Class at Work

DOES SOCIAL CLASS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LAND OF THE 'FAIR GO'?

Report embargoed until Monday, 26 October 2020.

An electronic executive summary of this research can be found on the <u>DCA website.</u>

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" This is a very important and personal project to me. As the daughter of post-war migrants who slowly rose out of western Sydney then Sydney's southern shire, I understand the impact that a person's social class has on their experience of inclusion from a personal perspective.

However, as CEO of Diversity Council Australia, and a diversity and inclusion practitioner of over two decades, I also understand that class is something that we aren't addressing in D&I research or practice.

Over the last thirty years, researchers and diversity and inclusion practitioners have begun to challenge inequalities in workplaces through D&I initiatives and programs for a range of diverse groups.

But until now, we haven't attempted to answer the question *does social class make a difference in the land of the 'fair go'*? And if it does, what should we do about it?

Partly, this is because of the enduring myth of Australia as the land of the fair go, where we don't have a classist society.

In 2019, DCA sought to address this gap by asking about social class in our *Inclusion@Work Index* survey of 3000 Australian workers.

What we found was strong evidence that people from self-identified lower classes experience more exclusion, discrimination and harassment than people from higher classes.

What we also found was that men from the self-identified lower class were among the least supportive for organisations taking action on D&I and were also the least likely to work in organisations taking action on D&I.

As a D&I practitioner, I often hear from men who don't feel like D&I benefits them.

What this research suggests, however, is that perhaps it's actually that D&I initiatives aren't reaching those men because they are not are working in organisations that are active in D&I.

For Australian organisations, this tells us two things.

Firstly, we need to start understanding more about class. How it impacts our experiences of work and why. This report shows us that organisations fostering workplace inclusion can increase the inclusive experiences of lower class workers. But we need to do more to get a better understanding class at work.

Secondly, we need a concerted effort to build inclusive organisations across the Australian economy. Only by increasing workplace inclusion can we ensure that everyone can experience a 'fair go'. "

LISA ANNESE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DIVERSITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

OUR ASPIRATION

Australia considers itself the land of the 'fair go'. We like to think that our family background, the school we went to, who we socialise with, and our class don't matter. We believe we are, as one researcher has put it, *"a place where … egalitarianism, rather than class has shaped the national character"*.[1]

After all, in our minds, when we 'threw off the shackles' of British colonialisation, we also threw away the class system. There are no Lords and Ladies in Australia.

But do we, in fact, all have the same opportunities, the same access to a 'fair go' at work?

Diversity and inclusion research tells us that certainly, for First Nations Peoples this has not been the case. Similarly, people with disability, women, and successive waves of migrants in Australia have experienced discrimination and exclusion in work and society. And we also know that there are issues around opportunity based on other factors such as age and LGBTIQ+ status.

But what about class at work – does **social class** make a difference in the land of the 'fair go'?

What is missing to-date in Australian research is a consideration of class as a form of diversity that impacts our experiences of inclusion or exclusion at work.

To address this oversight, Diversity Council Australia (DCA) partnered with the University of Newcastle to investigate how class impacts on Australian workers' experiences of inclusion and exclusion at work, and why class at work is important for organisations to consider.

To investigate these questions, we drew on two sources of evidence, namely international and national research, and DCA-Suncorp's *Inclusion@Work Index 2019–2020* survey dataset. The survey dataset is based on a nationally representative survey of 3,000 Australian workers, which maps and tracks inclusion in the Australian workforce. In 2019, DCA, Suncorp and supporting sponsor Novartis decided to include a new demographic question – one on class. The survey findings in this report are based on an analysis of workers' inclusion and exclusion experiences based on their class.

By SOCIAL CLASS we mean someone's social standing compared to other Australians based on a range of factors including their wealth, income, education, and occupation. All these factors combine to create a person's status, power and/or position – that is, their social standing or social class.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'SOCIAL CLASS'?

While defining social class is tricky – even among experts there are many different views – for this report we have defined it as follows:

Social class means someone's social standing compared to other Australians based on a range of factors including their wealth, income, education, and occupation. All these factors combine to create a person's status, power and/or position – that is, their social standing or social class.

We have used this definition of social class as it recognises that our wealth, income, education, and occupation provide each of us with differing levels of economic capital (income and wealth) and social capital (connections and networks) with which to get ahead in the world.

"Social class is a little like 'swagger'. It is hard to define, and tough to measure, but you know it when you see it".[2]

# LOWER CLASS, MIDDLE CLASS AND HIGHER CLASS – WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

For this report, we used the terms 'lower class', 'middle class', and 'higher class' when comparing different workforce cohorts by class. We chose these categories as they describe class in a way that is easily understood by a majority of the Australian community.[3]

While we recognise that there is a lack of consensus about what constitutes each of these class groups, research suggests that in an Australian context the following attributes are commonly associated with each of these traditional class groups.[4]

	Lower Class	Middle Class	Higher Class
Examples of Attributes	People in the lower class tend to have the lowest levels of educational attainment, currently earn the lowest household incomes, and are least likely to own property. They are the least likely of the social classes to have experienced intergenerational advantages such as coming from a high-income family or having parents who worked in high prestige jobs.	People in the middle class are more likely to have parents' with above average educational qualifications. Their household incomes are above the bottom 20% of income earners but lower than the top 20% of income earners. They are significantly more likely than lower class people to own property and have some disposable income. Most people in the middle class are more likely to come from middle class families.	People in the higher class are more likely to have well above average household incomes and the most disposable income of any of the class groups. They generally, although not always, work in jobs that have high occupational prestige, and have above average educational qualifications. Most higher class people come from higher class families where both parents have worked in high prestige occupations.
Our Sample	Lower class workers[5] were those who ranked themselves worse off compared to most Australians. That is, those who have the least money, the least education, and the least respected jobs or no job.	Middle class workers ranked themselves in the middle on our scale. That is, those who have the median amount of money, education, and respected jobs.	Higher class workers ranked themselves as having the most money, the most education, and the most respected jobs.

While in Australia 'lower class' is sometimes labelled 'working class', in this report we have used the term 'lower class' to avoid any confusion regarding employment or job type. The social class classifications of lower class, middle class and higher class are not intended to be based on traditional job categories (e.g., blue collar / lower class) but rather on how an individual perceives their class relative to others in society.

Hence, lower perceived class is relative to those who have more money, more education, and the most respected jobs.
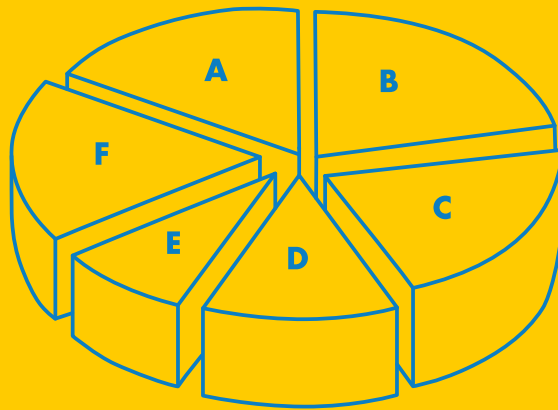
WHERE DO YOU SIT WHEN IT COMES TO CLASS?

