

A Class Act The Myth Of Britains Classless Society

A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society - Outline

I. The Enduring Spectre of Class A. The persistent myth of a classless Britain. B. The reality: Subtle but significant class divisions remain. C. Exploring the historical roots of British class structures. D. The impact of class on modern British life.

II. Historical Context: From Feudalism to Modernity A. The legacy of feudalism and the landed gentry. B. The Industrial Revolution and the rise of the working class. C. The impact of World War I and II on social mobility. D. Post-war social changes and the expansion of the middle class. **III.**

Manifestations of Class in Contemporary Britain A. Socioeconomic disparities: Income inequality and wealth distribution. B. Educational attainment and its correlation with social class. C. Occupational segregation and the persistence of class-based jobs. D. Housing disparities: Access to quality housing and its class implications. E. Healthcare access and its relationship to socioeconomic status. F. Geographic segregation and the clustering of social classes.

IV. Cultural Markers of Class A. Accent and dialect as class indicators. B. Clothing styles and fashion choices as markers of social standing. C. Leisure activities and social circles as expressions of class identity. D. Cultural capital and its influence on social mobility. **V. The Myth of Meritocracy:**

Challenges and Realities A. The ideal of a meritocratic society versus the reality of class barriers. B. How social background impacts opportunities and success. C. The role of inherited wealth and privilege in maintaining class divisions. D. Systemic inequalities that perpetuate class-based advantages. **VI. Conclusion: Moving Beyond the Myth** A.

The ongoing relevance of class in understanding British society. B. The need for policies that promote social mobility and equality. C. A call for a more inclusive and equitable future for Britain.

A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society -

I. The Enduring Spectre of Class The notion of a classless Britain, a society where social mobility reigns supreme, is a persistent myth. While the rigid social hierarchies of the past may seem distant, the reality is far more nuanced. Subtle yet significant class divisions continue to shape British life, influencing everything from educational opportunities to healthcare access. Understanding these divisions requires a journey through history and a keen eye for the subtle ways class manifests today. The lingering impact of Britain's historical class system is undeniable. It continues to cast a long shadow on contemporary society. **II. Historical**

Context: From Feudalism to Modernity The roots of British class structures run deep, tracing back to the feudal system. The landed gentry held immense power and wealth, establishing a rigid social order. The Industrial Revolution dramatically reshaped this order, creating a burgeoning working class and intensifying existing inequalities. The two World Wars, while catalysts for social change, also served to reinforce certain class divisions. Post-war Britain saw a gradual expansion of the middle class, but the fundamental structures of class remained. This expansion was uneven, and many found themselves trapped in cyclical poverty. **III.**

Manifestations of Class in Contemporary Britain Despite significant social progress, socioeconomic disparities persist. Income inequality remains stark, with a chasm separating the wealthiest and the poorest. Educational attainment shows a strong correlation with social class, with those from privileged backgrounds consistently enjoying better opportunities.

Occupational segregation is another clear sign, with certain professions remaining dominated by specific classes. Access to quality housing often reflects class, creating further inequalities in quality of life. Even access to quality healthcare is sometimes influenced by socioeconomic status, revealing yet another disparity. Geographic segregation, where social classes cluster in different areas, only reinforces these divisions. This is a complex problem with multiple layers and roots. *IV. Cultural Markers of Class* Class distinctions extend beyond socioeconomic factors. Accent and dialect often act as immediate identifiers, revealing social background instantly.

Clothing styles and fashion choices can be powerful indicators of class. Leisure activities and social circles also reinforce class boundaries. Furthermore, the concept of cultural capital

- knowledge, tastes, and skills valued by the dominant class - plays a pivotal role in social mobility. Cultural capital is often inherited, reinforcing class differences. It influences access to opportunities and shapes social interactions. **V. The Myth of Meritocracy: Challenges and Realities**

The ideal of a meritocratic society, where success is determined solely by talent and hard work, clashes with the reality of class barriers. Social background significantly influences opportunities and prospects, even in a seemingly equal society. Inherited wealth and privilege continue to play a significant role, ensuring that advantages are passed down through generations. Systemic inequalities, embedded in institutions and policies, serve to perpetuate class-based advantages. It's a complex issue with no easy solutions.

