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Social Mobility Pay Gap Report 2023

May 2024

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Social mobility pay gap report 2023

In this report, we set out the socio-economic breakdown of our workforce followed by a series of pay gap statistics for 2023. We explain the reasons for any gaps and set out what measures we are taking to improve social mobility both inside and outside of the firm.

“Historically, the legal profession has been more accessible to those from privileged backgrounds. At Lewis Silkin, we want to play a role in changing that.

Our current ranking of 14th in the Social Mobility Index (up from 59th place in 2021) is proof of our commitment to improve our performance in this crucial area. While a significant proportion of our legal professionals did attend private school and come from more economically advantaged backgrounds, we're committed to reshaping this narrative.

At Lewis Silkin, we champion fair access to the legal sector for talented individuals from all walks of life. Embracing diversity isn't merely the right thing to do, it's also a catalyst for innovation, collaboration, and creativity within our organisation. By fostering an environment where colleagues from diverse socio-economic backgrounds thrive, we not only better serve our clients but also better reflect society.

We know that we cannot achieve our objective overnight, but we have set ambitious goals to drive meaningful change over time. We’re determined to make a positive difference on social mobility, both within our firm and in society at large, and to help create a more inclusive future for all.”

Jo Farmer, Joint Managing Partner

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Joint Managing Partner

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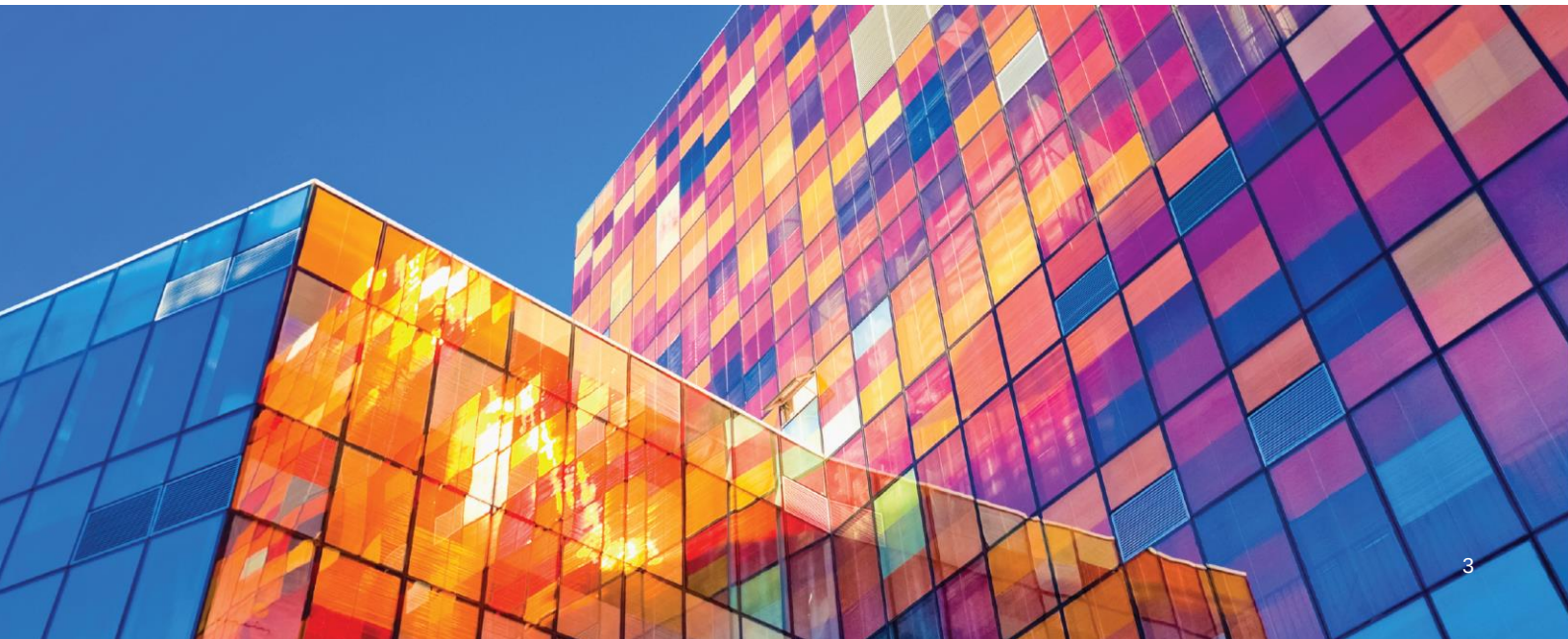
Our approach

