers from low-SEBs are over-performing, but under-progressing.</p> <p>They also experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Cumulative exposure to micro-aggressions. > Psychological toll of code-switching. > Exclusion from socials. <p>They do not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > See role models from a shared background further up the career ladder. > Feel able to call out behaviour for fear of recrimination. 	<p>Our research found that law professionals from diverse backgrounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Experience microaggressions in work and social settings. > Have to balance multiple responsibilities over the duration of a career. > Take significantly longer to reach partner level. > Do not see role models from diverse backgrounds.

Recommendations

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Data collection, monitoring & management <small>Including qualitative research</small>	<p>Employers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Recruit students through outreach charities and universities that have good systems and processes for data collection and monitoring impact – this will simplify monitoring and evaluation. > Collect qualitative data to understand experiences and impact. > Synthesise survey and interview data to provide comprehensive insight. 	<p>Law schools need to undertake robust and detailed data collection and analysis of successful and unsuccessful applicants by SEB to check for unintended barriers</p>	<p>All stakeholders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ensure ongoing robust data collection on successful and unsuccessful applicants. > Conduct qualitative research looking at lived experiences of navigating pathways. > Monitor all pathways to ensure particular routes are not being favoured. 	<p>Employers should systematically collect data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Who is getting ahead and at what rates. > Specificity of talent and how performance evaluation varies by demographic criteria. > Conduct independent exit interviews. 	<p>Employers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ensure ongoing collection of demographic data. > Collect and submit diversity data to a trusted third party for sector-wide comparisons.
Need for collaboration and leadership	<p>Cross-sector bodies should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Collaborate to achieve maximum impact. > Share and learn from best practices. 	<p>Law schools should share expertise in process and evidence with each other.</p> <p>Other research suggests prioritising low-SEB law students for bursaries and work experience placements.</p>	<p>Cross-sector bodies should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Share best practice in recruitment strategies. > Ensure consistency in implementing the SQE. > Ensure that diversity is prioritised in the creation of new assessments. > Learn from best practice in other professions. 	<p>Cross sector bodies should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Create a network of diverse legal professionals. > Pool mentors across the sector. > Take ownership of the D&I agenda with senior leaders across firms. 	<p>Cross-sector bodies should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Engage colleagues in research on diversity and inclusion. > Ensure that firms' data is understood relative to the whole sector. > Introduce formal mentoring programmes.
What is real impact? <small>What would equal outcomes look like in each area?</small>	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Make an informed decision about studying law and a career in law. > Regardless of their background, successfully pursue a degree/career in Law, if they choose to. 	<p>Law schools admit low-SEB and high-SEB students who meet entry requirements at the same rate.</p> <p>Students on different pathways (eg BTECs) have the same opportunities.</p>	<p>SEB has no bearing on rates of recruitment when controlling for other factors.</p> <p>Students using different legal qualification pathways have the same opportunities.</p> <p>Assessments do not favour particular groups.</p>	<p>The best people are promoted, regardless of background.</p> <p>Quality of work performance is the only criterion for progression.</p> <p>There is a clear pipeline of diverse talent being actively managed.</p>	<p>Partners are representative of the wider UK population.</p> <p>No barriers exist for law professionals from diverse backgrounds in reaching partner level.</p> <p>Criteria for progression to partner are transparent and based on performance.</p>