

*A question
of class
by Jonny Gifford*

About us

- Independent centre for applied research and consultancy
- Focus: labour markets, employment, skills & HR
- Founded in Brighton, 1968 (as Institute of Manpower Studies)
- Emphasis on the 'applied' & mission: practical improvements on the ground
- Funded through corporate HR Network & research for employers, government, foundations etc.
- c.50 staff, plus a network of associates







Class or simply wealth?



How should we define class?



The class system
1960's comedy sketch

Who holds the power? What can employers / HR do?



UK Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation





Jonny Gifford



Mark Williams



Maria Koumenta



Marco Guerçi



Sven Hauff

How do we gauge someone's class?

Accent?

How much did
your parents
earn?

Did you have
many books in
your house?

Did you go on
holiday
abroad?

Did you have
an outdoor
toilet?

Did you have
more than one
car?

... ?



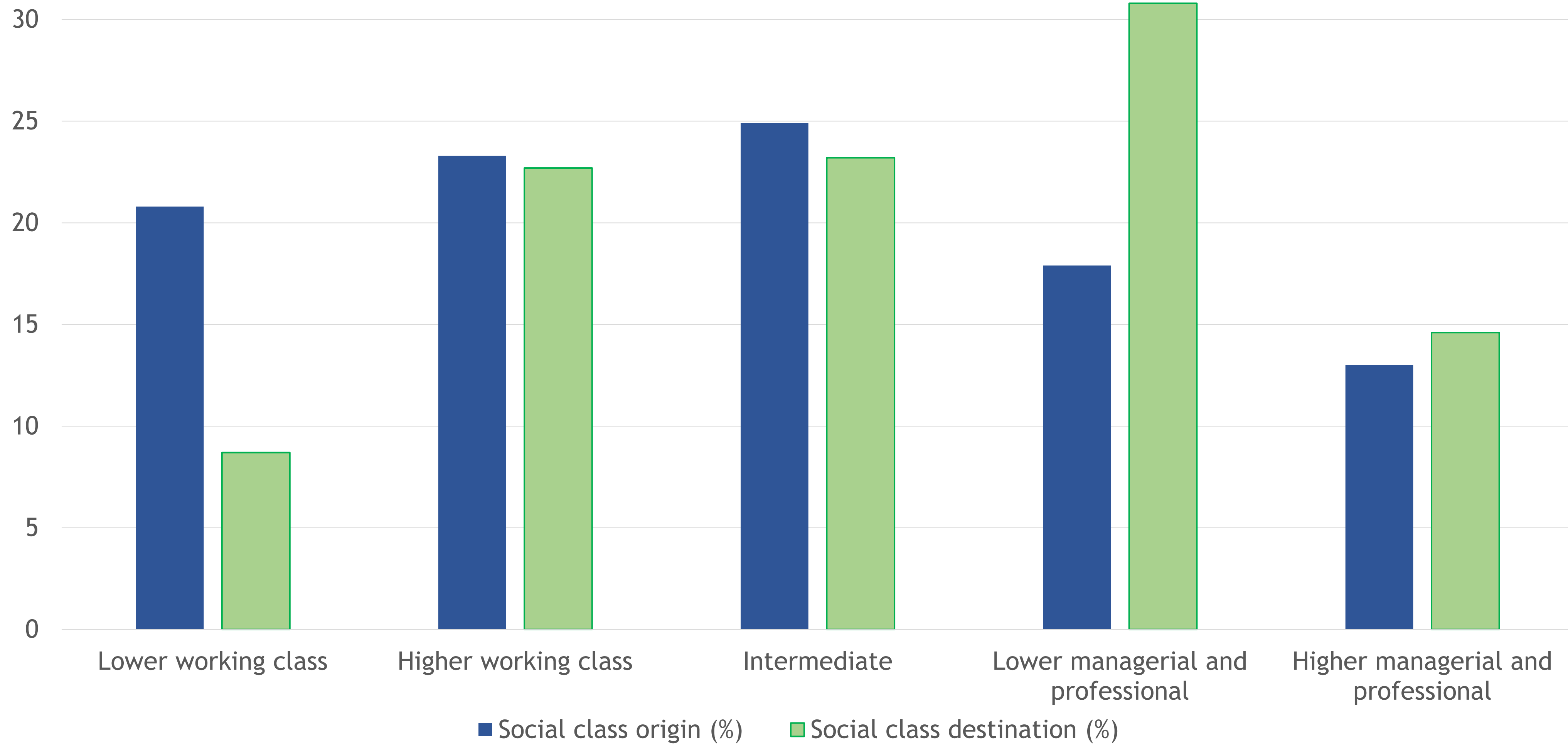
4 measures of socio-economic background

- **Parental occupational class**
(aged 14)
- **Highest parental education**
- **Type of school attended**
(11-16 yrs, state-funded or fee-paying)
- **Received free school meals**

Office for National Statistics / UK government

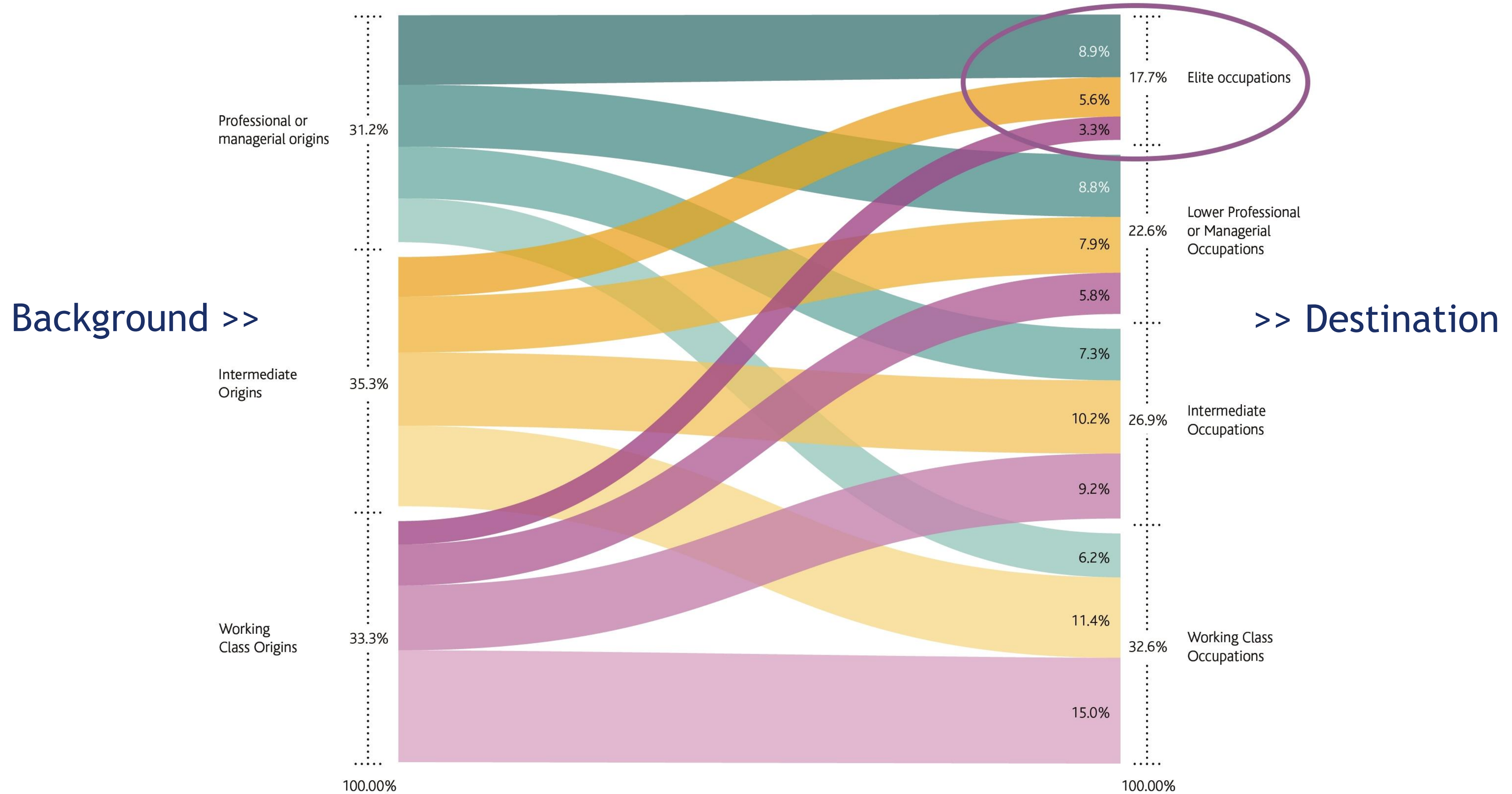


Change across a generation: UK class origins & destinations



Data: Understanding Society survey, UK 2022

Social mobility



Some nuances

eg among elite occupations:

- Least social mobility in ‘traditional professions’, eg law, medicine, and finance.
- More social mobility in ‘technical occupations’, eg engineering and IT.