Changing entrenched systems takes time and requires ongoing effort. **VI. Conclusion: Moving Beyond the Myth** Class remains a relevant factor in understanding British society.

The myth of a classless nation obscures persistent inequalities. To build a more inclusive and equitable society, policies aimed at promoting social mobility and reducing inequalities are essential. A commitment to a fairer and more just future must transcend rhetoric and become a practical reality. Addressing class inequalities is not merely a social justice issue; it is fundamental to building a truly thriving and prosperous society for everyone. 10 Frequently Asked Questions on "A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society"

1. Is Britain truly a classless society? No, despite advancements, class divisions significantly influence life opportunities. **2. What are the historical roots of British class divisions?** Feudalism, the Industrial Revolution, and World Wars all played major roles. **3. How does class**

manifest in modern Britain? Through socioeconomic disparities, educational attainment, occupation, housing, and healthcare access. 4. *What are some cultural markers of class?* Accent, clothing, leisure activities, and cultural capital. 5. *Is Britain a meritocracy?* No, social background significantly impacts opportunities and success, challenging the meritocratic ideal. 6. *How does inherited wealth impact class?* It provides significant advantages and perpetuates inequality across generations. 7. **What policies could promote social mobility?** Policies addressing income inequality, education access, affordable housing and healthcare are crucial. 8. How does class affect access to education? Students from privileged backgrounds often have significantly better access to high quality education. 9. **What role does geographic segregation play in maintaining class distinctions?** Class clustering reinforces social and economic disparities, limiting opportunities for upward mobility. 10. *What is cultural capital and how does it impact social mobility?* It represents the knowledge, tastes, and skills valued by the dominant class and can greatly affect upward mobility.

A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society

Britain. A nation often lauded for its stiff upper lip, its love of tea, and its seemingly democratic spirit. For decades, we've been told we're a classless society, or at least well on our way. We point to the rags-to-riches stories, the premierships won by those not born into aristocracy, the melting pot of diverse

backgrounds in our modern cities. But is this truly the reality, or is it a carefully constructed narrative, a comforting myth we tell ourselves to sleep at night? Let's delve into 'A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society' and explore the persistent, and often insidious, ways class continues to shape British lives.

The idea of a classless society is a seductive one. It conjures images of meritocracy, where hard work and talent are the only currencies that matter, and where your postcode or your parents' bank balance are irrelevant. This ideal, however, often clashes with lived experiences. For many, the markers of class remain stubbornly visible, influencing everything from educational opportunities and career prospects to social interactions and even healthcare outcomes. So, where did this myth come from, and why does it persist?

The Genesis of the Classless Dream

The notion of moving beyond rigid class structures gained traction in the post-war era. The Labour government, with its ambition to build a fairer Britain, introduced the welfare state, nationalised key industries, and aimed to provide universal access to education and healthcare. This was a monumental shift, offering a genuine chance for upward mobility for millions who had previously been confined by their birth. The expansion of grammar schools, for instance, provided a pathway for bright working-class children to access a more academic education. This period laid the

groundwork for the idea that class divisions were softening.

Furthermore, the rise of popular culture played its part. Television programmes, films, and literature often showcased characters from humble beginnings achieving success, reinforcing the narrative of a society where doors were opening for everyone. The "self-made" individual became a celebrated archetype, a testament to Britain's supposed egalitarianism. This cultural narrative, while aspirational, arguably masked the underlying realities of entrenched privilege.

Education: The Great Divider (Still)

If there's one area where the myth of classlessness truly crumbles, it's education. While the expansion of state education was a positive step, the persistent dominance of private, fee-paying schools remains a significant barrier. These institutions, often steeped in tradition and boasting extensive alumni networks, offer a distinct advantage to their pupils. From elite university admissions to coveted internships and graduate schemes, the pathways carved out by these schools are often smoother and better illuminated.

The concept of "cultural capital," coined by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, is crucial here. It refers to the non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means. This includes education, intellect, style of speech, dress, or physical appearance. Children from privileged backgrounds are often imbued with this cultural capital from birth, making them more comfortable and adept in the environments favoured by the upper echelons of society. This isn't about

inherent ability; it's about inherited advantage.

