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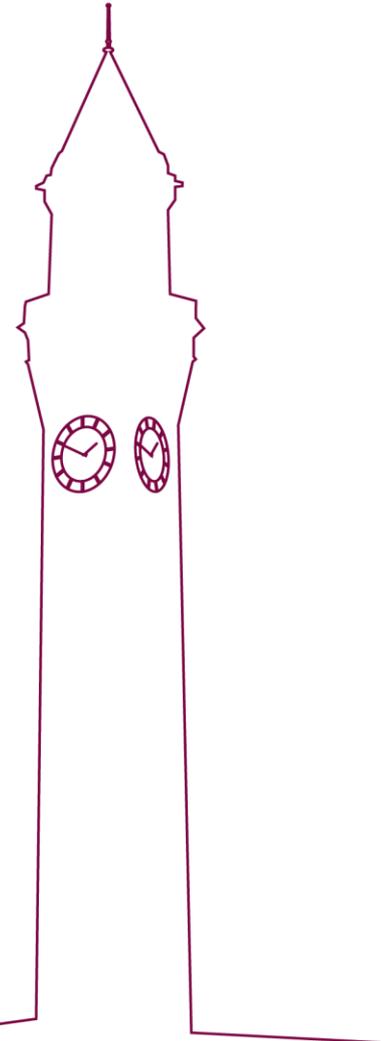
CAGE

Competitive Advantage
in the Global Economy

The importance of education and skills in driving social mobility

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Policy Briefing at the Social Market Foundation



The outcomes of parents and children are inextricably linked

- For every £100 increase in parental income, children's income at age 30 rises by about £30
- Half explained by differences in education and skills between children from richer and poorer families
 - Source: Blanden, Gregg and Macmillan (2007)
- Suggests improving education and skills of kids from poorer families may be one route to social mobility



Roadmap for today

- Access to elite education institutions . . .
- . . . and the importance of looking beyond these
- Skills that are highly rewarded in the labour market and what we should be doing to generate these