The International Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Compare Your Income web tool uses the objective measure of income against your subjective perceptions of income inequality, compared with the rest of the population.

The British Broadcasting Organisation's The Great British Class Calculator based on a 2013 study, examines class based on your economic capital (income, savings, house value), social capital (the number and status of people someone knows) and cultural capital (the extent and nature of cultural interests and activities).

The ABC has published the questionnaire, Working Class or Affluent? Find out where you fit in Australia, from the ANUPoll study, based off the British Class Calculator. The questionnaire examines your ranking in five social classes based on social contacts, cultural activities, income, value of property and savings.

The ABC & Australian Cultural Fields Project, created a quiz on what your habits reveal about your social class. The quiz is based on research that investigates how cultural tastes and lifestyles connect with privilege in Australia.

Even though we tend to assume social class doesn't exist in Australia, when we are actually asked, according to a 2015 ANUPoll, the majority of us (94%) will nominate a particular class we belong to.[6]

WHY IS CLASS IMPORTANT FOR ORGANISATIONS?

There is a clear moral case for including people from all classes in our workplaces. But for business, there are several other tangible business benefits for making class-inclusion a priority.

REFLECTING THE DIVERSITY OF THE COMMUNITY IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Increasingly, employers are understanding that there are positive outcomes of having a workforce that is representative of the community that you serve. Social class is an important part of the diversity of our community and should be an important part of your workforce make up.

The UK Civil service has specifically recognised the importance of class diversity in their inclusion strategy:

"To be 'A Brilliant Civil Service', we need to be an inclusive employer with a diverse workforce that reflects all of British society, bringing a wealth of perspectives and ideas for delivering the best outcomes for the UK. … We have extended our consideration to also ensure we reflect the socio-economic diversity of the UK population."[7]

WIDENING THE TALENT POOL

Organisations that unconsciously, or consciously, narrow their talent pool by only hiring people from elite schools and universities are missing out on other talented employees. Organisations are increasingly recognising that hiring only from a limited number of institutions may mean they are missing out on talented employees that have not had access to elite institutions because of their class background.

Research also shows that graduates from elite university and affluent backgrounds express the strongest intention to leave organisations within just a few years.[8]

Google previously hired only from 'Ivy League' universities but realised that elite credentials don't predict success. They have since widened their hiring criteria focussing instead on cognitive abilities, leadership capabilities, and difference.[9]

BOOSTING PERFORMANCE THROUGH CLASS-INCLUSION

Our *Inclusion@Work Index* survey findings reveal a strong case for 'class inclusion' in Australian workplaces. They show that diverse teams that are inclusive of all staff – whether, lower, middle, or higher class – are more effective and innovative, and more likely to provide excellent customer service.

To illustrate, in the case of lower class workers[10] who are in inclusive teams, these workers were:

- *17 times more likely* to be in a team that works **effectively** than lower class workers in a non-inclusive team (53% in inclusive teams compared to 3% in non-inclusive teams)

- *15 times more likely* to be in a team that is **innovative** (47% in inclusive teams compared to 3% in non-inclusive teams)

- *10 times more likely* to be in a team providing **excellent customer service** (65% in inclusive teams compared to 6% in non-inclusive teams) and

- *Twice as likely* to **work extra hard** (59% in inclusive teams compared to 25% in non-inclusive teams).

Figure 1: Lower Class Workers - Impact of Being in Inclusive, Somewhat and Non-Inclusive Teams on Performance
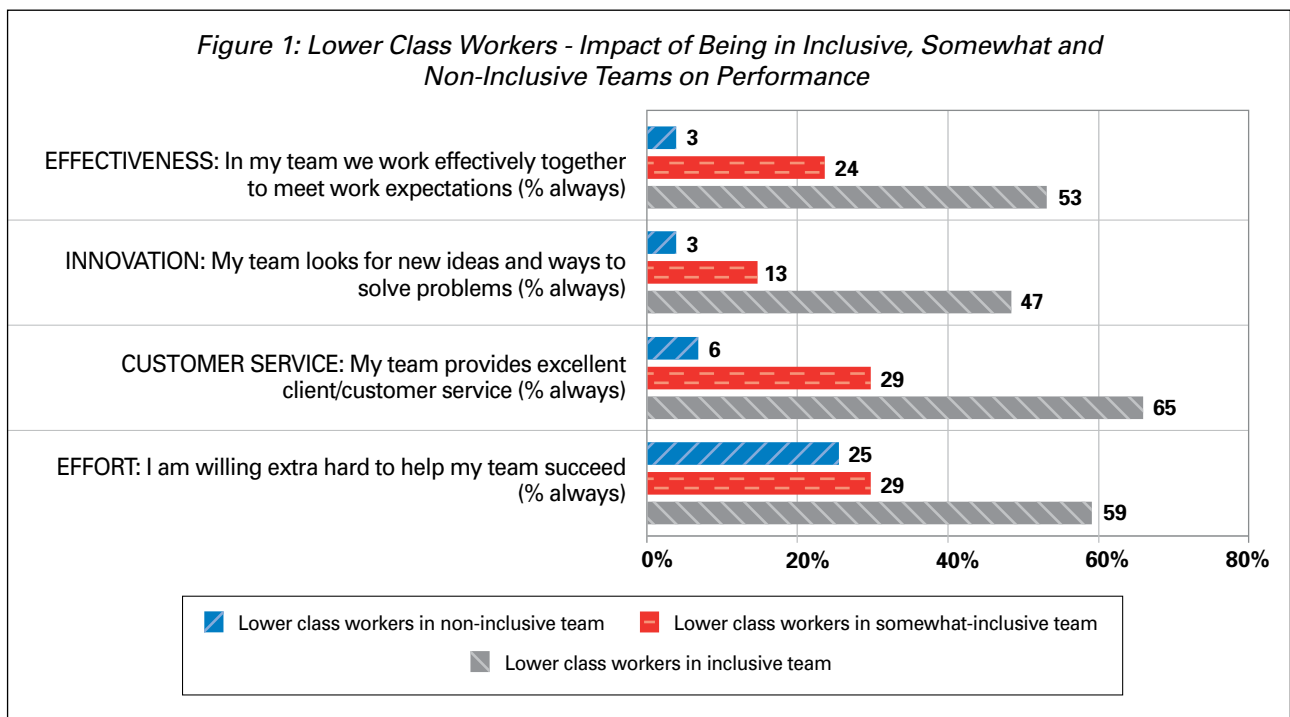
TRANSLATING AND BRIDGING

People who have to navigate their identity across multiple spaces (be it cultural or class) bring a range of skills to workplaces. Emerging research suggests 'class-transitioners' (that is, people who have moved from one class to another) may bring unique skills to workplaces by being able to understand and bridge differences within groups.[11]

THE STATE OF INCLUSION THROUGH A CLASS LENS

CLASS COUNTS – A LOT

Class, more than any other diversity demographic investigated in DCA-Suncorp's *Inclusion@Work Index*, is the most strongly linked to workers' experience of inclusion at work and one of the most strongly linked to exclusion.