The Class Ceiling

Why it Pays to be Privileged

Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison



"Seminal....updates our understanding of modern Britain
and class itself." Amol Rajan, BBC Media Editor

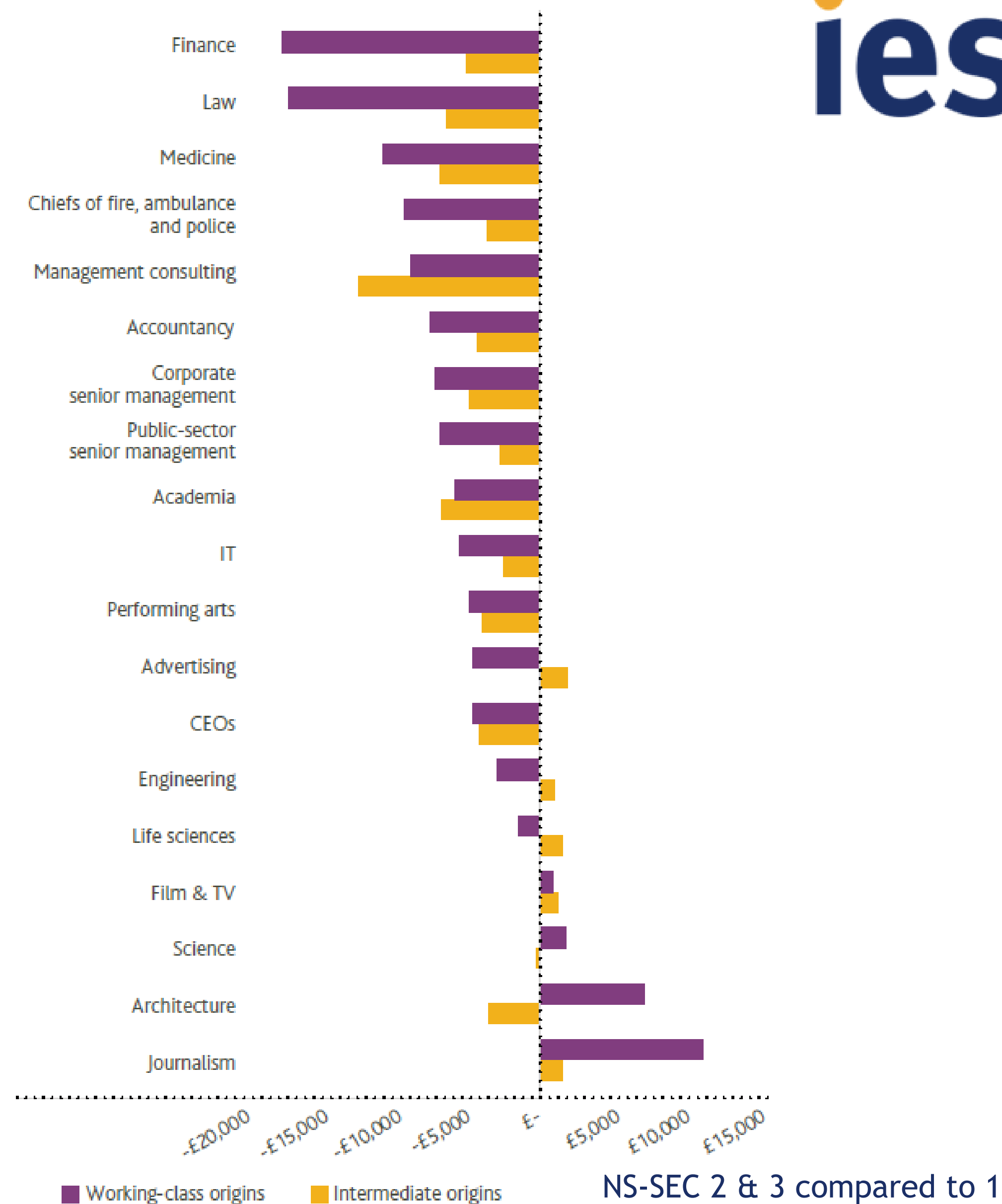


<https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/the-class-ceiling#>

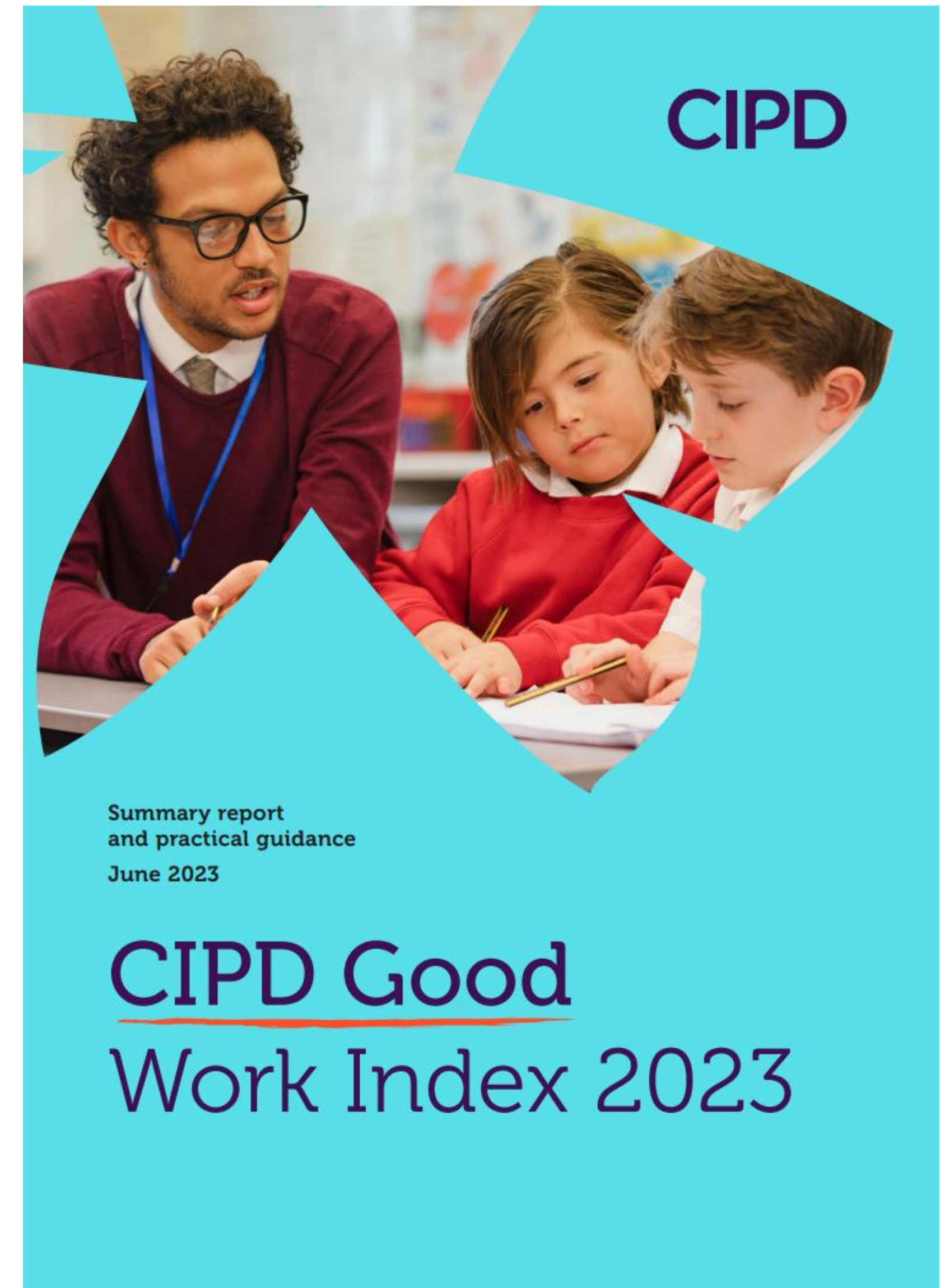
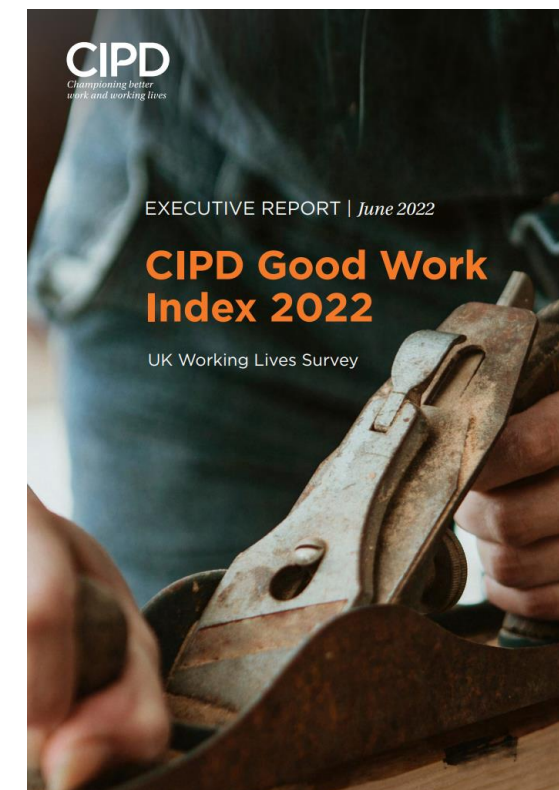
Laurison, D. and Friedman, S. (2016). The Class Pay Gap in Higher Professional and Managerial Occupations. *American Sociological Review*. 81(4): 668-695 2020

Within-class pay disparity

Working-class employees in high-status occupations earn **17% less (£7,350)** than those from privileged backgrounds, on average.



