

British private school pupils earn 30 percent more in later life

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Students who attended independent schools go on to obtain an average of 30% higher earnings than state school students, according to a study published in *Significance*, the magazine of the Royal Statistical Society. When compared against like for like family background, the gap is reduced to an increase of 20% in earnings. Most of this gap came from the achievement of higher qualifications.

For several decades 7-8% of children in Britain have been educated in private/independent schools. Yet, small though this proportion is, privately educated people have gone on, in adulthood, to occupy a much larger share of the prominent positions in public and private life. This throws up several questions. Is this because of the background and connections of students whose families can afford this education? Do private schools give more added-value, such as self-esteem and a wider view of the world through more extra-curricular activities? Is it the networking abilities and contacts which lead to increased earnings?

The study looked at data from 10,000 British residents and compared them on earnings, schooling, qualifications, family background, age, and region lived in. Whilst family background did have an impact on earnings, the main difference was in relation to the qualifications gained, implying that if the average person attending private school were to fail their exams, there would be no other benefits to fall back on.

"We began this research to try to understand whether private school education was sustaining, or merely reflecting, low levels of social

mobility in society," said lead author Francis Green, Professor of Economics at the University of Kent. "Our findings suggest that rather than family background being the predominant factor, a private school education seems to offer something else to the equation. Parents with enough money, but wondering whether it is a good investment to choose private schooling, might be reassured by these findings."

The study also compared the effect on earnings of attending a private school prior to 1960, and after. The results showed that the estimated impact had increased over time. "Given this finding, it seems that today's pupils might expect to see even greater benefits," added Green.

"This difference in [earnings](#) was especially pronounced when we looked at the top end of the salary scale," said co-author Richard Murphy, from the London School of Economics. "Even after adjustments for qualifications gained and family background, those in the top 10% of earners who had attended independent schools earned on average 20% more than state school pupils in the same salary band. Whether these benefits come through 'old boy networks', or through unmeasured broad competences that are obtained through private schooling, we cannot say."

Source: Wiley-Blackwell

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