We have followed guidance on data collection and analysis set out by the Social Mobility Commission and asked employees and partners to provide information about their background voluntarily. We have data relating to:

- Socio-economic background (based on parental occupation at age 14)
- Whether they received free school meals (if they attended school after 1980)
- Whether they attended a state school (and if so whether comprehensive or selective/grammar) or private school
- Whether either of their parents graduated and gained a degree

Using this information, we applied the same methodology used in gender pay gap reporting in order to calculate a series of pay gap statistics, using 5 April 2023 as our “snapshot” date.

In this report we have also included a breakdown of the socio-economic profile of our workforce. In addition to the above categories, this also covers housing tenure during secondary education.



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Our workforce

In this section we publish data on the socio-economic profile of our workforce as of 5 April 2023.

	Working class background (%) [1]	Intermediate (%)	Professional (%)	Received free school meals (%)	Attended comprehensive / academy (%)	Attended private / public school (%)	Attended grammar school (%)	"First in family" to graduate from university (%)	Lived in social housing during secondary education (%)
PAs / Secretaries	42.4%	9.1%	48.5%	21.4%	87.5%	2.5%	10.0%	22.7%	17.6%
Junior Business Services	22.7%	6.8%	70.5%	15.1%	55.3%	29.8%	14.9%	38.5%	19.1%
Senior Business Services	27.3%	9.1%	63.6%	8.9%	62.7%	19.6%	17.6%	43.2%	5.5%
Junior legal roles (Paralegal to Associate)	21.5%	10.8%	67.7%	12.9%	54.7%	32.6%	12.6%	39.8%	6.5%
Senior legal roles (Senior Associate to Legal Director)	18.5%	7.4%	74.1%	1.8%	50.0%	32.1%	17.9%	39.6%	1.9%
Other legal roles	16.7%	8.3%	75.0%	3.9%	45.8%	31.3%	22.9%	41.7%	6.1%
Partner	**24.2%**	**3.2%**	**72.6%**	**10.1%**	**39.7%**	**39.7%**	**20.6%**	**50.0%**	**4.5%**
Employees only	**23.5%**	**8.9%**	**67.6%**	**10.5%**	**57.9%**	**26.4%**	**15.7%**	**39.1%**	**8.5%**
Whole firm	**23.7%**	**8.0%**	**68.4%**	**10.5%**	**54.8%**	**28.6%**	**16.5%**	**41.2%**	**7.8%**
NATIONAL AVERAGES	**39.0%**	**24.0%**	**37.0%**	**15.0%**	**92.5%**	**7.5%**		**67.0%**	**n/a**

	Class	Free school meals	Type of school attended	First generation to attend university	Housing tenure
Response rates	**80.6%**	**82.3%**	**88.1%**	**72.2%**	**75.8%**

Compared to 2022, we have seen good increases in our response rates for all data points.

[1] This is determined using parental occupation at age 14 - we follow the recommendations set out by the Social Mobility Commission in its employer toolkit. Although research shows that parental occupation is the best measure of socio economic advantage, we recognise that it is only one indicator, which is why we have chosen to report across different measures.

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Socio-economic background or “class”

What is this?

The Social Mobility Commission recommends defining an individual’s socio-economic background using the occupation of the highest earner in their household when they were aged 14. Using this guidance, we asked people to choose from a range of options. We then grouped these choices according to the guidance.

According to the guidance, examples of ‘working class’ occupations include electrician, farm worker, train driver, cleaner, security guard and plumber. Examples of ‘intermediate class’ occupations are secretary, call centre agent, nursery nurse and restaurant manager. Examples of ‘professional class’ occupations are teacher, nurse, accountant, solicitor, scientist and police officer.