DCA's *Inclusion@Work Index* survey investigated nine diversity demographics including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, age, caring status, class, cultural background, disability status, gender, religion, and sexual orientation and gender identity.

Class was **the** diversity demographic that was most markedly linked to workplace inclusion – there were statistically significant differences between lower and higher class people on every question we asked.

Class was also one of the diversity demographics most strongly linked to exclusion (discrimination, being ignored and not getting the same opportunities as others) the others being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, disability status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and religion.

Lower Class Workers Are Less Likely to Experience Inclusion

As illustrated in the figure below, lower class workers are much more likely to be in a non-inclusive team or organisation, and to have a non-inclusive leader.

Figure 2: Proportion of Workers by Class in/with Non-Inclusive Teams, Leadership and Organisations

Category	Lower Class Workers	Middle Class Workers	Higher Class Workers
Non-Inclusive Team	27	10	5
Non-Inclusive Manager	37	21	15
Non-Inclusive Organisational Climate	39	21	14
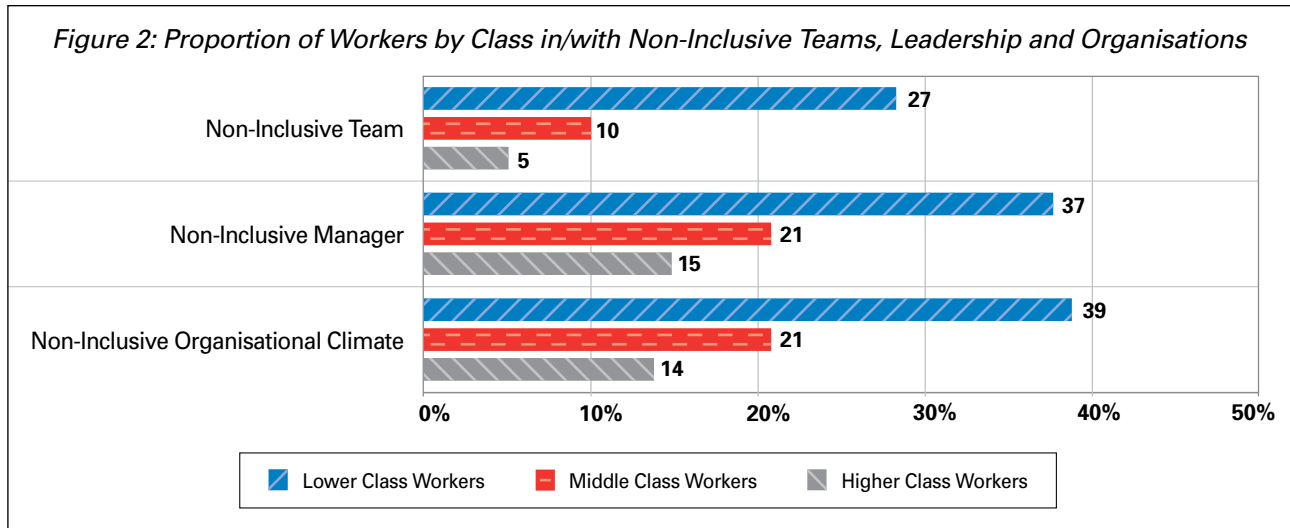
Fair Treatment.
Only half of lower class workers indicated that they trusted their organisation to treat them fairly (53% strongly agree/agree), significantly lower than middle class workers (73% strongly agree/agree) and higher class workers (82% strongly agree/agree).

Opportunities.
Lower class workers were less likely to report they felt they had the same opportunities as anyone else with their abilities and experience (55% strongly agree/agree) compared with middle class (73% agree/strongly agree) and higher class (82% agree/strongly agree).

Diverse Perspectives.
Lower class workers were significantly less likely than middle class and higher class workers to report that their manager actively sought out diverse perspectives from all employees (46% versus middle class 64% and higher class 73%).

Figure 3: Proportion of Workers' Experiences of Inclusion by Class

Statement	Lower Class (% strongly agree + agree)	Middle Class (% strongly agree + agree)	Higher Class (% strongly agree + agree)
I trust my company to treat me fairly, regardless of my age, culture/ ethnicity, disability, gender, Indigenous background, or sexual orientation	53	73	82
I have the same opportunities as anyone else of my ability/experience, regardless of my age, culture/ethnicity, disability, gender, Indigenous background, or sexual orientation	55	73	82
My manager actively seeks out information and new ideas from all employees to use in their decision making	46	64	73

Lower Class Workers Are More Likely to Experience Exclusion

Lower class workers were also far more likely to experience exclusion at work than middle- and higher-class workers. For example:

Discrimination/Harassment.
More than two-fifths of lower class workers (43%) reported having personally experienced discrimination and/or harassment in the workplace in the last 12 months, compared to 26% of higher class workers.

Non-Inclusive Teams.
27% of lower class workers work in non-inclusive teams, compared to 10% of middle class workers, and 5% of higher class workers.

Compared to middle class and higher class workers, lower class workers were more likely to report experiencing exclusionary behaviours in the workplace, including:

Being ignored.
Lower class workers were more likely to report being ignored (17% strongly agree/agree) compared to middle class workers (6%) and higher class workers (7%).

Missing out on opportunities and privileges.
Lower class workers were more likely to report missing out on opportunities and privileges (22% strongly agree/agree) compared to middle class workers (9%) and higher class workers (9%).

Left out of social gatherings.
Lower class workers were more likely to report being left out of social gatherings (20% strongly agree/agree) compared to middle class workers (6%) and higher class workers (7%).

Figure 4: Proportion of Workers' Experiences of Exclusionary Behaviours by Class

Behaviour	Lower Class	Middle Class	Higher Class
Being ignored by people at work or treated as if I didn't exist	17	6	7
Not getting opportunities or privileges others received	22	9	9
Being left out of a work social gathering	20	6	7

