

# Discover Economics

## Improving Diversity in Undergraduate Economics



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Scottish Economic Society

## THE PROBLEM

It is increasingly recognised that economics has a diversity problem and it starts at school and university.

State school and black students are under-represented among economics undergraduates and fewer than 30% of economics students are women.

By not studying economics, these students miss out on a degree that leads to high-paid future careers.<sup>1</sup> But more fundamentally, the lack of diversity among economics students is a problem because economists – who occupy key policy roles in government departments and the Bank of England – need to reflect the society that they are helping to shape.

Since one in five economics graduates goes on to work in finance, the lack of diversity among economics students may contribute to the well-known lack of diversity in the financial sector.

## THE CAMPAIGN

Discover Economics is a new three-year campaign led by the Royal Economic Society (RES) in partnership with leading economics organisations. The campaign aims to:

- broaden the appeal of economics to potential students
- change their perceptions of economics and economists
- attract more students from under-represented groups (women, state school/further education college students and ethnic minorities).

Promoting good economics education is important at all ages, but the campaign will target 15-17 year olds – young people who are making choices about what post-16 qualifications to take and what subjects to study at university. One issue for these students is that they may have limited information about economics if it is not taught in their school or college – and they may have few role models in the subject.

Increased student outreach will be a key part of the campaign. The outreach will focus on delivering key messages – that economics is a broad, social science subject that can be taken by almost anyone at university, even if they haven't studied economics or A-level maths.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/undergraduate-degrees-labour-market-returns>

# GET INVOLVED

Students have told us that they want to know more about studying economics and more opportunities to hear from economists and economics graduates. The RES will work with partner organisations to deliver this.

A new campaign website will provide a key platform for providing this information:

[www.discovereconomics.ac.uk](http://www.discovereconomics.ac.uk)

The website will grow and be upgraded as the campaign progresses. It will advertise any outreach events, internship opportunities and a new student ambassador programme that the campaign is developing.

You can support the campaign by:

- joining as a partner
- increasing your organisation's student outreach activity and promoting it via the campaign website
- promoting the campaign website and following our Twitter
- pledging funding towards our website, ambassador programme or other outreach initiatives.

# GET IN TOUCH

Our campaign task force is co-chaired by Sarah Smith (University of Bristol) and Arun Advani (University of Warwick).

Please get in touch with them or the RES Chief Executive Leighton Chipperfield if you wish to find out more and/or support the campaign.

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*Attracting people from a wide diversity of backgrounds and outlooks into economics really matters – for the future of the discipline and for good policy-making. With this campaign, we will do all we can to engage the very best and brightest students.*

**Rachel Griffith, President of the Royal Economic Society**

*At the Bank of England, we are currently having to think about new problems, such as the impact of climate change on the economy and the future of work. These issues will need new perspectives and different viewpoints if we are to come up with solutions that have a positive impact on all society. It is critical that economists reflect this and that the profession appeals to a diverse range of people. That is why this initiative is so important.*

**Ratidzo Starkey, Head of Outreach and Education, Bank of England**

*We need to undo the mismatch between the central role of Economics in society and its chronic lack of diversity. If institutions are to serve the society they shape, they need to break the not-for-me barrier and access the diverse economic experience and ideas of talented people of all backgrounds.*

*If I ask a young person or adult to draw an economist, the image is always the same: an older man, surrounded by £ signs, in a suit. Changing the public image of Economics as a subject among young people is step one in future-proofing and diversifying the discipline at the heart of our democracy*

**Ali Norrish, Head of Research and Schools, Economy**