Our pay gap statistics

These statistics are calculated by comparing the average (mean/median) person of a working class background against the average person who is not from this background. Positive values (ie greater than 0%) show that the mean/median person from a working class background is paid less than the mean/median person not from this background. Negative values (ie less than 0%) show the reverse.

	Employees only	Partners only	Whole firm
Mean pay gap	5.4%	-9.9%	-4.3%
Median pay gap	14.9%	-41.1%	11.4%
Mean bonus gap	-10.2%	-17.7%	-19.5%
Median bonus gap	-32.3%	-33.3%	-31.1%
Proportion of intermediate/professional class people who received a bonus	75.2%	89.4%	77.4%
Proportion of working class people who received a bonus	74.0%	93.3%	77.2%
Lower quartile (percentage of working class people)	26.6%	25.0%	25.5%
Lower-mid quartile (percentage of working class people)	25.6%	20.0%	25.8%
Upper-mid quartile (percentage of working class people)	25.6%	20.0%	25.8%
Upper quartile (percentage of working class people)	21.5%	25.0%	27.4%

Our mean class pay gap for the whole firm is low (and slightly negative), but the median gap is slightly higher. This is because of the impact of the partnership.

Class has some correlation with age because of the way in which it is determined: parental occupation at age 14. Older people are more likely to have had their parent working in a job now classed as working class; there is a higher proportion of “working class” people among our partner population than among our non-partner lawyer population, and the “working class” partners also tend to be highly paid. Because partners are highly paid, this pushes the mean pay gap down. We consider that the median pay gap is a more reflective figure of disparity as it is not so affected by a small group of highly paid people. The median pay gap is higher, showing that overall, working class people tend to occupy lower paid roles. Our greatest class diversity is among our PAs and this group is most reflective of the general population.

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Free school meals

What is this?

We asked people to state whether they received free school meals at any point during their education.

This is a measure of extreme economic disadvantage. The poorest 15% of the UK population receive free school meals. By measuring this, we hope to understand the degree to which our workplace is accessible to the poorest in society.

Our pay gap statistics

These statistics are calculated by comparing the average (mean/median) person who received free school meals against the average person who did not receive free school meals. We followed Social Mobility Commission guidance and excluded anyone who did not attend school after 1980.

	Employees only	Partners only	Whole firm
Mean pay gap	30.5%	-11.7%	9.9%
Median pay gap	40.0%	-50.2%	36.8%
Mean bonus gap	43.2%	-22.1%	12.9%
Median bonus gap	23.7%	-33.3%	34.1%
Proportion of people who did NOT receive free school meals	73.7%	91.9%	76.7%
Proportion of people who received free school meals	78.4%	85.7%	79.5%
Lower quartile (percentage who received free school meals)	40.0%	27.3%	34.4%
Lower-mid quartile (percentage who received free school meals)	12.3%	0.0%	11.2%
Upper-mid quartile (percentage who received free school meals)	12.3%	0.0%	11.2%
Upper quartile (percentage who received free school meals)	2.8%	15.0%	7.1%

As shown above, 15% of the UK population receive free school meals but 10% of our workforce (and 10% of our partners) received them. Because it is such a small proportion of the workforce, it means these gaps are potentially liable to change. The addition or removal of just a few extra people could have a big impact on averages and so change the gap.

The pay gaps at an employee and whole firm level are large. This is because fewer employees in our highest paid (non Partner) roles received free school meals, whereas 40% of those in the lowest paid roles received them.

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Type of school attended

What is this?

We asked people to state what type of school they attended at age 14. This is a measure of extreme economic advantage. The options were:

- State comprehensive / academy
- Grammar
- Private / public school

Our pay gap statistics

These statistics are calculated by comparing the average (mean/median) person who went to a state comprehensive/academy against the average person who did not go to a state comprehensive/academy.