Lower Class (% often + always)　Middle Class (% often + always)　Higher Class (% often + always)
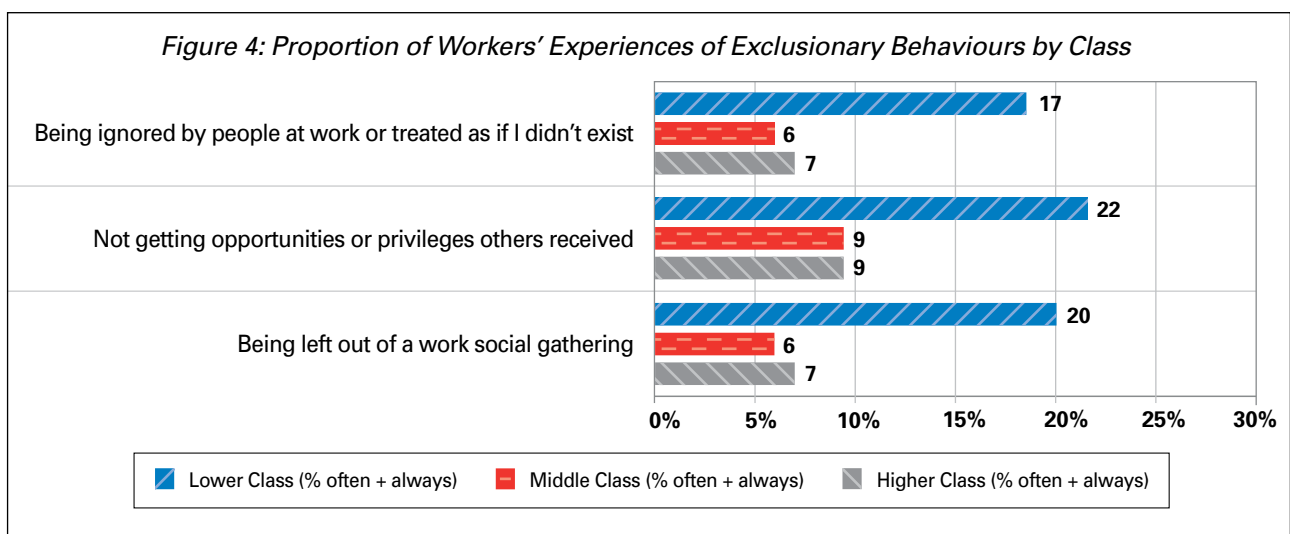
WHEN CLASS INTERSECTS

Our workplace experiences are affected not just by
our class but by a combination or intersection of our age,
cultural background, gender, sexual orientation,
disability status, and so on.

For each of us, these aspects of our identity come together
to affect the degree of inclusion and exclusion
we experience at work.

WHEN CLASS AND GENDER COMBINE...

We explored the extent to which gender[12] **and** class in combination impact experiences of inclusion or exclusion. We found that gender made a difference to 'class inclusion' – but it operated in very different ways for men and women.

Lower Class Women Most Likely to Experience Exclusion and Strongly Supportive of D&I (Along with all Women)

While lower class women were consistently more likely to report experiences of harassment and discrimination than other groups, they were also among the most supportive of D&I, along with all other women.

Figure 5: Experience of Discrimination and/or Harassment in Past Year by Class and Gender

	%
Lower class female	45
Lower class male	39
Middle class female	24
Middle class male	21
Higher class female	25
Higher class male	27

Personally experienced discrimination and/or harassment (% yes)
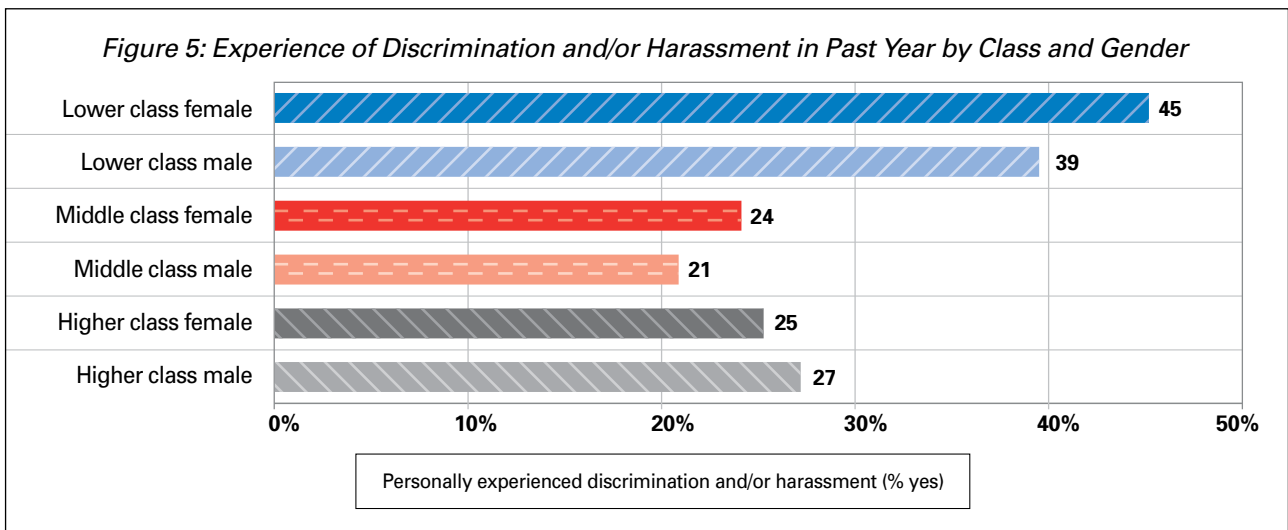
Note that the differences between middle class and higher class workers are not statistically significant.

Figure 6: Strong Support for Organisational D&I Activity by Class and Gender

	%
Lower class female	49
Middle class female	49
Higher class female	49
Lower class male	37
Middle class male	36
Higher class male	45

% Strong support for diversity and inclusion action
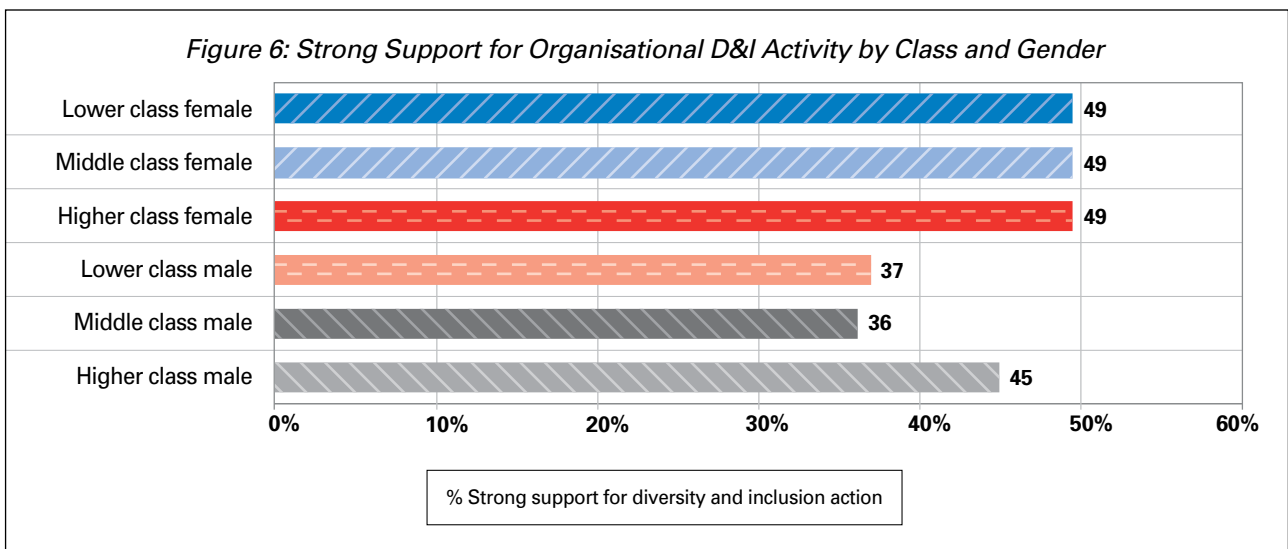
Note that the differences between lower class men and middle class men are not statistically significant.

