

The Great British Class Survey – Results



Mike Savage and Fiona Devine examined class in a brand new way

[Mike Savage](#) from the London School of Economics and [Fiona Devine](#) from the University of Manchester describe their findings from [The Great British Class Survey](#). Their results identify a new model of class with seven classes ranging from the Elite at the top to a 'Precariat' at the bottom.

In January 2011, with the help of BBC Lab UK, we asked the BBC audience to complete a unique questionnaire on different dimensions of class.

“ We now have a much more complex class system”

We devised a new way of measuring class, which doesn't define class just by the job that you do, but by the different kinds of economic, cultural and social resources or 'capitals' that people possess.

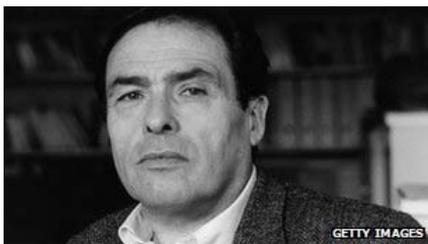
We asked people about their income, the value of their home and savings, which together is known as 'economic capital', their cultural interests and activities, known as 'cultural capital' and the number and status of people they know, which is called 'social capital'.

Amazingly, more than 160,000 of you completed the survey. We now have one of the largest ever studies of class in Great Britain.

The results to date

Our new model includes seven classes.

What was the method?



The full class survey was based on a theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu in 1984
It looked at a person's cultural and social life as well as their economic standing
Participants were asked if they enjoyed any of 27 cultural activities including watching opera and going to the gym
[How do you identify new types of class?](#)

Elite: This is the most privileged class in Great Britain who have high levels of all three capitals. Their high amount of economic capital sets them apart from everyone else.

Established Middle Class: Members of this class have high levels of all three capitals although not as high as the Elite. They are a gregarious and culturally engaged class.

Technical Middle Class: This is a new, small class with high economic capital but seem less culturally engaged. They have relatively few social contacts and so are less socially engaged.

New Affluent Workers: This class has medium levels of economic capital and higher levels of cultural and social capital. They are a young and active group.

Emergent Service Workers: This new class has low economic capital but has high levels of 'emerging' cultural capital and high social capital. This group are young and often found in urban areas.

Traditional Working Class: This class scores low on all forms of the three capitals although they are not the poorest group. The average age of this class is older than the others.

Precariat: This is the most deprived class of all with low levels of economic, cultural and social capital. The everyday lives of members of this class are precarious.

Other unique findings

Twentieth-century middle-class and working-class stereotypes are out of date. Only 39% of participants fit into the Established Middle Class and Traditional Working Class categories.

“ The very rich and very poor are still with us in the 21st Century”

The traditional working class is changing. It's smaller than it was in the past. The new generation are more likely to be Affluent Workers or Emergent Service Workers.

People consume culture in a complicated way. The Technical Middle Class are less culturally engaged while emergent service workers participate in various activities.

The extremes of our class system are very important. The Elite and Precariat often get forgotten with more focus on the middle and working classes. We've discovered detailed findings about them.

What did we measure?

People tend to think they belong to a particular class on the basis of their job and income. These are aspects of economic capital.

Sociologists think that your class is indicated by your cultural capital and social capital. Our analysis looked at the relationship between economic, cultural and social capital.

The [findings have been published in the journal Sociology](#) and were presented at a conference of the British Sociological Association.

Who took part?



A total of 161,458 people from around the UK completed the survey. The majority (86%) lived in England while 8% lived in Scotland, 3% in Wales and 1% in Northern Ireland.

Can we rely on the results?



Sociologists used complex stats to identify the new classes
A representative survey was combined with the web data

[How was the selection bias tackled to make the results apply to the whole country?](#)

Of that total, 91,458 men (56%) and 69,902 women (43%) completed the survey. They had an average age of 35 and 145,521 participants (90%) described themselves as 'white'.

This very large sample allowed us to analyse the connections between the different capitals using a technique called 'latent class analysis'.

This produced a lot of very detailed information which took a long time to examine. There's still plenty of exciting work still to be done!

The data from the Great British Class Survey was analysed by a team including Niall Cunningham, Yaojun Li and Andrew Miles from the University of Manchester, Mark Taylor from the University of York, Sam Friedman from City University, Johs Hjellbrekke from the University of Bergen, Norway and Brigette Le Roux of Universite Paris Descartes, France.



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