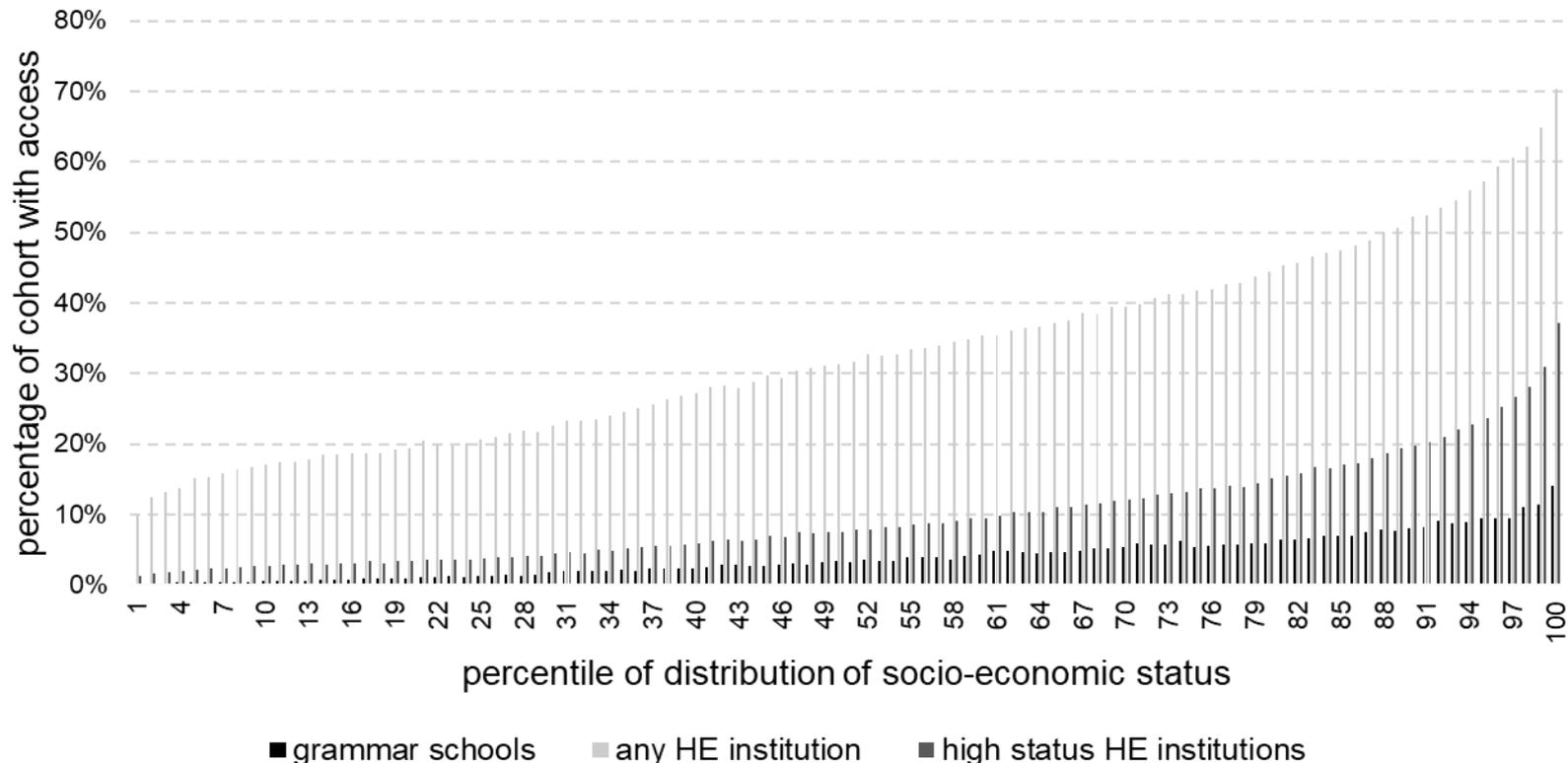


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Much policy discourse focuses on access to elite education institutions



Are such large differences likely to hinder social mobility?

- Yes if there are benefits to accessing such institutions
- For example:
 - Belfield et al. (2018) shows strong average returns to a degree, including significant variation by institution
 - Evidence is less clear cut in terms of grammar schools . . .