	Employees only	Partners only	Whole firm
Mean pay gap	12.3%	7.5%	34.9%
Median pay gap	26.5%	-1.4%	30.0%
Mean bonus gap	-3.0%	-11.4%	25.6%
Median bonus gap	-12.6%	0.0%	24.8%
Proportion of those who DID NOT attend a state comprehensive/academy that received a bonus	71.0%	92.9%	75.6%
Proportion of those who DID attend a state comprehensive/academy that received a bonus	76.1%	88.9%	77.6%
Lower quartile (percentage who went to state comprehensive/academy)	64.1%	54.5%	60.8%
Lower-mid quartile (percentage who went to state comprehensive/academy)	62.3%	26.3%	65.6%
Upper-mid quartile (percentage who went to state comprehensive/academy)	62.3%	26.3%	65.6%
Upper quartile (percentage who went to state comprehensive/academy)	46.7%	40.0%	42.1%

In the UK, 7.5% of people went to a private/public or grammar school. In our workplace, and in common with the rest of the legal industry, people from this background are overrepresented: 42% of our employees – and 60% of our partners – went to private / public or grammar schools.

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First generation university

What is this?

We asked people “if you went to university, were you the first generation in your family to do so?”.

Although this is not a measure of social background, attending university gives a nuanced form of cultural advantage, as organisational cultures can favour graduates. Being the ‘first in family’ to attend signals that someone may have had a potential lack of support to navigate university and entry into the graduate workforce. If pay gaps calculated on this basis are high, it suggests that people with that advantage may be more likely to succeed. They may find it easier to be recruited and have successful careers.

Our pay gap statistics

These statistics are calculated by comparing the average (mean / median) person of who was the first generation in their family to graduate from university against the average (mean / median) person who is not the first generation in their family to graduate from university. We excluded all people who did not wish to provide this information or who had not provided any response.

	Employees only	Partners only	Whole firm
Mean pay gap	-10.0%	-1.1%	-27.2%
Median pay gap	-15.5%	-33.9%	-17.9%
Mean bonus gap	-27.4%	-3.8%	-24.6%
Median bonus gap	-40.7%	0.0%	-34.7%
Proportion of people who WERE NOT the first generation to graduate from university who received a bonus	71.4%	94.3%	75.1%
Proportion of people who WERE the first generation to graduate from university who received a bonus	80.3%	88.6%	82.2%
Lower quartile (percentage of people who were the first generation to graduate from university)	34.7%	47.1%	33.7%
Lower-mid quartile (percentage of people who were the first generation to graduate from university)	33.8%	38.9%	40.4%
Upper-mid quartile (percentage of people who were the first generation to graduate from university)	33.8%	38.9%	40.4%
Upper quartile (percentage of people who were the first generation to graduate from university)	44.4%	38.9%	50.0%

Our gaps are low, which suggests that we understand the experiences and needs of employees. If people do come to Lewis Silkin with some sort of advantage as a result of having parents that attended university, it is not something that then leads to continued advantage in our workplace. Among our lawyers, 54% were the first in their family to attend university. This compares with 67% among employers generally across all sectors.

A larger proportion of our partners were the first generation to attend university compared to the rest of our workforce. This could be something to reflect on as a note for positivity in terms of our diversity. However, this may also be because partners tend to be older and, because of the rise in university education over the past 20-30 years, it is more likely that they were the first in their family to attend university. This – combined with the fact that partners are the highest paid members of our workforce – is why the mean pay gap for the whole firm is much lower than the median pay gap; median pay gaps are not distorted.

What we are doing to improve social mobility

We are taking a number of steps to improve social mobility, within both our firm and our industry.

Social mobility cold spot outreach

We deliver remote and in-person careers events to secondary school students (mostly Year 10 and above) in areas with low social mobility (known as social mobility 'cold spots'). Over the 2023/24 financial year, we ran 22 sessions in schools these areas.

We also make positive use of our position as advisors to many large employers in various sectors by encouraging clients to take part in our outreach events. These events aim to raise aspirations and provide the advice and support needed to achieve them. We build lasting relationships and attendees at our cold spot events have gone on to subsequently win our essay competitions, take part in our mentorship scheme and carry out work experience at the firm.