Lower Class Men Least Likely to be in a D&I Organisation and to Experience Inclusion

In contrast, lower class men were much less likely than other men, and all women, to report being in inclusive organisations and inclusive teams and to have an inclusive leader.

Figure 7: Experience of Team Inclusion by Class and Gender

Category	% in Inclusive Teams
Lower class male	32
Lower class female	36
Middle class male	49
Middle class female	51
Higher class male	65
Higher class female	63

% in Inclusive Teams

Figure 8: Experience of Inclusive Leadership by Class and Gender

Category	% with Inclusive Leader
Lower class male	19
Lower class female	30
Middle class male	34
Middle class female	37
Higher class male	40
Higher class female	42

% with Inclusive Leader

Figure 9: Experience of Organisational Inclusion by Class and Gender

Category	% in Inclusive Organisations
Lower class male	24
Lower class female	32
Middle class male	38
Middle class female	41
Higher class male	46
Higher class female	46

% in Inclusive Organisations

What's more lower class men were least likely to work in organisations taking action on D&I.

Figure 10: Organisations Taking D&I Action by Class and Gender

Category	Value
Lower class female	50
Middle class female	57
Higher class female	62
Lower class male	43
Middle class male	57
Higher class male	65

% Yes my organisation is taking action to create a workplace that is diverse and inclusive

Lower Class Men Least Strongly Supportive of D&I

Given the above finding, it is perhaps not surprising then that lower class men were among the least supportive for organisations taking action on D&I.

While the findings are not able to determine causation, the low level of support for D&I amongst lower class men could be because they are not working in organisations that are active in D&I and therefore not experiencing the benefits of D&I initiatives.

Lower Class Women Most Likely to Experience Workplace Exclusion

Lower class women are much more likely than other women, and all men to report experiencing discrimination and/or harassment in the past year.

- As *Figure 5* shows, 45% of lower class women report having experienced discrimination and/or harassment of some type in the past year, compared to 39% of lower class men, 21% to 24% of middle class workers, and 25% to 27% of higher class workers.

Lower class women are much more likely than middle class and higher class women to have experienced different types of discrimination and/or harassment in the past year.

- As *Figure 11 (overleaf)* shows, 13% of lower class women report having experienced discrimination due to caring responsibilities in the past year, compared to 5% of middle or higher class women. Similarly, 11% of lower class women report having experienced harassment due to their gender in the past year, compared to 6% of middle or higher class women.

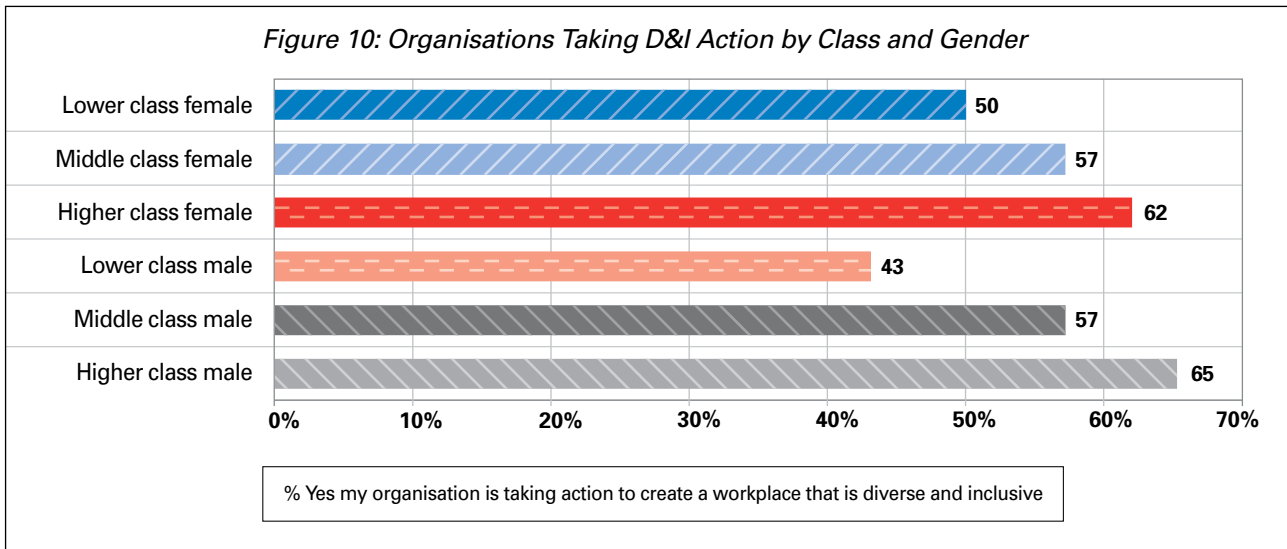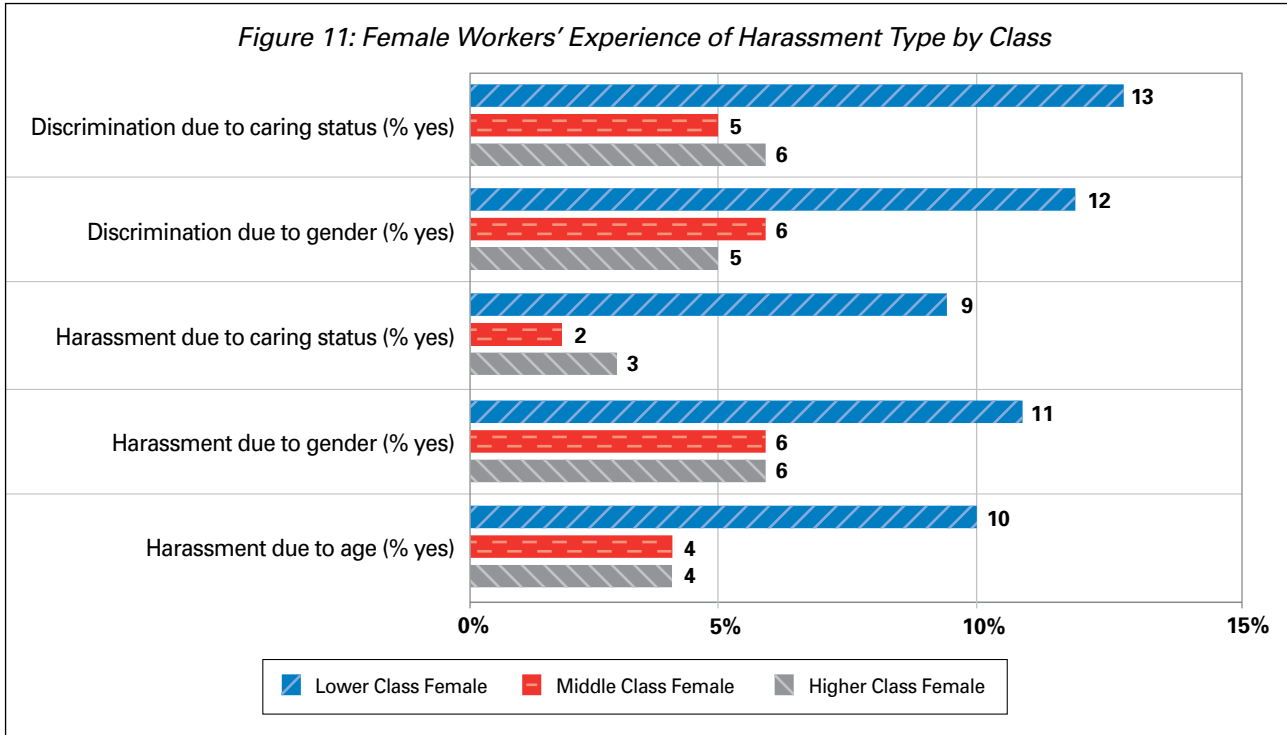We found that gender made a difference to 'class inclusion' – but it operated in very different ways for men and women. While lower class men were least likely to be in a D&I organisation and to experience inclusion, lower class women were most likely to experience workplace exclusion.