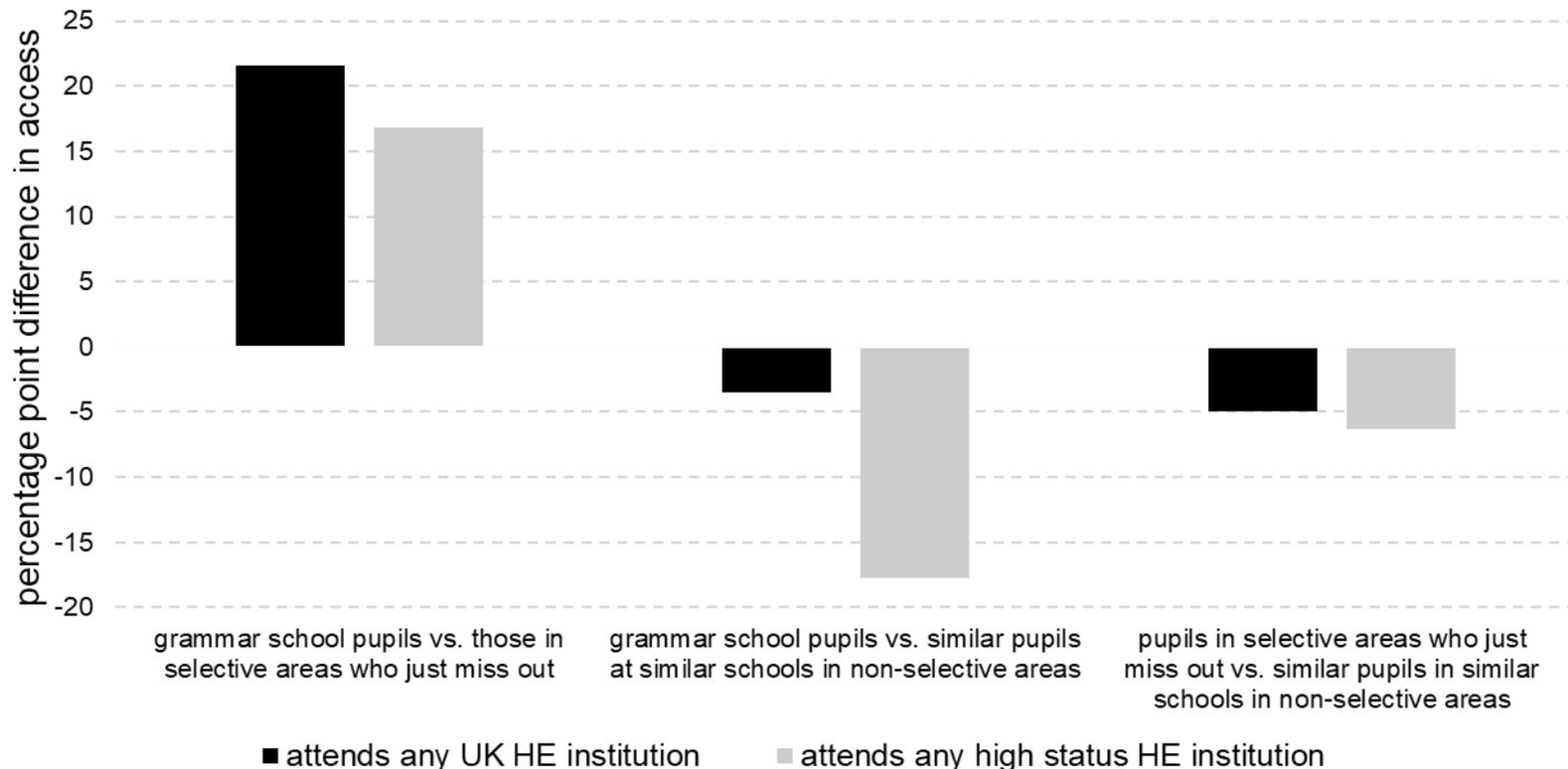


Is selective education good for social mobility?

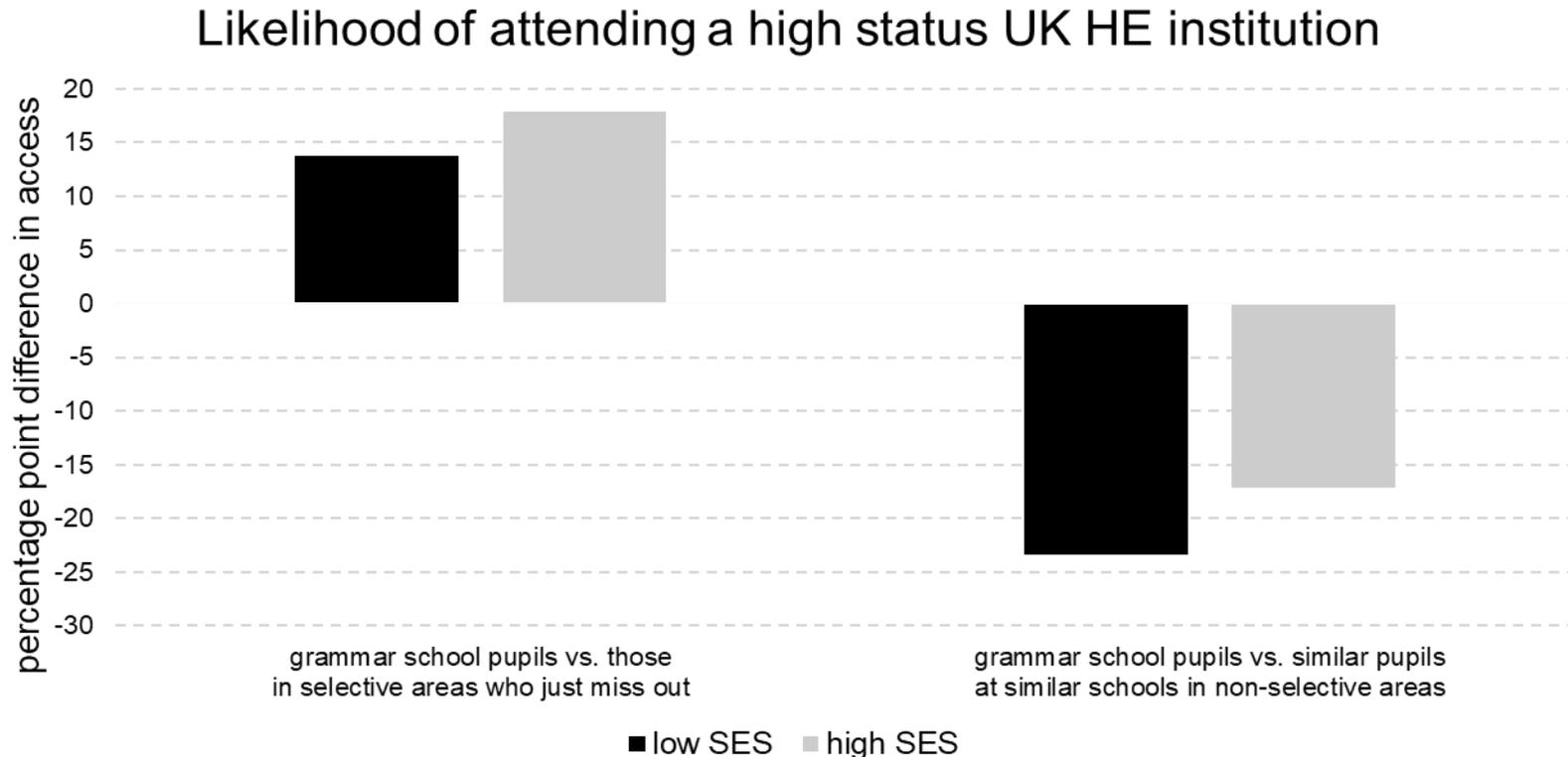
- Burgess, Crawford and Macmillan (2017) investigate
- Compare pupils attending grammar schools in selective areas with:
 - Other pupils in selective areas
 - Pupils at schools with similar intakes in non-selective areas
- Also compare those who just miss out with similar pupils at similar schools in non-selective areas