Mentoring schemes

Our Mentoring Scheme is a nine-month programme for students aged 16-18, many of whom attend school in social mobility cold spots. Our mentors meet regularly with their mentees and help them with their career aspirations (in the legal sector or otherwise) by offering advice, information and resources about various paths, whether related to university, apprenticeships or job experience. Our mentors come from across the firm including lawyers, accountants, paralegals and project managers. We currently have 47 mentor-mentee pairings. We strive to offer integrated opportunities, including in-person office visits to meet with their mentors and work experience opportunities.

Internal mentoring

Since our last report, we created have an internal mentoring programme targeted at those from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The programme was a response to a survey, in which a large proportion of those who self-identified as working class highlighted a desire for mentoring to help with career progression. The structured programme creates a reciprocal mentoring partnership between two colleagues at the firm, who will then meet on a monthly basis to discuss personal career progression to the mentee. We hope that the mentors involved in this programme will gain new insights into the wider barriers that individuals can face in the workplace, and, given their senior roles, take steps to mitigate them.

Social mobility index

We are committed to improving our ranking on the Social Mobility Foundation's Employer Index. Since 2021 we have risen from 59th in the index to 14th - we are really pleased with this progress. We have a social mobility Employee Resource Group made up of individuals from across the firm who are empowered to take action on the feedback we receive from the Employer Index.

Improving access to the legal sector: apprenticeships

We have embraced alternative methods of accessing the legal sector, and have a number of apprentices in the firm in both legal and non-legal roles.

Our first cohort of solicitor apprentices joined the firm in 2021 and will qualify in 2027. In September 2022 we also welcomed our third solicitor apprentice to the firm. We will continue to recruit two more apprentices in 2024, making a total of seven in the firm.

Social mobility week

We hold an annual social mobility week in January each year. In 2024, this included an event where people from around the firm discussed the Amol Rajan documentary *How to Crack the Class Ceiling*. We also ran a survey to find

out more about perceptions of class within the firm. Our social mobility Employee Resource Group also held a joint event with our LGBTQ+ ERG to discuss intersectional issues.

Data and analysis

We have proactively built an internal social mobility dataset. By being open and transparent about our objectives, over 80% of our workforce has chosen to voluntarily provide data about their socio-economic backgrounds, which we use to inform decision making.

Sutton Trust

This year, the Firm voted for the Sutton Trust to be our new charity partner. The Sutton Trust champions social mobility from birth to the workplace through a combination of programmes, research and policy advocacy. As well as raising money to support the Sutton Trust's work, we are also collaborating with the charity to achieve better social mobility outcomes both within and without our organisation. Externally, we send Lewis Silkin lawyers to support the Sutton Trust's Pathways to Law programme, and internally we are drawing on the charity's expertise and research to hold events teaching our staff more about social mobility issues.

PRIME

We are a member of PRIME (an alliance of law firms across the UK and Republic of Ireland determined to improve access to, and socio-economic diversity within, the legal profession). As part of our PRIME commitment, we offer work experience placements for students from less privileged backgrounds who might otherwise not have the opportunity to access careers in the legal world.

Rare

We use the Rare Contextual Recruitment System for our graduate roles, which uses data to help us identify candidates with the greatest potential. The system compares the economic and social circumstances of applicants to produce contextual data on every candidate, allowing us to spot talent we might otherwise have missed, and ensure we build an even richer and more diverse staff population.

Targets

We have set a number of challenging targets to push ourselves to do more in a range of areas.

- **By 2025, to be carrying out more than 20 outreach sessions each year in social mobility cold spot areas**
  - In 2023-24, we met this target and carried out 22 sessions. In the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years, we want to continue to carry out at least this many sessions. Although we met this challenging target early, we are committed to sustaining our efforts.
- **By 2027, to achieve a ranking in the top ten of all employers in the social mobility index**
  - We continue to make progress, rising to 14th in the index in 2023.
- **By 2033, to have one or more previous attendees of a social mobility cold spot outreach event working for the firm as a qualified solicitor**
  - This is a long term, aspirational target. We continue to provide ongoing opportunities and support to students who have previously attended our cold spot careers events, including our annual essay competition. For example, we have recently awarded a £3,000 annual bursary to Ismail Hossain, a previous careers event attendee and current law student.

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