Figure 11: Female Workers' Experience of Harassment Type by Class

Chart data:

Harassment Type	Lower Class Female	Middle Class Female	Higher Class Female
Discrimination due to caring status (% yes)	13	5	6
Discrimination due to gender (% yes)	12	6	5
Harassment due to caring status (% yes)	9	2	3
Harassment due to gender (% yes)	11	6	6
Harassment due to age (% yes)	10	4	4

WHEN CLASS AND OTHER DIVERSITY DIMENSIONS COMBINE...

Class intersects with other demographics to amplify lack of inclusion and exclusion – specifically, for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers, workers with a disability, non-Christian workers, and LGBTIQ+ workers.
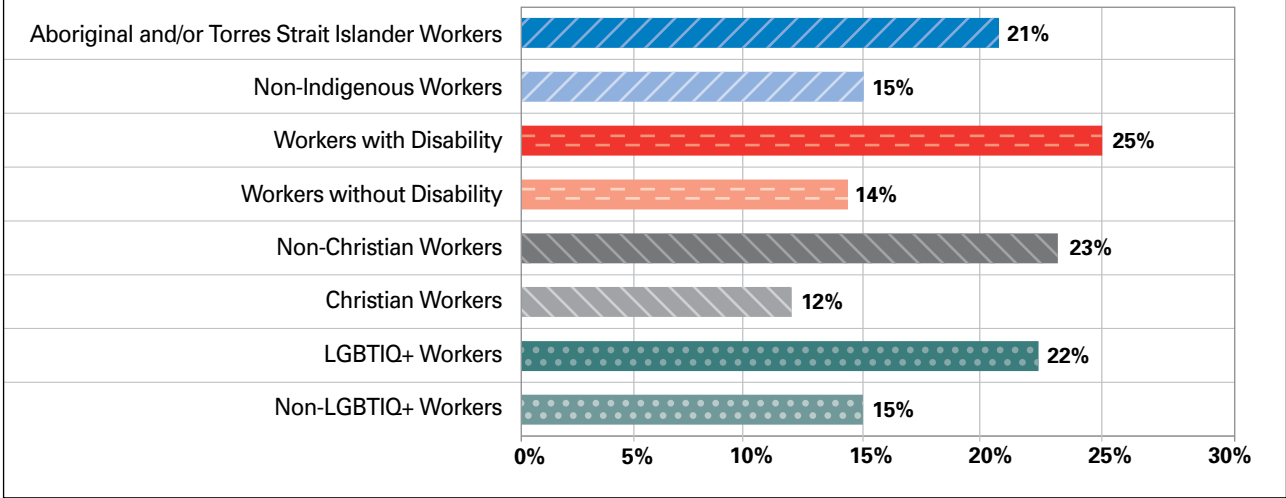
Our findings also showed that lower class workers who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, have a disability, are non-Christian or are LGBTIQ+ are more likely to be in non-inclusive teams and non-inclusive organisations, and also have a non- inclusive leader, than lower class workers who are non-Indigenous, do not have a disability, are Christian, or are non-LGBTIQ+.

More Likely to be Lower Class

Our findings indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, workers with a disability, non-Christian workers, and LGBTIQ+ workers are more likely to be lower class than non-Indigenous workers, workers without a disability, Christian workers, and non-LGBTIQ+ workers:

- **21% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers** identify as lower class versus 15% non-Indigenous

- **25% workers with a disability** identify as lower class versus 14% without disability

- **23% non-Christian workers** identify as lower class versus 12% Christian workers

- **22% LGBTIQ+ workers** identify as lower class versus 15% non-LGBTIQ+.

Figure 12: Lower Class Distribution by Indigenous Status, Disability Status, and Religion

Category	%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Workers	21%
Non-Indigenous Workers	15%
Workers with Disability	25%
Workers without Disability	14%
Non-Christian Workers	23%
Christian Workers	12%
LGBTIQ+ Workers	22%
Non-LGBTIQ+ Workers	15%

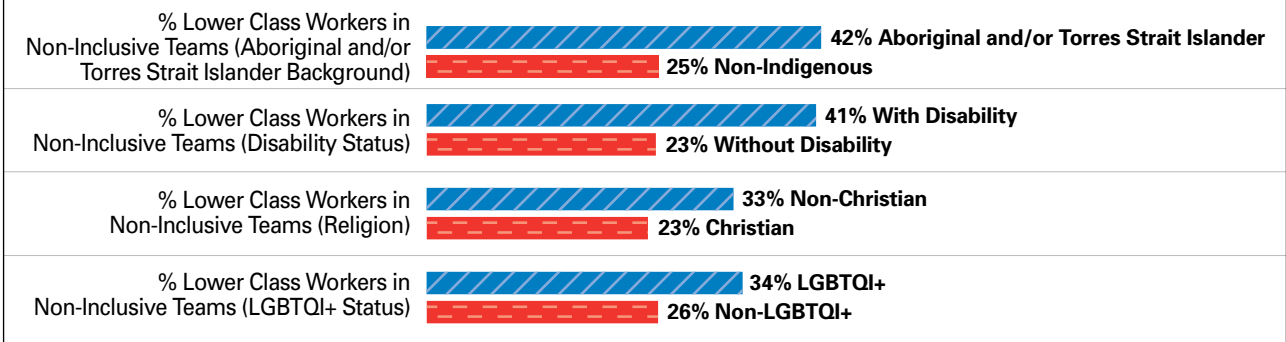## More Likely to Experience Exclusion

These lower class workers are also more likely to have experienced discrimination and/or harassment in the past year than lower class workers who are non-Indigenous, do not have a disability, or are Christian.