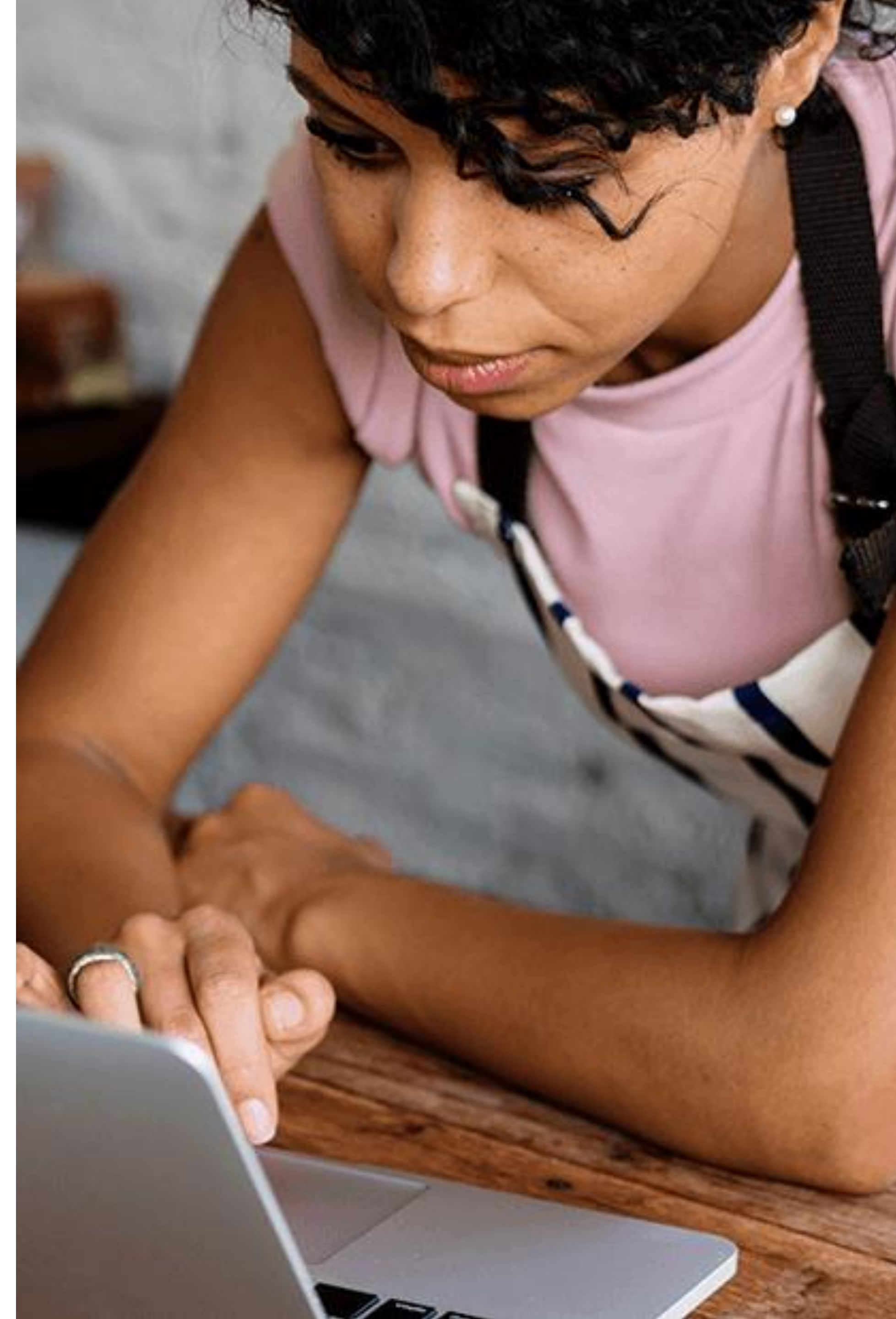
... what about other aspects of 'good work'?