Even within the state sector, the postcode lottery significantly impacts educational outcomes. Schools in affluent areas often receive more funding, attract better teachers, and have more resources, creating a stark disparity for children in less privileged neighbourhoods. The aspiration to a classless society falters when a child's future is so heavily influenced by their geographical location at birth.

The Enduring Echoes of Social Heritage

Beyond formal education, social heritage continues to exert a powerful influence. The old school tie network, while perhaps less overtly potent than in previous generations, still opens doors. Attending the same university, belonging to the same clubs, and having parents who know the right people can provide an immeasurable head start in the professional world. This isn't necessarily malicious; it's the natural consequence of a society that, despite its aspirations, still operates with ingrained social hierarchies.

The Language of Class

Subtle, yet pervasive, are the linguistic markers of class. From the way we pronounce certain words to our choice of vocabulary, our speech can betray our background. While this might seem trivial, it can lead to unconscious biases and judgements. An accent perceived as "common" can, unfortunately, lead to someone being underestimated, while a

more "refined" delivery can garner unconscious respect. This is a testament to how deeply ingrained class perceptions are, even when we strive for objectivity.

The Shifting Sands of Social Mobility

While some evidence suggests a decline in intergenerational social mobility in recent decades, the narrative of upward mobility remains a powerful tool in the classless society myth. The focus often shifts to individual success stories, overshadowing the systemic issues that prevent broader societal change. When we celebrate the few who break through, we risk ignoring the many who remain tethered by their circumstances.

The Economic Realities of Class

Ultimately, economic disparity is the bedrock upon which class structures are built. Income inequality, wealth accumulation, and access to resources remain profoundly uneven. While Britain may not have the ostentatious aristocracy of some European nations, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and the struggles faced by those at the bottom, paint a clear picture of persistent economic stratification. The housing crisis, the rising cost of living, and the precariousness of work for many are all manifestations of these underlying economic divides.

The "Underclass" Debate

The term "underclass" itself is controversial, often used to describe a group perceived as being outside the normal structure of society, characterized by long-term unemployment and dependency. However, critics argue that this label unfairly pathologizes poverty and ignores the systemic factors that trap people in such circumstances. The debate highlights the uncomfortable reality that significant portions of the population face barriers to social and economic inclusion, a far cry from a classless ideal.

Challenging the Myth: Towards a More Honest Conversation

Acknowledging the myth of Britain's classless society is not about fostering resentment or promoting division. Instead, it's about fostering a more honest and nuanced understanding of our nation's social fabric. It's about recognizing that while progress has been made, significant inequalities persist and require ongoing attention and action.

To truly move towards a fairer society, we need to:

1. **Address educational disparities:** Ensuring equal opportunities and resources for all students, regardless of their background or postcode.
2. **Promote genuine social mobility:** Creating pathways for advancement that are based on merit and effort, not on inherited advantage.
3. **Tackle economic inequality:** Implementing policies that

promote fairer distribution of wealth and resources.

4. **Challenge unconscious biases:** Fostering a greater awareness of how class influences our perceptions and interactions.
5. **Foster inclusive language and representation:** Ensuring that all voices and experiences are heard and valued.

The myth of Britain's classless society is a powerful one, a comforting illusion that has, for a time, allowed us to sidestep uncomfortable truths. But the reality is that class remains a potent force, shaping lives and opportunities in profound ways. By confronting this myth head-on, by engaging in open and honest conversations, and by committing to real, systemic change, we can begin to build a Britain that is genuinely a class act, not just in aspiration, but in reality.

Unveiling the Myth: Britain's Classless Society and the Reality Behind the Facade

Behind the polished veneer of modern Britain lies a persistent myth — that social class no longer shapes lives, opportunities, or outcomes. This narrative of a seamless, egalitarian society often obscures deeper truths about enduring class divisions rooted in history, geography, and economic structure. Far from being a relic of the past, class remains a powerful force in shaping identity, influence, and access, even as Britain continues to evolve culturally and socially.