Is selective education good for social mobility?



Is selective education good for social mobility?



Is selective education good for social mobility?

- Pupils attending grammar schools in selective areas do better than pupils in these areas who just miss out
- But . . .
 - Grammar schools are very socially segregated
 - Low SES students seem to benefit relatively less
 - Pupils in selective areas – whether in grammar schools or not – seem to perform worse than similar pupils in non-selective areas
- Suggests selective education isn't great for mobility



How can we 'widen' access to HE, especially to high status institutions?

- Increasing the attainment of pupils from poorer backgrounds, especially at GCSE, should help

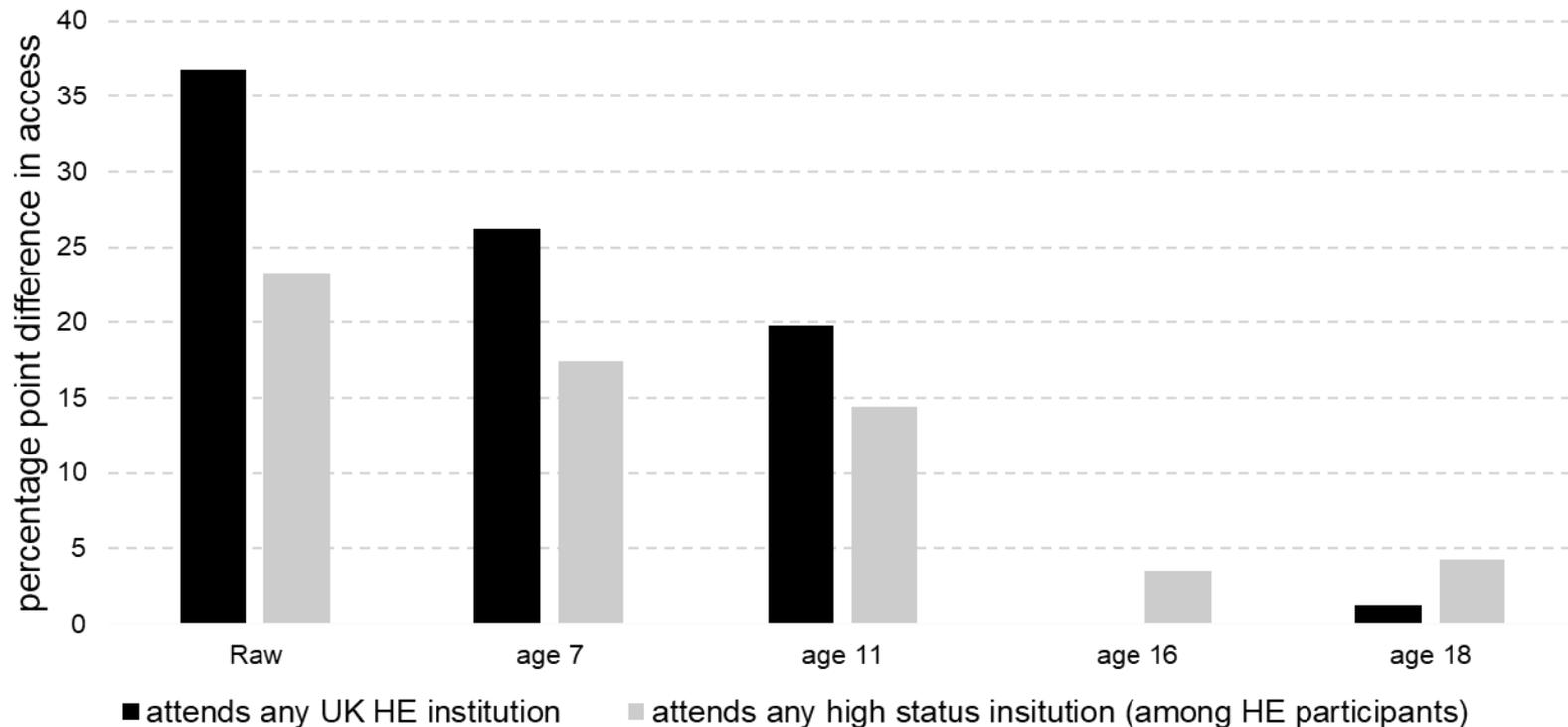


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How can we 'widen' access to HE, especially to high status institutions?



Source: Crawford et al. (2016)



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How can we ‘widen’ access to HE, especially to high status institutions?

- Increasing the attainment of pupils from poorer backgrounds, especially at GCSE, should help
- Know a lot more than we did about how to do this
- The EEF toolkit suggests there are low-cost but effective strategies that help kids to learn more
 - e.g. self-regulated learning, collaborative learning, effective feedback, and language/comprehension interventions
- There are also effective but expensive interventions
 - e.g. early years interventions or one-to-one tuition



How can we ‘widen’ access to HE, especially to high status institutions?

- But attainment is not the whole story . . .
- Differences in attainment explain **all** of the gap in participation at any HE institution, but not quite all of the gap in participation at high status institutions
- Suggests more is needed to encourage students from low SES backgrounds to apply to these institutions
 - And applications are the key margin, not offers