7 dimensions of Good Work



Report: [Understanding and measuring job quality](#) | CIPD





Jonny Gifford



Mark Williams



Maria Koumenta



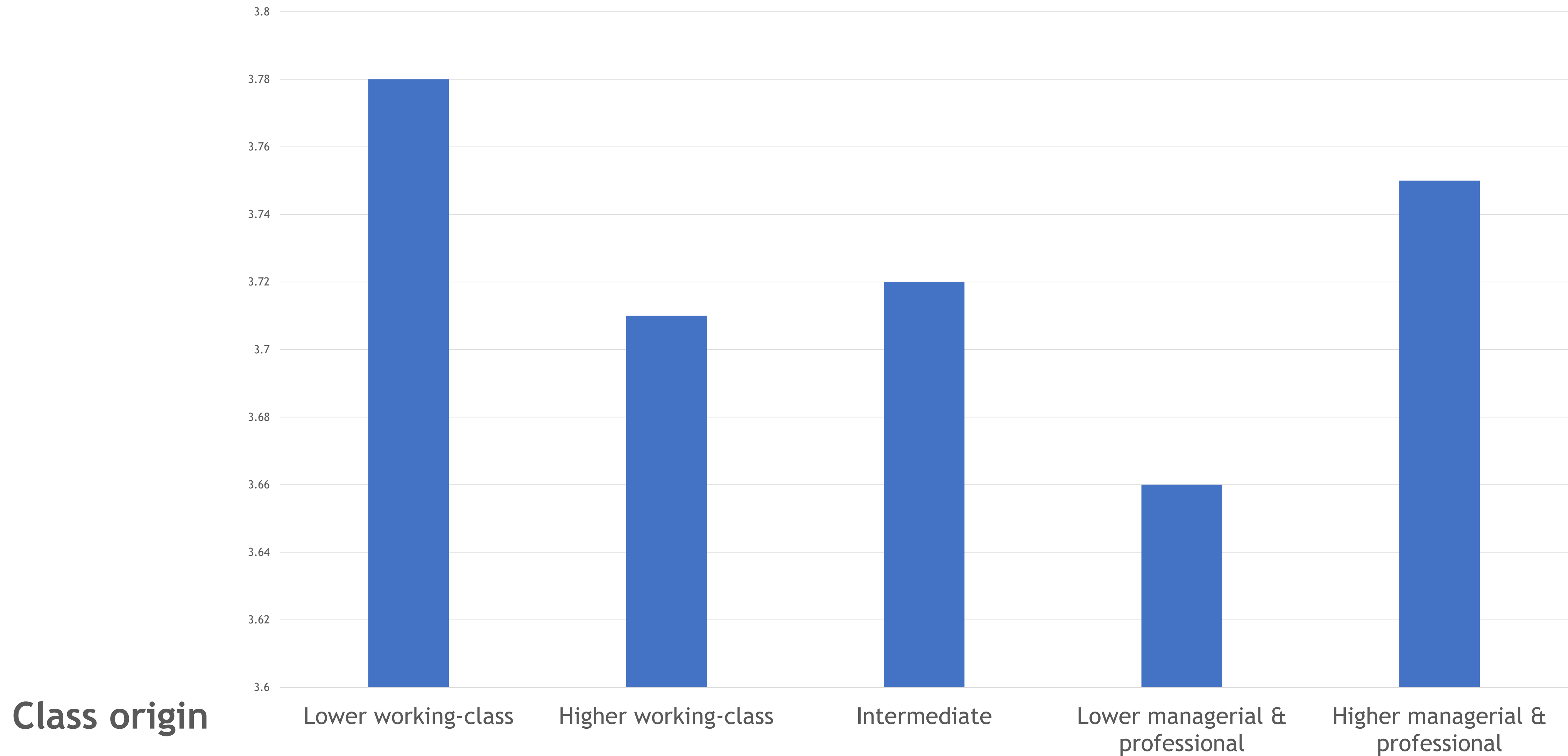
Marco Guerchi



Sven Hauff

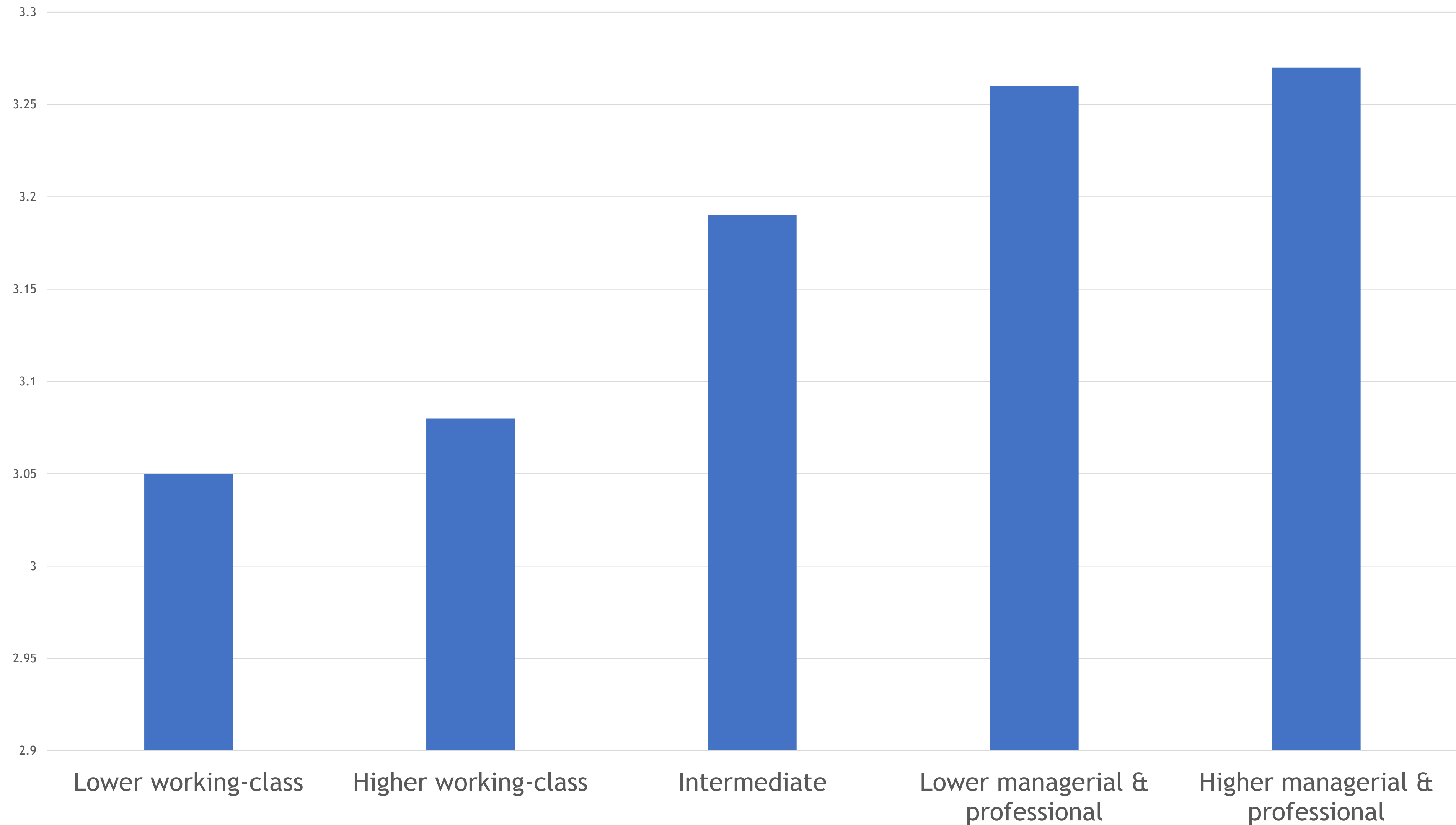


Job security in higher managerial & professional jobs



Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

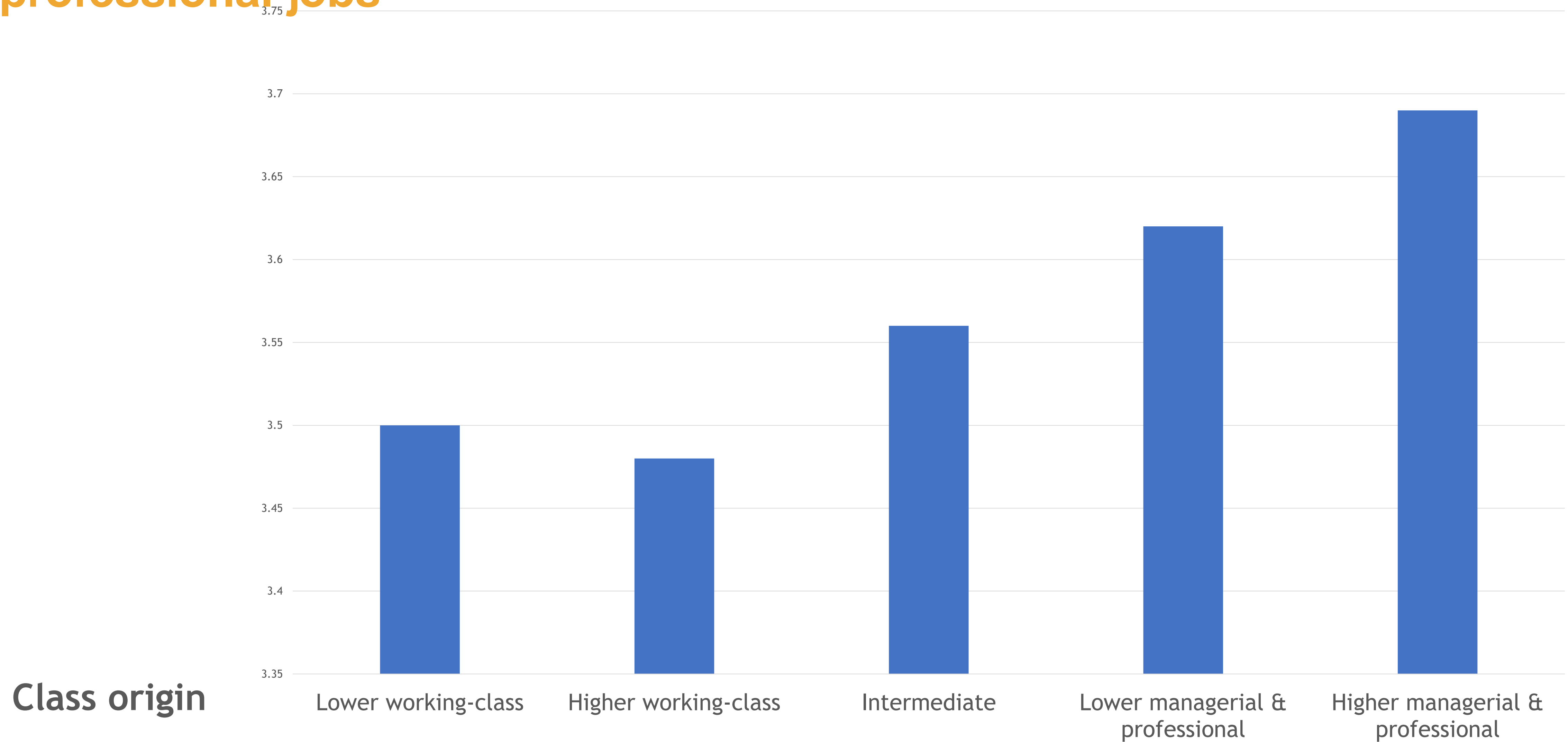
Promotion prospects in higher managerial & professional jobs



Class origin

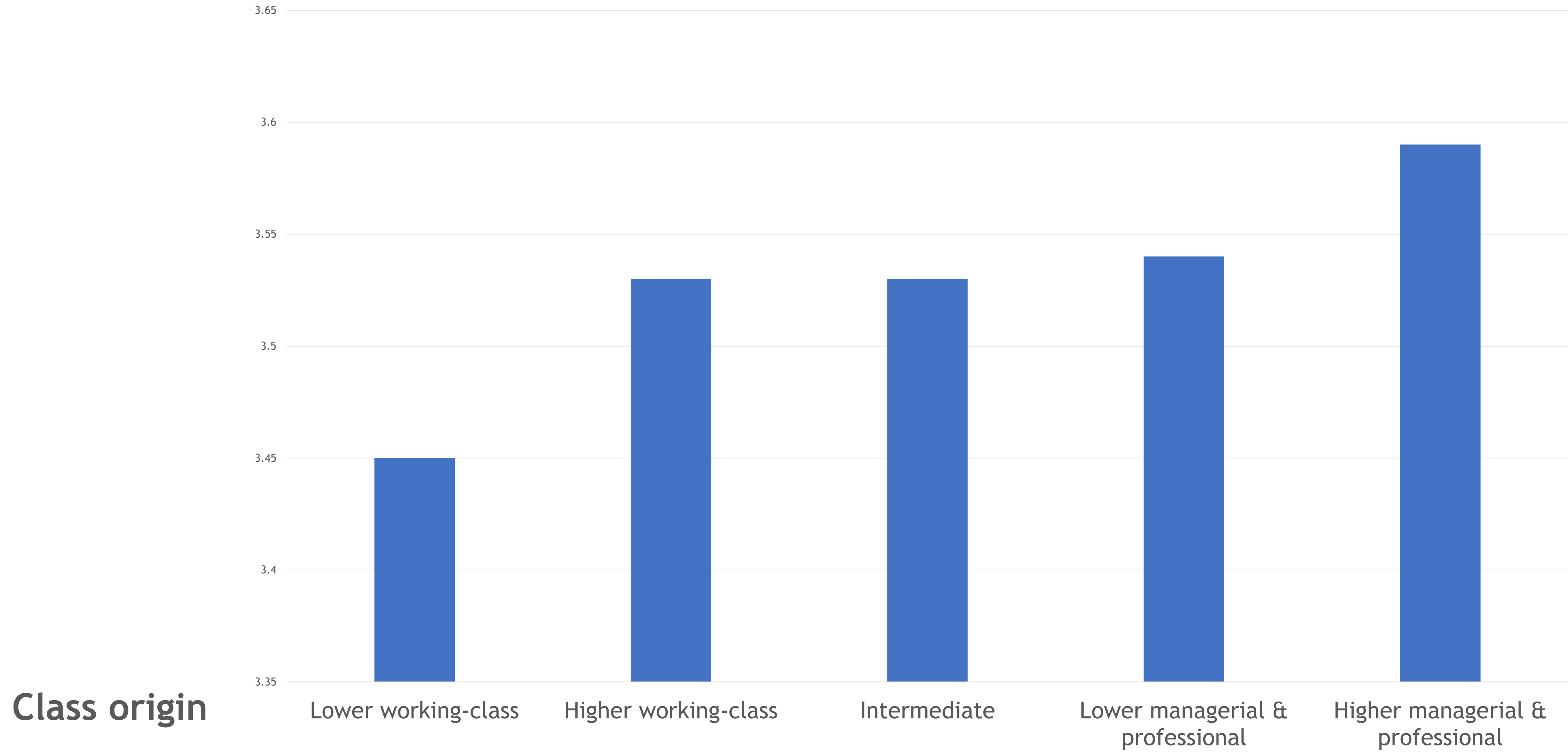
Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