Figure 13: Lower Class Workers Who Have Experienced Discrimination and/or Harassment in Past Year by Indigenous Status, Disability Status, and Religion
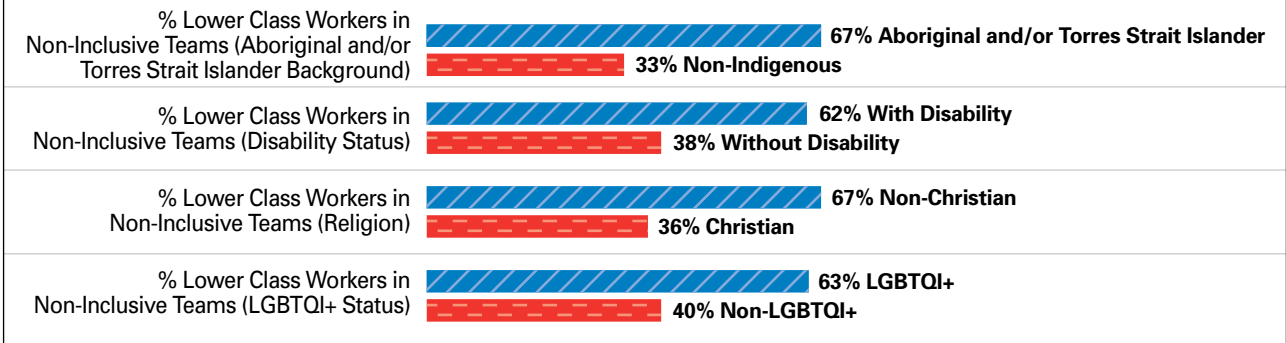
Category		%
% Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Background)	67% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	
	33% Non-Indigenous	
% Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams (Disability Status)	62% With Disability	
	38% Without Disability	
% Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams (Religion)	67% Non-Christian	
	36% Christian	
% Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams (LGBTQI+ Status)	63% LGBTQI+	
	40% Non-LGBTQI+	

Lower class workers who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, have a disability, or are non-Christian or LGBTIQ+ are statistically more likely to be in non-inclusive teams, than lower class workers who are non-Indigenous, do not have a disability, or are Christian or non-LGBTIQ+ – *see graphs below*.

Figure 14: Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams by Indigenous Status, Disability Status, and Religion

Category		%
% Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Background)	42% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	
	25% Non-Indigenous	
% Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams (Disability Status)	41% With Disability	
	23% Without Disability	
% Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams (Religion)	33% Non-Christian	
	23% Christian	
% Lower Class Workers in Non-Inclusive Teams (LGBTQI+ Status)	34% LGBTQI+	
	26% Non-LGBTQI+	

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR D&I PRACTICE

Over the last thirty years, researchers and diversity and inclusion practitioners have begun to challenge inequalities in workplaces through D&I initiatives and programs for a range of diverse groups. But until now, we haven't attempted to answer the question *does social class make a difference in the land of the 'fair go'?* And if it does, what should we do about it?

Make 'class' a standard part of D&I vocabulary and practice

We can no longer ignore that social class makes a difference to our workplace experiences. We need to ensure that 'class' becomes part of the standard vocabulary for D&I practice. That means pushing aside the Australian discomfort with this subject and start talking about class as part of our diversity so we can develop and implement D&I strategies to ensure social class inclusion.

Develop a consistent measure for class that can be adopted by Australian workplaces

We can't hope to understand class inclusion if we don't measure class. Employers should adopt a consistent set of indicators that will help them understand the impact of class on attraction, recruitment and progression within Australian organisations.

There are many ways to measure and understand class. But we don't have an agreed set of measures reflecting the Australian context that could be adopted by employers. The UK Civil Service has developed its own set of measures to understand socio-economic background in their workforce. We need an Australian standard that takes into account our local context and history, and that can be easily adopted across Australian workplaces.

Keep intersections in mind

D&I practitioners need to be aware that class affects all of us, but in different ways. This report showed for example, that lower class men and lower class women have different experiences of inclusion and exclusion. The other aspects that make up our identity (e.g., cultural background, age etc.) will also be impacted by class in different ways. We cannot understand any aspect of diversity in isolation and we must always keep this in mind.

Ensure that D&I initiatives reach and positively impact people from all classes

This report showed there was a correlation between low levels of support for D&I and the groups least likely to experience D&I in their workplaces. While the findings are not able to determine causation, the low level of support for D&I amongst these groups could be because they are not working in organisations that are active in D&I and therefore not experiencing the benefits of D&I initiatives. We need a concerted effort to build inclusive organisations across the Australian economy. Only that way can we ensure that everyone can experience the benefits of inclusion.

Recruit for Class Diversity

Organisations need to consider their recruitment practices to determine if they are consciously or unconsciously narrowing their talent pool to exclude people from certain classes. For example, do recruitment strategies focus on hiring people from elite schools or Go8 universities; is there evidence of postcode discrimination (where candidates from certain locations are not recruited); what weighting is given to academic transcripts and extra-curricular activities versus other employment experiences (e.g., having had part-time jobs)? Many of these criteria are associated with having higher class backgrounds and may exclude people who have not had access to these same opportunities due to their class background.

Go Beyond Urban Talent

Some organisations focus on recruiting employees only from city locations even where the job may not require full-time face-to-face hours. Addressing assumptions about face-to-face work and having a flexible mindset about the need for in-office hours (e.g., set days per week, flexible working) can mean the opportunities are opened up to people from regional or remote locations who might otherwise be overlooked.

Check Words at Work (Inclusive Language)

Language is a powerful tool for building inclusion and exclusion at work. It can be used to create a sense of being valued, respected and one of the team or of being under-valued, disrespected, and an 'outsider'. Organisations that address jokes or phrases that may be offensive and classist (e.g., 'houso', 'bogan', etc.) will create more welcoming and inclusive environments.

Review Informal Networking

Consider whether organisational gatherings and informal networking opportunities require certain types of etiquette or unwritten codes of behaviour that may affect a person's inclusion or comfort level at these events.

For example, are there requirements for certain dress codes, or does informal networking occur in settings that may have a high cost to participate in (such as tennis, golf, road cycling, sailing, etc.)? Being conscious of the criteria for involvement and social capital required to participate in these activities will help to diversify informal networking opportunities.

Are Networks and Sponsorship Access Inclusive?

People rarely progress based on their own efforts alone. Entry into certain professions by way of unpaid internships organised through parents' professional networks is a barrier to entry to some people. What's more, informal mentoring/sponsorship often preclude people who don't have access to relationship capital in an organisation through alumni or personal networks.

Having formal programs for paid internships, or formal structures for mentoring and sponsorship with clear accountabilities for mentees or sponsors can help address some of these barriers and open up opportunities to people from different backgrounds.

OUR METHODOLOGY

This project investigated two research questions:

1 How does class impact on Australian workers' experiences of inclusion and exclusion at work?

2 Why is class at work important for organisations to consider?

To investigate these questions, we drew on two sources of evidence, namely international and national research, and DCA's *Inclusion@Work Index* survey dataset.

INDUSTRY & ACADEMIC RESEARCH

We reviewed international and national academic and industry research to establish what it tells us about class at work, including: how class is understood and defined; the representation/distribution of different class groups in Australian society and the workforce; and the extent to which class impacts on workers' inclusion and exclusion experiences and therefore individual, team and, organisational outcomes.