Historically, Britain once appeared to embody a relatively fluid class system, with rigid hierarchies softening over time through industrialization, education expansion, and welfare

reforms. Yet, this transition did not erase class; instead, it transformed its expression. Today, social class continues to influence where people live, the quality of their education, their health outcomes, and even the networks that open doors to opportunity. The persistence of these patterns challenges the widespread belief in a truly classless society, revealing instead a complex landscape where class intersects with wealth, ethnicity, and geography in subtle but profound ways.

Decoding the Myth: Class in Contemporary Britain

The illusion of classlessness thrives on the idea that anyone, regardless of background, can rise based on merit alone. While social mobility has improved in measurable ways—such as increased access to higher education—the data reveals persistent gaps. Regional disparities, for example, highlight how economic activity and investment concentrate in certain areas, leaving others behind. Urban centers with thriving tech and finance sectors contrast sharply with post-industrial communities struggling with limited opportunities. These divides reinforce class-based expectations, not through overt barriers, but through subtle influences on life chances that shape aspirations and outcomes.

Moreover, cultural capital—the knowledge, behaviors, and skills deemed valuable in elite circles—continues to advantage those born into higher-income families. From early exposure to cultural institutions to familiarity with dominant social norms, these advantages are often inherited rather than earned. This continuity fuels the myth that success is purely

individual, masking the structural forces that maintain class boundaries. The result is a society that prides itself on fairness while quietly sustaining divides that resist change.

Applications and Real-World Implications

Understanding the myth of a classless Britain holds significant practical value. In policy-making, acknowledging persistent class influences allows for more targeted interventions—such as regional investment programs or tailored educational support—that address root causes rather than symptoms. In business and leadership, recognizing diverse class backgrounds enriches organizational culture, fostering inclusion that drives innovation and resilience. For educators and community leaders, this awareness helps dismantle assumptions about potential, ensuring equitable access to opportunity and breaking cycles of disadvantage.

Beyond institutional settings, the persistence of class shapes everyday experiences. Conversations about “upward mobility” often overlook systemic barriers, while stereotypes about work ethic, intelligence, or ambition reinforce class-based judgments. Challenging these narratives opens space for empathy and systemic reform, moving beyond blame to collective responsibility for a more just society.

Benefits of Confronting the Truth

Embracing the reality of class in Britain offers transformative benefits. It empowers individuals and communities to

understand their position within broader social structures, fostering agency rather than resignation. For policymakers, data grounded in class realities informs fairer resource allocation and inclusive growth strategies. Culturally, confronting myths paves the way for richer, more authentic stories that reflect Britain's true diversity—stories that honor both privilege and struggle. Ultimately, this clarity lays the foundation for a society where merit and potential are not constrained by birth, but nurtured by fairness and opportunity.

Looking Ahead: A Future Beyond Myth

The path forward requires moving beyond romanticized narratives toward honest dialogue about class. As Britain navigates economic shifts, demographic change, and evolving social values, the myth of a classless society must give way to a more nuanced understanding—one that recognizes both enduring divides and the possibility of meaningful progress. By confronting this truth, society can build pathways that uplift all, ensuring that the dream of equality is not just an ideal, but a lived reality.

A Class Act: The Enduring Myth of Britain's Classless Society

For decades, the notion of a truly "classless society" has been a recurring, often comforting, narrative in Britain. It's a story whispered in parliament, celebrated in popular culture, and

perpetuated by a desire for a more equitable and unified nation. Yet, beneath the surface of this aspirational ideal lies a complex and persistent reality: the enduring power of social class. This article delves into the myth of Britain's classless society, exploring its origins, its manifestations, and the profound implications for social mobility, opportunity, and the very fabric of British identity.

The idea of shedding the rigid class structures of the past has been a potent force in shaping post-war Britain. The Labour government's establishment of the National Health Service (NHS) and comprehensive education system, for instance, were monumental efforts to level the playing field and dismantle the hereditary advantages that had long dictated life chances. These reforms, undeniably progressive, fostered a belief that the old distinctions were fading, replaced by a more meritocratic system where hard work and talent could triumph regardless of background. This optimistic outlook, however, often overshadowed the subtle, yet significant, ways in which class continued to influence lives.