Development opportunities in higher managerial & professional jobs



Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

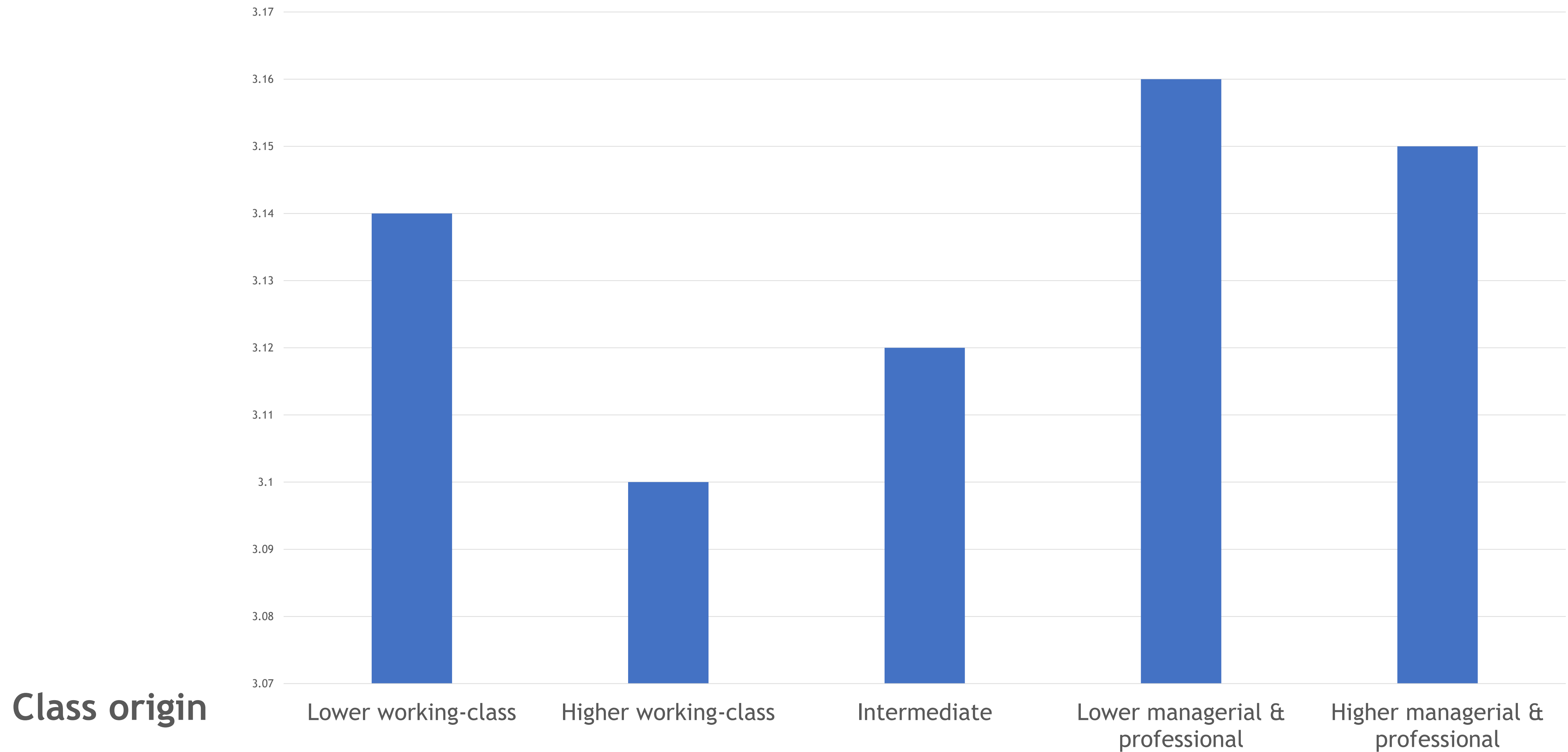
Job complexity in higher managerial & professional jobs



Class origin

Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

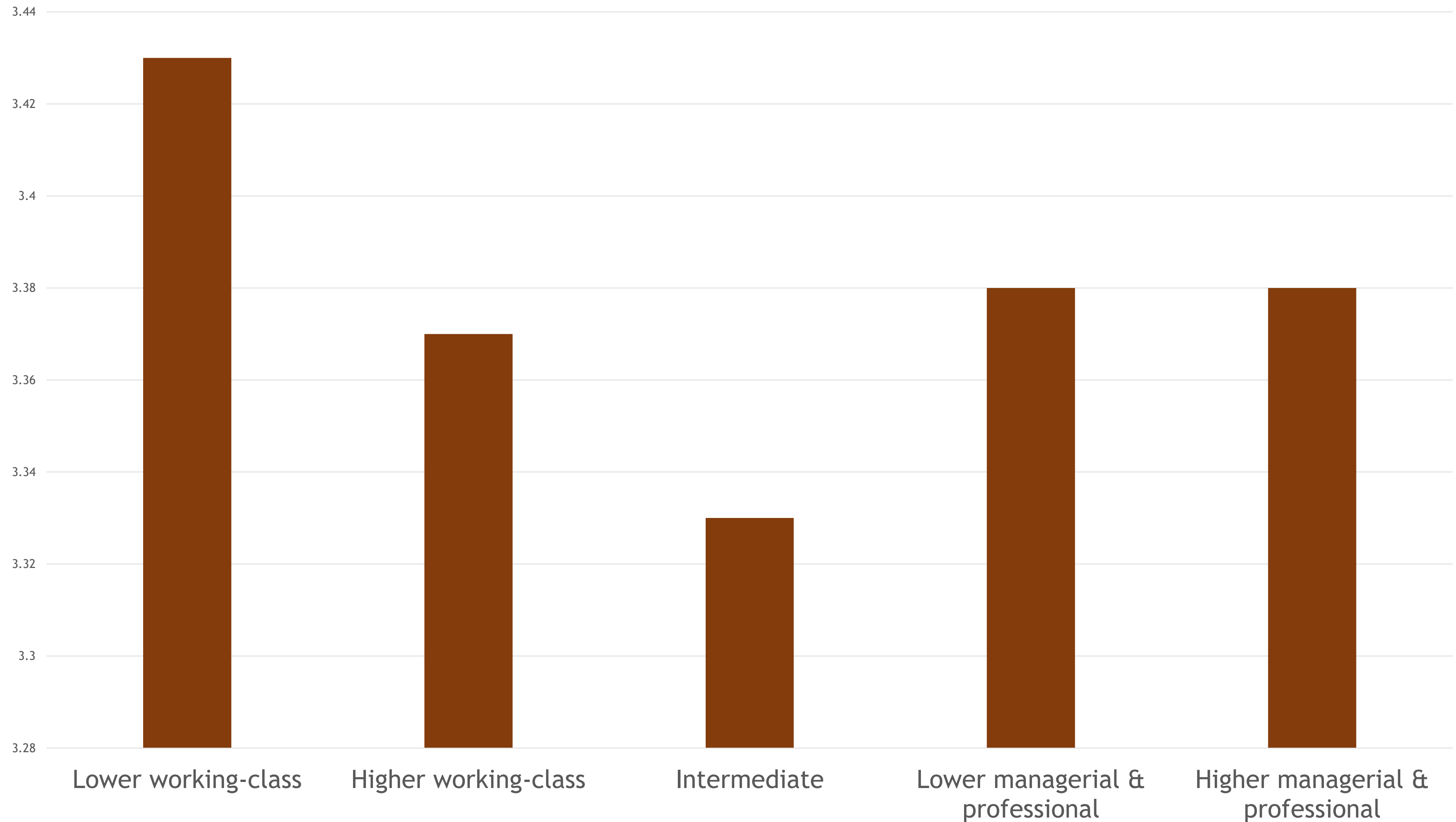
Autonomy in higher managerial & professional jobs