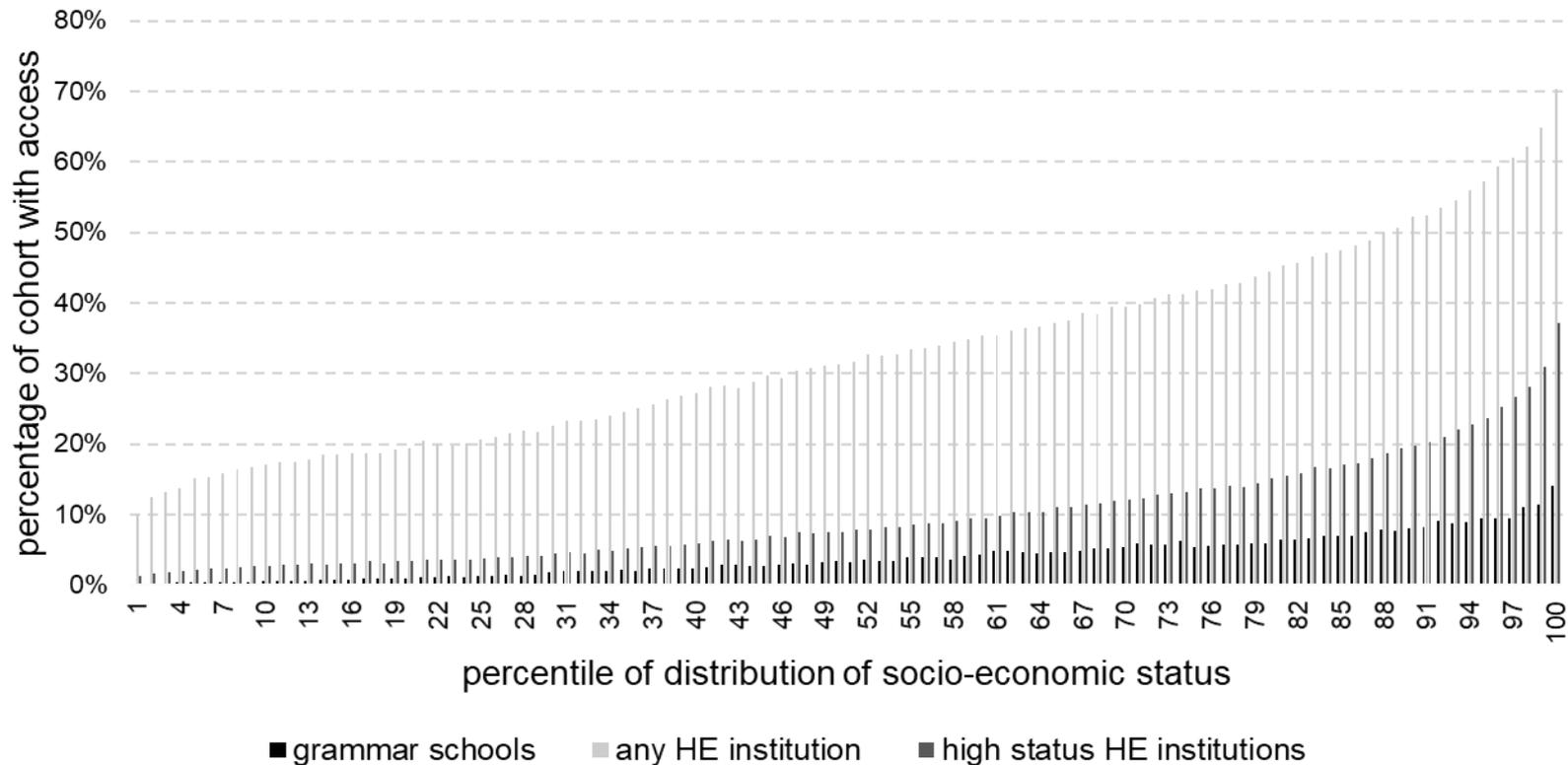


How can we 'widen' access to HE, especially to high status institutions?

- Greater use of contextual admissions policies (and greater transparency about existing ones) could help
 - Boliver et al. (2017) highlighted lack of clarity about which factors used to contextualise and how they affect offers
- But it would require a substantial relaxation of entry requirements to make a significant difference
 - Even with offers two grades lower, only around an additional 750 students eligible for free school meals would qualify
- Clearly other innovative solutions required as well . . .



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- Most pupils, especially those from low SES backgrounds, don't have the chance to go to a grammar school, and most don't go on to university
- Suggests must focus on rest of education system as well to maximise potential mobility (and productivity)



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Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- Need a system that delivers skills that are in high demand in the labour market (and likely to remain so)
- Basic skills command a premium, suggesting a shortage
 - e.g. Vignoles et al. (2011)
- Our schools don't seem to equip all children with these skills, leaving England lagging behind internationally



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- ❑ Despite being massively more qualified, the basic skills of those aged 16-24 are no better than those aged 55-65
 - Source: Kuczera et al. (2016) [OECD Skills Survey]
- ❑ Suggests shortage of basic skills will become more acute
- ❑ Those from lower SES backgrounds over-represented amongst the group lacking these skills, potentially holding back wages (and hence prospects for mobility)



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- Some interventions identified as helping children make good progress by EEF toolkit especially good for literacy
 - e.g. language/comprehension interventions
- Evidence on effective numeracy strategies more mixed
- Most effective seem to be high intensity, high cost
 - e.g. one-to-one support via Every Child Counts



Is access to elite institutions the right way to ensure social mobility for all?

- Also require technical skills to develop new products, technologies and other innovations, and strong management skills to ensure these are disseminated
- FE has an important role to play here, yet has been under-funded relative to HE and schools in recent years
- And plethora of vocational qualifications, not always delivering strong average wage returns, do not provide clear alternative to GCSE/A-level/university pathway



Policy implications?

