

# Research Bulletin

Issue 4, July 2015

Welcome to the July edition of Elevation Networks Research Bulletin.

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## UNEMPLOYMENT (June 2015)

Headline unemployment has fallen by 43,000 to 1.81 million (February to April); the jobless rate currently stands at 5.5%, the lowest since August 2008, according to recent figures published by the ONS.

However the youth unemployment rate, which accounts for unemployment in the 16-24 age groups, still remains considerably higher. At the end of April, 16.1% of young people were classed as 'unemployed'.

The number of people identified as 'NEET' (not in education and not seeking/available to work) also fell by 10,000 on the previous quarter, down to 9.02 million.

Average weekly earnings increased by 2.7% during the quarter to £462 p/w (excluding bonuses), whilst inflation has now turned positive, with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) index rate rising to +0.1%.

→ **Read the full release:**  
<http://ow.ly/OrCYV>

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## People in work and poverty

The ONS has announced that despite the increase in overall employment around 3 million people in work also live in poverty. The ONS revealed that as many as 3 in 10 people remained in poverty after entering employment.

→ **Read the full release:** <http://ow.ly/PieW1>

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## GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2015 Budget Statement

The Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered the 2015 budget statement to parliament on 8<sup>th</sup> July.

The budget statement included significant changes to student maintenance grants for low-income students which are to be replaced by student loans from September 2016, repayable once people are earning more than £21,000 per annum.

Currently, students from families with annual incomes of less than £25,000 are entitled to a full grant of £3,387 a year. Under the proposals the current grants are set to be replaced by Student maintenance loans of up to £8,200 per year.

The chancellor also announced measures that would allow universities to increase tuition fees in line with inflation from 2017-18. The move is likely to affect 'top universities' and could see students paying above the current annual tuition fee cap of £9,000.

**Read key points from the budget 2015:**  
<http://ow.ly/Prnoj>

→ **BBC News Article:** <http://ow.ly/PwH4W>

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## SOCIAL MOBILITY

### New report suggests 'elite' firms failing to recruit candidates from poorer backgrounds

A government study published by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission has indicated that 'elite' firms are 'systematically excluding' candidates from working class backgrounds.

The research conducted with 13 of the country's elite legal, accountancy and financial services organisations which are responsible for as many as 45,000 high-level vacancies found that as many as 70% of job offers in 2014 were to graduates who had been educated at selective or fee-paying

schools; this compares to 11% of the population as a whole.

The research suggests that despite initiatives to widen the talent pool to attract candidates from low socio-economic backgrounds elite firms could do more to attract poorer candidates.

The report makes 3 key recommendations:

- Amend attraction strategies to encourage more applications from a wider range of educational and socio-economic backgrounds
- Improving access to support for poorer candidates throughout the recruitment and selection process.
- Review selection procedures to ensure that disadvantaged students are not ruled out for reasons of their background.

→ Read full report: <http://ow.ly/OiMZN>

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## EDUCATION NEWS

### New GCSE Grading System Introduced

As from Summer 2017 the existing A\*-G grading system for GCSEs is to be replaced by a numbered grading system with Grades 1-9.

Grade 9 will be the highest, equivalent to the current top 50% of an A\* grade; Grade 4 will be equivalent to a current C Grade, whilst Grade 1 is equivalent to Grades F and G. Under the new system students will have to attain a Grade 5 in order to achieve a 'good pass'.

The changes which will come into effect for English and Maths GCSE subjects from September 2015, with students due to sit their first exams under the new grading system in June 2017.

The new grading structure is designed to be more comparable with internationally high-performing educational systems in countries such as Finland, Canada and The Netherlands.

→ Read more at: <http://ow.ly/OnjOr>

→ New 2017 grade boundary table: <http://ow.ly/Onkao>

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## DIVERSITY NEWS

### Declining Ethnic Diversity among FTSE 100 Executives

A new report published by the London-based executive recruiter Green Park has revealed that the number of ethnic minority Chief Executives has fallen from 6 to 4 within the past year, whilst the number of 'all-white' boards has increased to 70% of all FTSE100 companies, up by 11% on 2014.

The report warns of "widening diversity deficit" within Britain's largest companies which could threaten the UK's international competitiveness. There are now no Chinese or Asian executive directors in the FTSE100, whilst the number of ethnic minority leaders has declined from 480 in 2014 to 440 in the last 12 months.

→ Read Article: <http://ow.ly/PndG5>

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## SOCIAL CAPITAL

A recent dataset published by the Office of National Statistics highlights inequalities in social capital as measured by age and gender. Young people were found to be the least interested in politics, and less likely to participate in political action. However, 90% of young people now use social media, whilst 19% of 18-24 year-olds had volunteered within the past year:

- Around 28% of 18-24 years-olds had participated in political action (including campaigning, signing petitions or contacting officials), compared to 41% of 45-54 year-olds.
- Around 19% of 18-24 year-olds participated in volunteering within the past 12 months.
- 90% of 18-24 year-olds belonged to a social network/website.
- 45% of those aged 18 to 24 regularly stopped to talk with neighbours compared to 83% of those aged 65 to 74 and 79% of those aged 75 and over.

→ Read full release "Inequalities in Social Capital": <http://ow.ly/Pno3J>