Class origin

Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

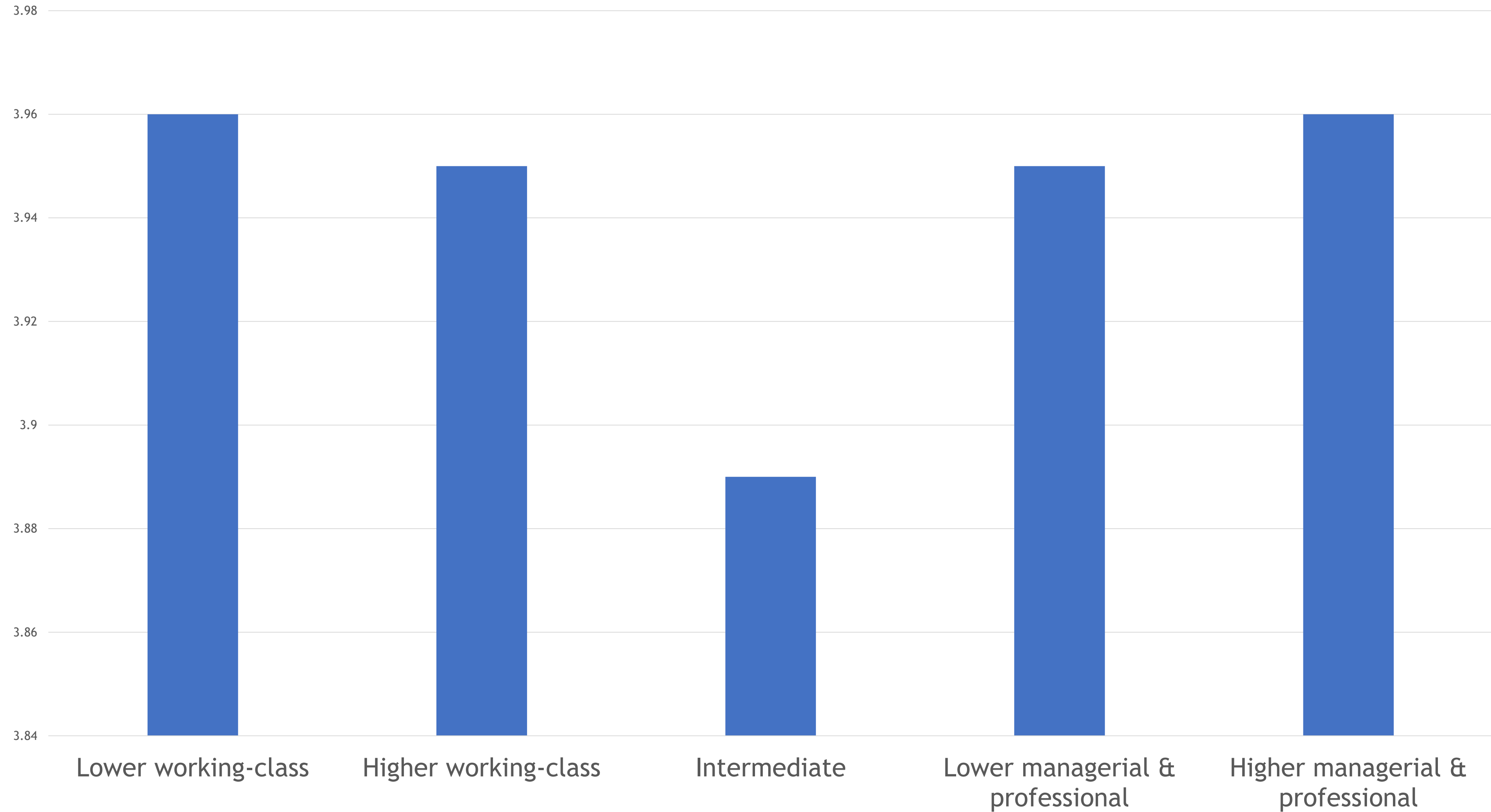
Job demands in higher managerial & professional occupations



Class origin

Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

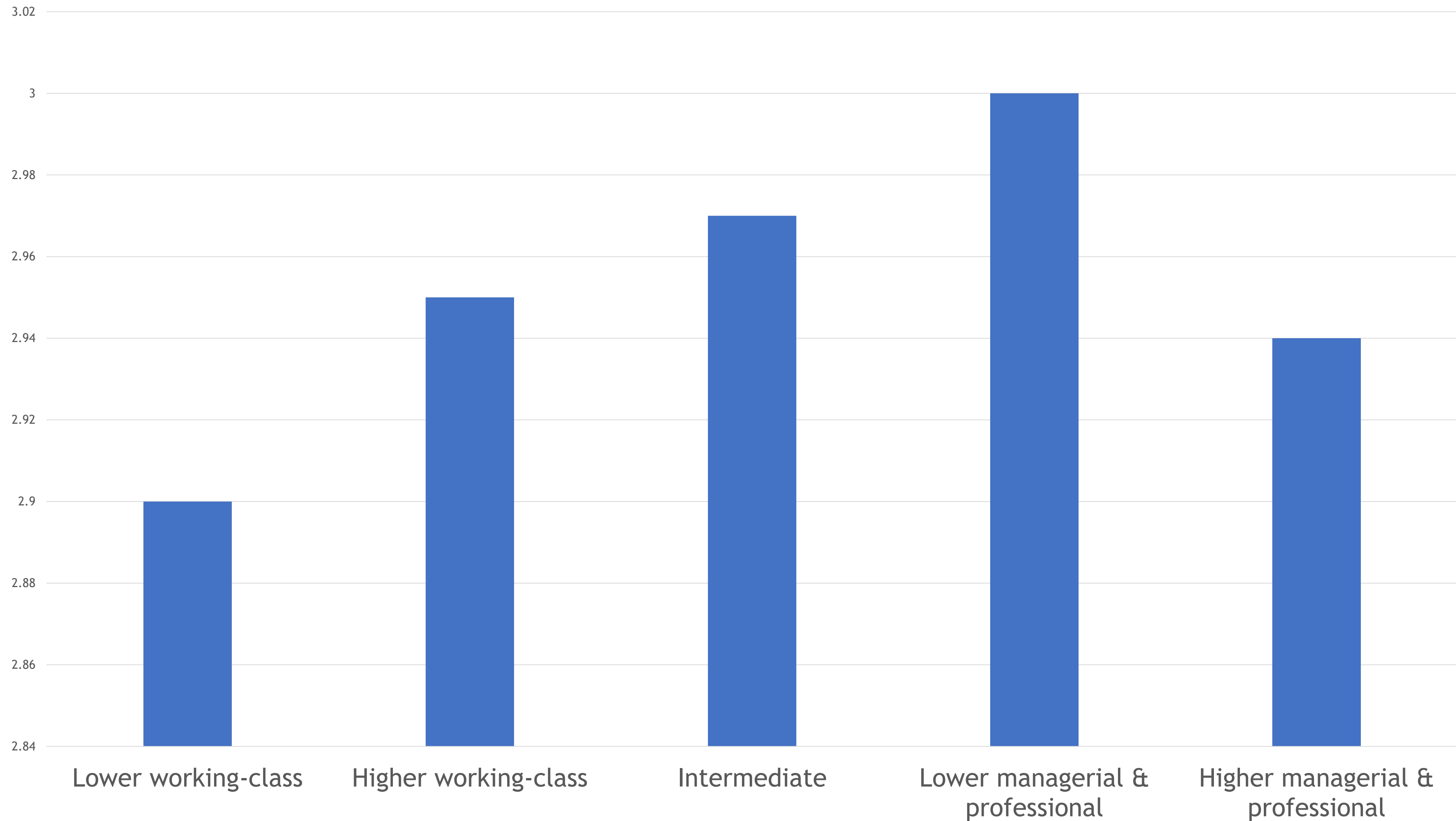
Working time autonomy in higher managerial & professional jobs



Class origin

Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

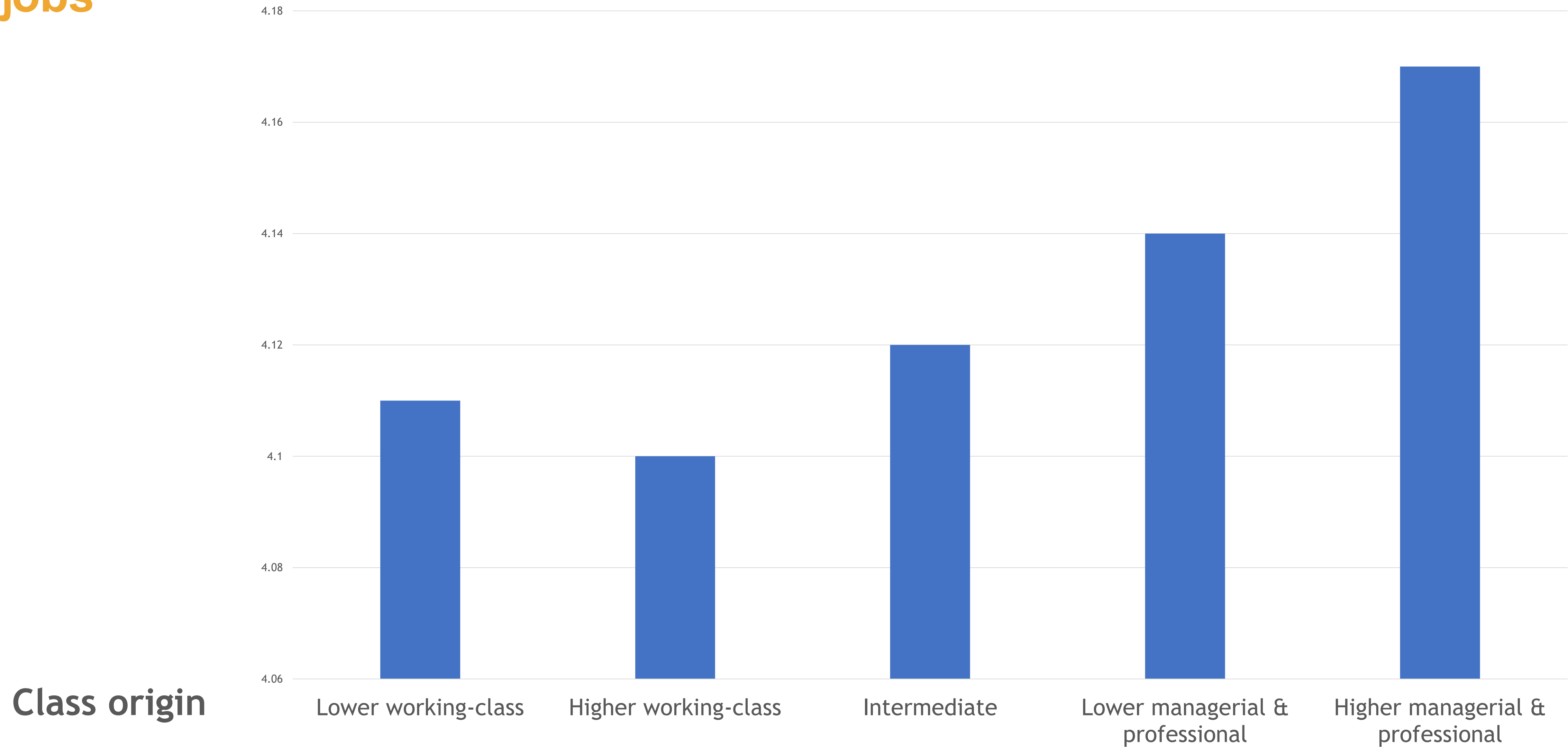
Informal flexibility in higher managerial & professional jobs