- ❑ Must get better at evidencing effective practice (e.g. in widening access to HE) and following the evidence
- ❑ Must ensure social mobility debate not driven exclusively by the needs of bright children from poor backgrounds
- ❑ Must ensure all children leave school with basic skills
- ❑ Must do better at communicating vocational routes through FE as alternatives to typical academic pathway
- ❑ Must ensure FE provision is well funded and high quality



Thank you!



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Spare slides

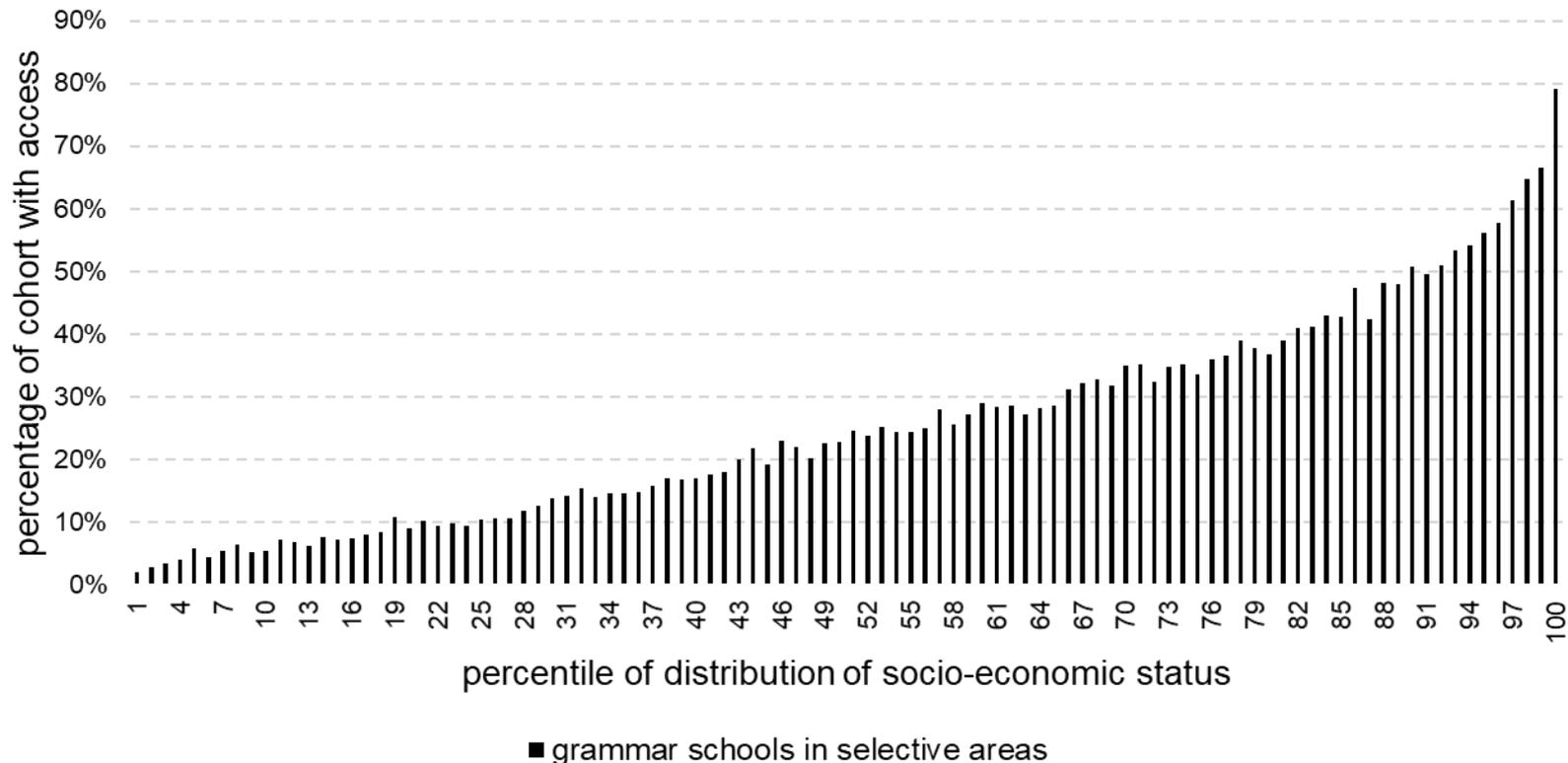


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