DCA'S INCLUSION@WORK INDEX

Since 2017, DCA and Suncorp have partnered to conduct the biennial *Inclusion@Work Index*, a nationally representative survey of 3,000 Australian workers, which maps and tracks inclusion in the Australian workforce over time. Specifically, the survey investigates how inclusive the Australian workforce is for a diversity of employees and what impact inclusion has on performance and wellbeing.

In 2019, DCA, Suncorp and supporting sponsor Novartis decided to include a new demographic question – one on class. The survey findings in this report are based on an analysis of workers' inclusion and exclusion experiences based on their class.

OUR MEASURE OF CLASS

We measured social class using an adapted version of the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status. The question asked respondents to indicate where they feel they stand in society relative to other Australians, based on money, education, and occupation. Respondents indicated their position on a 11 point-marked scale, in which higher numbers represented people in higher social classes, and lower numbers represented people in lower classes.

The MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status is a single-item subjective measure of social class and SES that captures individuals' sense of their place in society, taking into account their standing on multiple dimensions of socioeconomic status and social position. In this way, it provides a summative measure of social class, across the indicators of education, income, and occupation.

In this survey, only one question could be used to measure class because this diversity demographic was just one of nine that the *Inclusion@Work Index* survey needed to measure.[13]

While ideally social class should be measured with multiple variables, we were reassured to find a statistically significant positive correlation between the subjective measure of social class as measured by the MacArthur Scale and the objective measures of (a) highest educational level attained and (b) occupational level *(see Appendix B)*. Research suggests that variables such as occupation and education are typically significant predictors of respondents' assessments of their class position.[14] Indeed, Australian researchers have found that people's self-assessed social class generally closely reflects their objectively assessed class.[15]

CREATING CLASS GROUP CATEGORIES

We classified our sample into the traditional groupings of social class, these being lower class, middle class and higher class. While there are newer social class categories which are useful in understanding the structure of modern societies, these are yet to permeate society and become part of the cultural zeitgeist, and so they do not yet form a meaningful cultural identity the way traditional labels do.

Lower class respondents were classified as those who had indicated their position on the 11 point-marked scale as between 0 and 4 (i.e., 16% of the sample).

Middle class respondents were those who had a position between 5 and 7 (i.e., 61.5% of the sample).

Higher class respondents were those who reported a position on the scale of between 8 and 10 (i.e., 22.6% of the sample).

We chose a categorisation approach which identified groups that clearly were worse off or better off in comparison to others and we established the numerical cut-offs conceptually. Other studies have also reported subjective social status as a categorical variable, although no standardised cut-offs have been established.[16]

The cut-offs in this categorisation approach were chosen as the distribution of the sample across lower, middle, and higher was broadly similar to that found by Sheppard and Biddle in their *Social Class in Australia* poll of 1200 Australian adults. Additionally, our distribution of respondents in the three class categories broadly aligns with the distribution approach taken in wealth/income research, in which the bottom 20% of respondents is compared with the top 20% (with the remaining 60% being in the middle).[17]

FIND OUT MORE

DCA members can access the Full Report by logging into the Members Only area of the DCA website. The Full Report includes detailed information on:

- Conceptualising and defining 'social class'
- Social class in Australia – Australians' complex relationship and history with class
- Why class is important for organisations
- The impact of social class on Australian workers' experiences of inclusion and exclusion

- The impact of class inclusion on performance and wellbeing
- Class and intersectionality
- Practical steps organisations can take to create class inclusion at work
- Research methodology and all research references.

ENDNOTES

1. T. Bolton, 'Land of the Fair Go – An Exploration of Australian Identity.' AQ: *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 75, no. 2, 2003, pp. 16–40. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20638163.

2. ANUPoll, Social Class in Australia: Beyond the 'Working' and 'Middle Classes', Canberra, Australian National University, 2015.

3. Certainly, there are increasingly nuanced ways to describe class divides, as wealth and asset distribution change across generations with technological advancement (e.g., ANUPoll's five Australian classes). However, these newer social class categories can be useful to understand the structure of modern societies, they have not yet permeated society to become part of the cultural zeitgeist the way more traditional categories (lower, middle and higher) have.

4. J. Sheppard and N. Biddle, 'Class, Capital, and Identity in Australian Society', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2017, pp. 1-17.

   Australian Council of Social Services, University of New South Wales, *Inequality in Australia 2018*, NSW, 2018. Accessed at https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Inequality-in-Australia-2018.pdf.

   OECD, *Under Pressure: The Squeezed Middle Class*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019.

5. The *Inclusion@Work* sample consisted of employed people. Some characteristics of lower classes differ in the research where 'lower class' includes people who are unemployed.

6. ANUPoll, Social Class in Australia: Beyond the 'Working' and 'Middle Classes', 2015.

7. UK Civil Service, *A Brilliant Civil Service: Becoming the UK's Most Inclusive Employer The Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*, Crown, 2017.

8. L. A. Rivera, *How Social Class Determines Who Lands the Best Jobs*, Princeton University Press, 2016, p. 281.

9. L. Bock, *Work Rules! Insights from Inside Google That Will Transform How You Live and Lead*, John Murray Press, United Kingdom, 2016.

10. We specifically report on lower class workers in inclusive and non-inclusive environments as survey results showed that lower class workers are much less likely to work in inclusive environments than middle or higher class workers. However, the pattern that greater inclusion is linked to greater performance also holds true for middle- and higher-class workers – middle- and higher-class workers in inclusive teams also reported being in more effective, innovative and better customer serving teams than their counterparts in non-inclusive teams.

11. S. Martin and S. Côté, 'Social Class Transitioners: Their Cultural Abilities and Organizational Importance', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2019, pp. 618–642.

12. For the purposes of this analysis, 'gender' considers only the categories male and female. While we recognise the experiences of people who have a gender identity outside this binary, our sample of non-binary and gender diverse people was not large enough to be statistically significant *(see Appendix B of the Full Report)*.

13. These nine diversity demographics included Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, age, caring status, class, cultural background, disability status, gender, religion, and sexual orientation and gender identity.

14. N. Goldman, J. Cornman, and M-C. Chang, 'Measuring Subjective Social Status: A Case Study of Older Taiwanese', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, vol. 21, 2006, pp. 71-89.

15. J. Sheppard and N. Biddle, 'Class, Capital, and Identity in Australian Society'.

16. A. Singh-Manoux A, et al, 'Subjective Social Status: Its Determinants and its Association with Measures of Ill-Health in the Whitehall II study'.

   N. Adler, et al., 'Social Status and Health: A Comparison of British Civil Servants in Whitehall-II with European- and African-Americans in CARDIA'.

17. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 6523.0 - *Household Income and Wealth, Australia*, 2017-18. Accessed at: https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/finance/household-income-and-wealth-australia/latest-release.

   McCrindle, *Australia's Income and Wealth Distribution*. Accessed at https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/blog/australias-income-and-wealth-distribution/.