Class origin

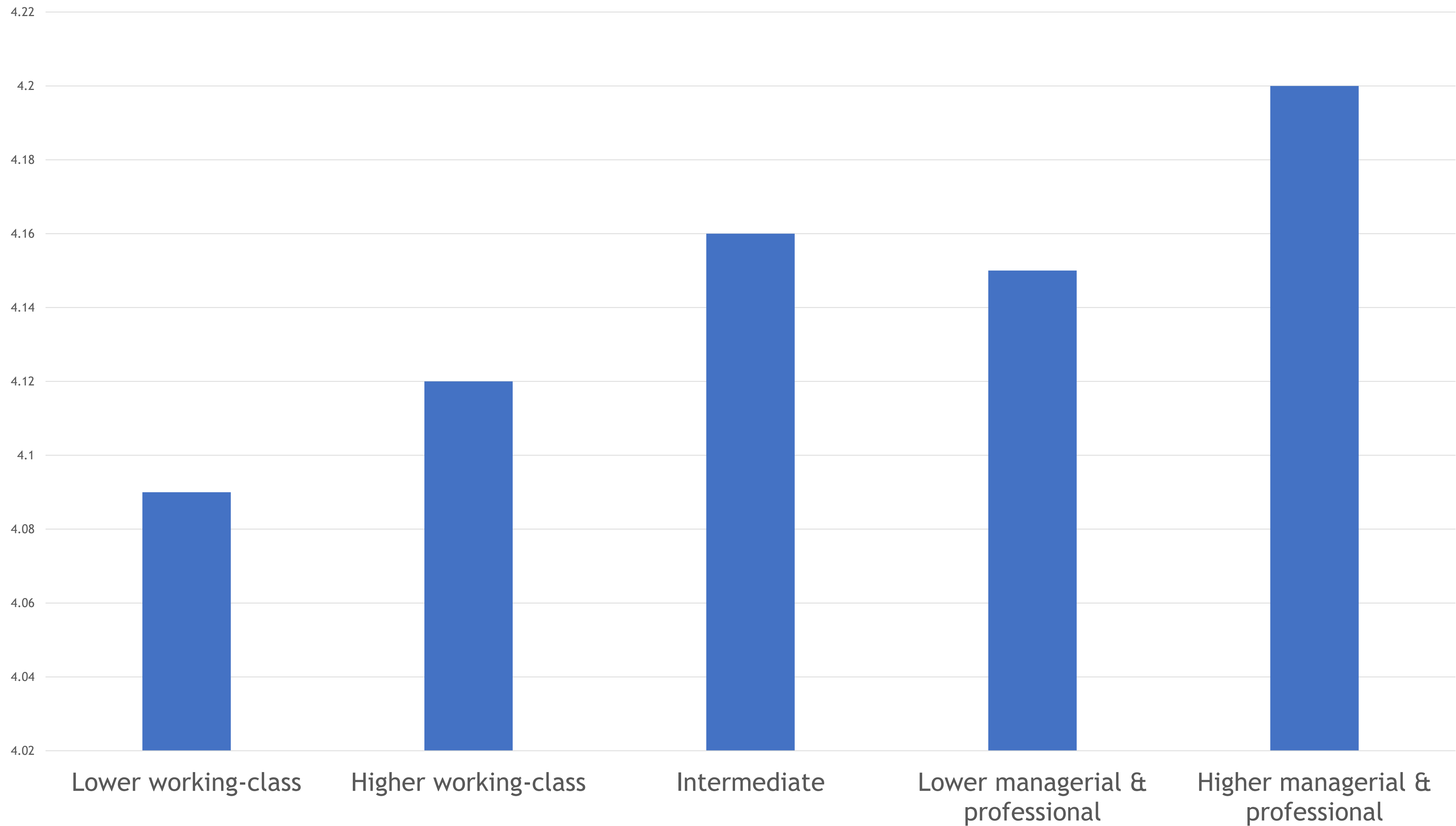
Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023; ease of taking time off for personal reasons

Relations with managers in higher managerial & professional jobs



Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

Relations with colleagues in higher managerial & professional jobs

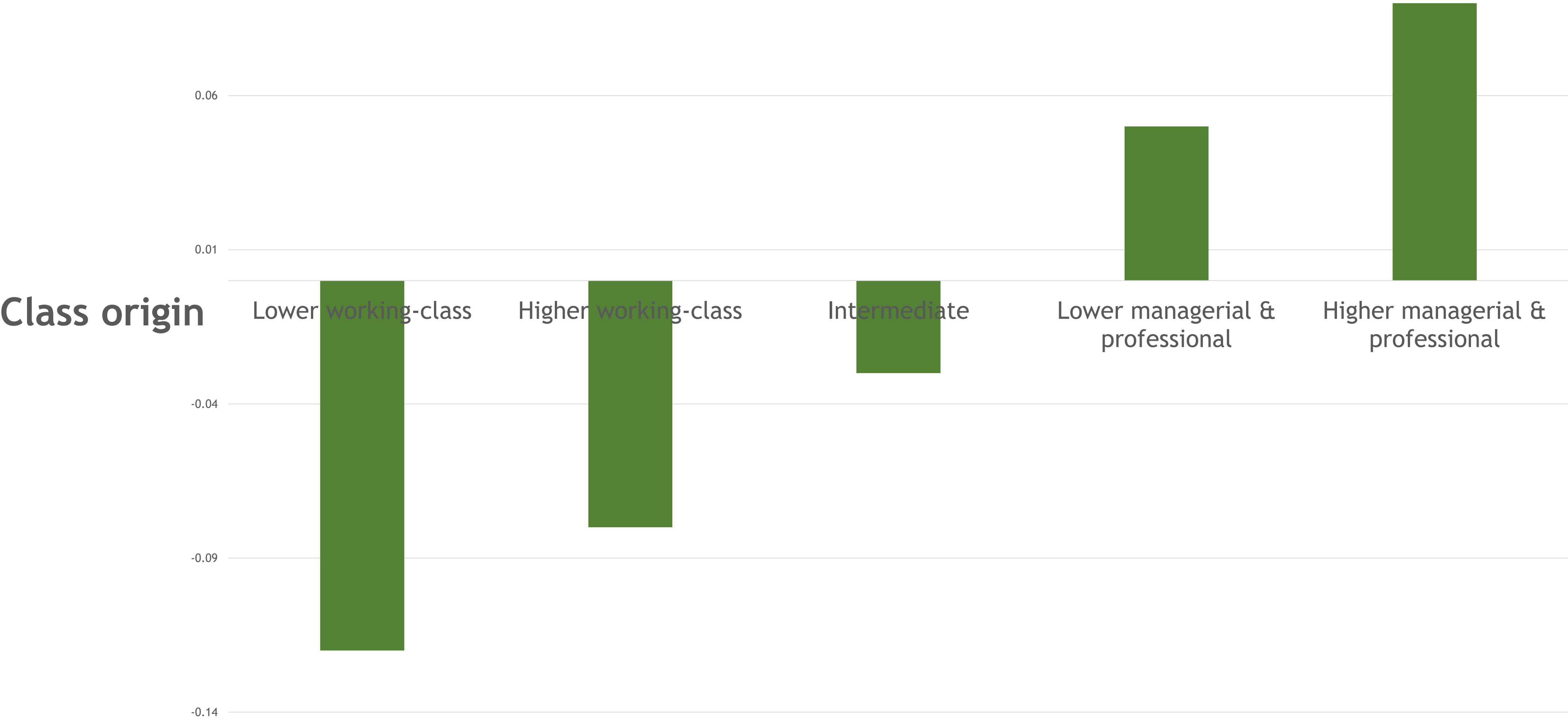


Class origin

Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

'Good work' in higher managerial & professional jobs

Job quality index



Data: YouGov/CIPD UK Working Lives survey 2021-2023

What next for education, employment & management practice?