The Legacy of the Old Boy Network: Entrenched Advantages

Despite legislative attempts at equality, the “old boy network” – a system of informal connections and patronage rooted in privileged education and social circles – has proven remarkably resilient. The continued dominance of certain elite private schools, like Eton College and Harrow, and their strong ties to prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, remains a stark indicator of this enduring

advantage. Graduates from these institutions often find themselves fast-tracked into positions of power and influence across various sectors, from politics and finance to media and the judiciary.

This isn't merely about academic achievement; it's about the development of a specific cultural capital. The language, etiquette, and social confidence cultivated in these environments provide a distinct advantage in navigating the corridors of power. This subconscious preference for those who speak the same language and share similar cultural references, often termed "cultural capital" by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, can create invisible barriers for individuals from less privileged backgrounds, even when their academic qualifications are comparable. The perpetuation of these networks, often unintentionally, reinforces existing power structures and perpetuates a subtle form of class discrimination.

Beyond the Obvious: The Nuances of Class Distinction

The understanding of class in modern Britain has evolved beyond the simplistic divide of aristocracy, middle class, and working class. Sociologists have identified a more granular spectrum, acknowledging distinctions within these broad categories and the emergence of new social groups. The Great British Class Survey, a landmark study conducted by the BBC and leading academics, revealed a more complex picture, identifying seven distinct social classes based on wealth, occupation, and cultural and social capital. This research

highlighted that economic status alone does not define class; shared tastes, activities, and social connections play a crucial role in social stratification.

These nuanced distinctions manifest in myriad ways. The choice of leisure activities, the type of music one listens to, the holidays one takes, and even the way one speaks can all serve as markers of social standing. These are not necessarily conscious decisions to exclude, but rather the natural consequence of shared experiences and upbringing. For individuals from working-class backgrounds, for instance, the language and social cues prevalent in certain middle-class or upper-class environments can feel alienating, creating a sense of being an outsider. This can impact everything from job interviews to social interactions, reinforcing the subtle but pervasive influence of class.

The Intergenerational Transmission of Inequality

One of the most persistent features of class in Britain is its intergenerational transmission. The advantages and disadvantages associated with a particular social class tend to be passed down from parents to children. Children from wealthier backgrounds are more likely to attend better-resourced schools, receive private tuition, and benefit from parental networks that can open doors to internships and employment. Conversely, children from poorer backgrounds often face a steeper climb, contending with underfunded schools, limited access to extracurricular activities, and a lack of established social capital.

This cyclical nature of inequality is a direct challenge to the idea of a classless society. While individual success stories – the rags-to-riches narratives – capture public imagination, they can inadvertently mask the systemic barriers that prevent widespread social mobility. The perpetuation of these cycles means that talent and potential can be squandered simply because of the circumstances of one's birth. This has significant societal implications, leading to a less diverse workforce, a less innovative economy, and a more divided society.

The Role of Education: A Double-Edged Sword

Education is often hailed as the great equalizer, the primary vehicle for upward social mobility. However, the reality in Britain is more complex. While state education has made significant strides, the disparities between well-resourced state schools in affluent areas and those in deprived communities remain a cause for concern. Furthermore, the overwhelming influence of a select few elite universities continues to shape career trajectories, often favoring those who have had access to the preparatory education and social grooming that leads to acceptance.

The debate around "access" to higher education highlights this tension. While efforts have been made to widen participation, the underlying advantages of a certain type of upbringing – familiarity with academic discourse, confidence in expressing opinions, and the ability to navigate complex application processes – can still give some students an edge.

The cost of higher education, even with student loans, can also be a deterrent for some families, further entrenching existing class divides. The aspiration for a classless society is profoundly linked to the promise of equal educational opportunity, a promise that remains, for many, unfulfilled.

Media Portrayals and the Reinforcement of Stereotypes

The media plays a significant role in shaping public perception of class. While some contemporary dramas and comedies have sought to explore the complexities of class relations with greater nuance, historical portrayals have often relied on well-worn stereotypes. The exaggerated depictions of posh characters and their detached lifestyles, or the caricatured representations of working-class communities, can reinforce a binary understanding of class and obscure the lived realities of individuals.

The ongoing fascination with the Royal Family, for example, while seemingly an apolitical interest, can also serve to reinforce a romanticized view of aristocracy and inherited privilege, inadvertently upholding the notion of a natural hierarchy. Conversely, the sensationalization of working-class struggles can sometimes perpetuate negative stereotypes, hindering efforts towards greater understanding and empathy. A truly classless society would necessitate media that actively challenges these ingrained perceptions and promotes a more accurate and inclusive representation of British society.

Conclusion: Towards a More Honest Conversation About Class

The myth of Britain's classless society is a persistent and powerful one, rooted in a desire for equality and meritocracy. However, a critical examination reveals that social class continues to exert a profound influence on opportunities, life chances, and social interactions. The enduring legacy of privilege, the subtle markers of distinction, the intergenerational transmission of inequality, and the complex role of education all point to the fact that Britain is far from classless.

Acknowledging the reality of class is not about fostering division or lamenting the past. Instead, it is about engaging in an honest and critical conversation about the structures and attitudes that perpetuate inequality. Only by understanding the enduring myth of the classless society can we begin to dismantle the very real barriers that prevent so many from reaching their full potential. The pursuit of true equality requires a deeper engagement with the persistent realities of social class and a commitment to creating a society where everyone, regardless of their background, has a genuine opportunity to thrive. This is the essential work for any nation aspiring to be truly just and equitable.

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In conclusion, digital access to [A Class Act The Myth Of Britains Classless Society](#) demonstrates the powerful fusion of technology and learning. Through responsible use of legal platforms, users can maximize knowledge acquisition while supporting ethical practices and cybersecurity. Digital downloads enable continuous intellectual growth, making education more accessible, flexible, and relevant in the digital age.

Questions & Answers About a class act the myth of britains classless society

No	Question	Answer
1	What is 'A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society' arguing?	'A Class Act' argues that despite common perceptions, Britain is far from a classless society. It highlights how deeply entrenched class structures continue to influence opportunities, social mobility, and life chances for individuals across the UK.
2	Who wrote 'A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society'?	'A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society' is a work that explores the persistent nature of class in Britain. While specific authors can vary for different iterations of this theme in books and media, the core argument is that Britain's class system remains a significant barrier.
3	What evidence does 'A Class Act' present to debunk the idea of a classless society in Britain?	'A Class Act' likely draws on data showing disparities in income, wealth, education, health outcomes, and access to prestigious professions, all of which correlate strongly with social class origins. It might also reference qualitative evidence from personal experiences of class barriers.

4	How does 'A Class Act' define 'class' in the British context?	'A Class Act' likely defines class not just by income, but also by factors like parental occupation, education, cultural capital (tastes, knowledge), and social networks. This broader definition reveals the subtle yet powerful ways class operates.
5	What are the modern-day implications of Britain not being a classless society, according to 'A Class Act'?	The implications are significant, including limited social mobility, perpetuation of inequality, and a potential waste of talent. It suggests that talented individuals from less privileged backgrounds may not reach their full potential due to systemic disadvantages.
6	Does 'A Class Act' suggest that social mobility is impossible in Britain?	Not necessarily impossible, but 'A Class Act' strongly suggests that social mobility is significantly harder and more limited than commonly believed. It points to systemic barriers that make upward movement a struggle for many.
7	What role does education play in the argument of 'A Class Act'?	Education is a central theme. The book likely highlights how access to quality education, from early years to university, is heavily stratified by class, reinforcing existing inequalities and hindering social mobility.
8	What are some of the cultural markers of class discussed in relation to Britain?	'A Class Act' might explore cultural markers such as accent, dialect, leisure activities, consumption patterns (e.g., brands, holidays), and the arts people engage with, which can act as subtle indicators of social class.

9	What does 'A Class Act' suggest can be done to address class inequality in Britain?	While specific solutions can vary, 'A Class Act' likely advocates for policies that promote genuine equality of opportunity. This could include reforms in education, progressive taxation, measures to tackle wealth inequality, and efforts to challenge class-based discrimination.
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Britain's classless society myth, The class act and social hierarchy in Britain, Myth of meritocracy in UK class structure, Britain's class divide and social mobility, A class act: challenging the myth of classless Britain, Social classes in modern Britain explained, The illusion of a classless British society, Class, privilege, and the British identity, Debunking the myth of classless Britain, The reality behind Britain's class system

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