Social Mobility Commission

Employer toolkits




Cross-industry toolkit

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Building Blocks toolkit

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Financial and professional services toolkit

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Apprenticeships toolkit

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Creative industries toolkit

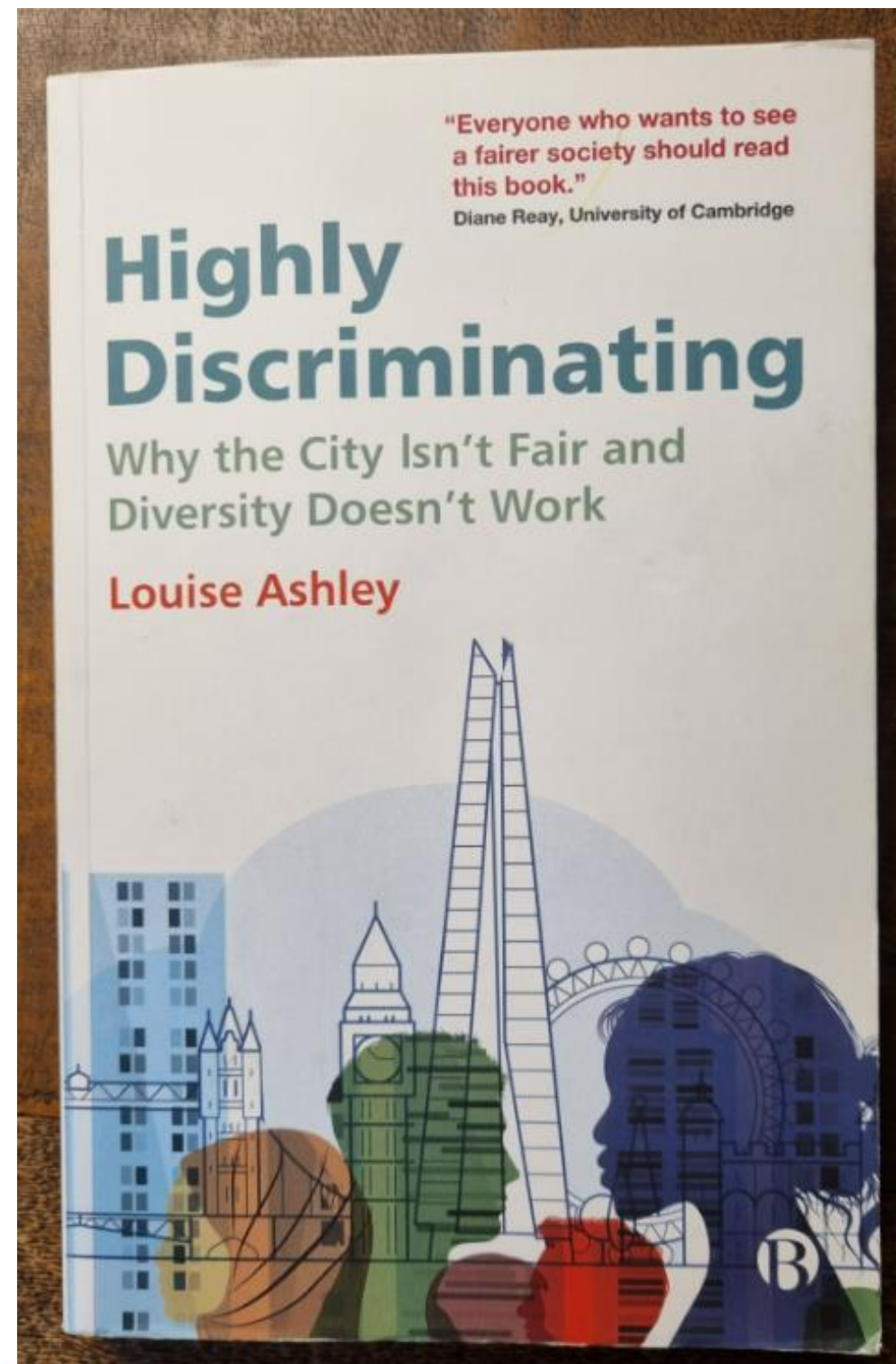
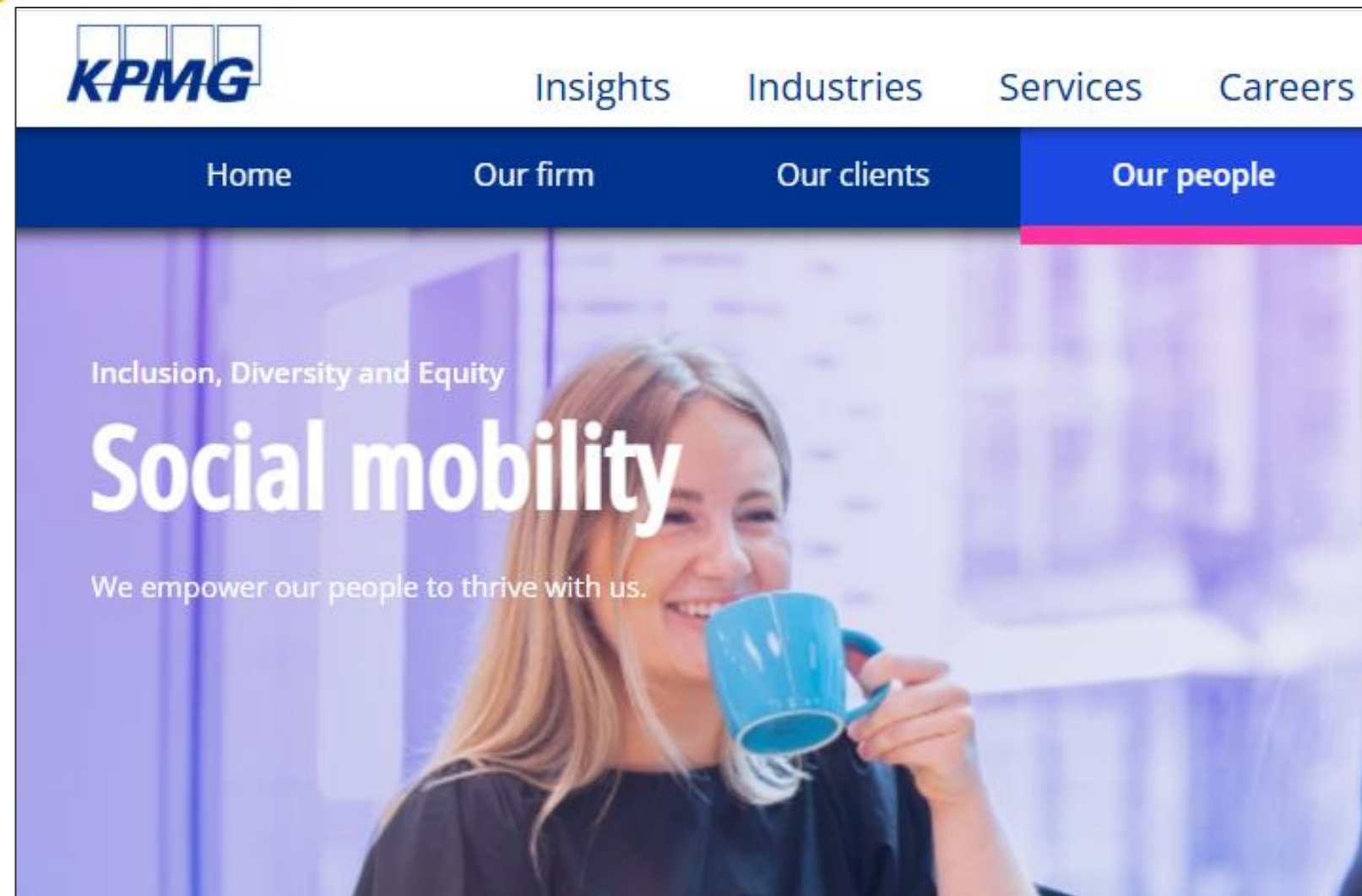
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Retail toolkit

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<https://socialmobility.independent-commission.uk/>



Louise Ashley, Queen Mary University of London
<https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/highly-discriminating>

Social class is important: influential, consequential

- 1) It shapes our life chances >> the jobs we get.
- 2) Even for those who do reach elite occupations, it influences:
 - How much we're paid
 - Other aspects of 'good work':
development opportunities, job tasks, autonomy, relationships ...

It shouldn't have to be this way.

- 3) We have examples of leading HR practice ... but need more research on what works & why.

A rectangular sign with a black border and rounded corners, hanging from a wall by two metal fasteners. The sign is white with the words "HELP" and "WANTED" printed in large, bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. The sign is slightly tilted and has a subtle reflection on the wall behind it. At the bottom of the sign, there is a small barcode and some faint text.

**HELP
WANTED**

Social mobility in the workplace

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