

# *The Case for Affirmative Action in France*



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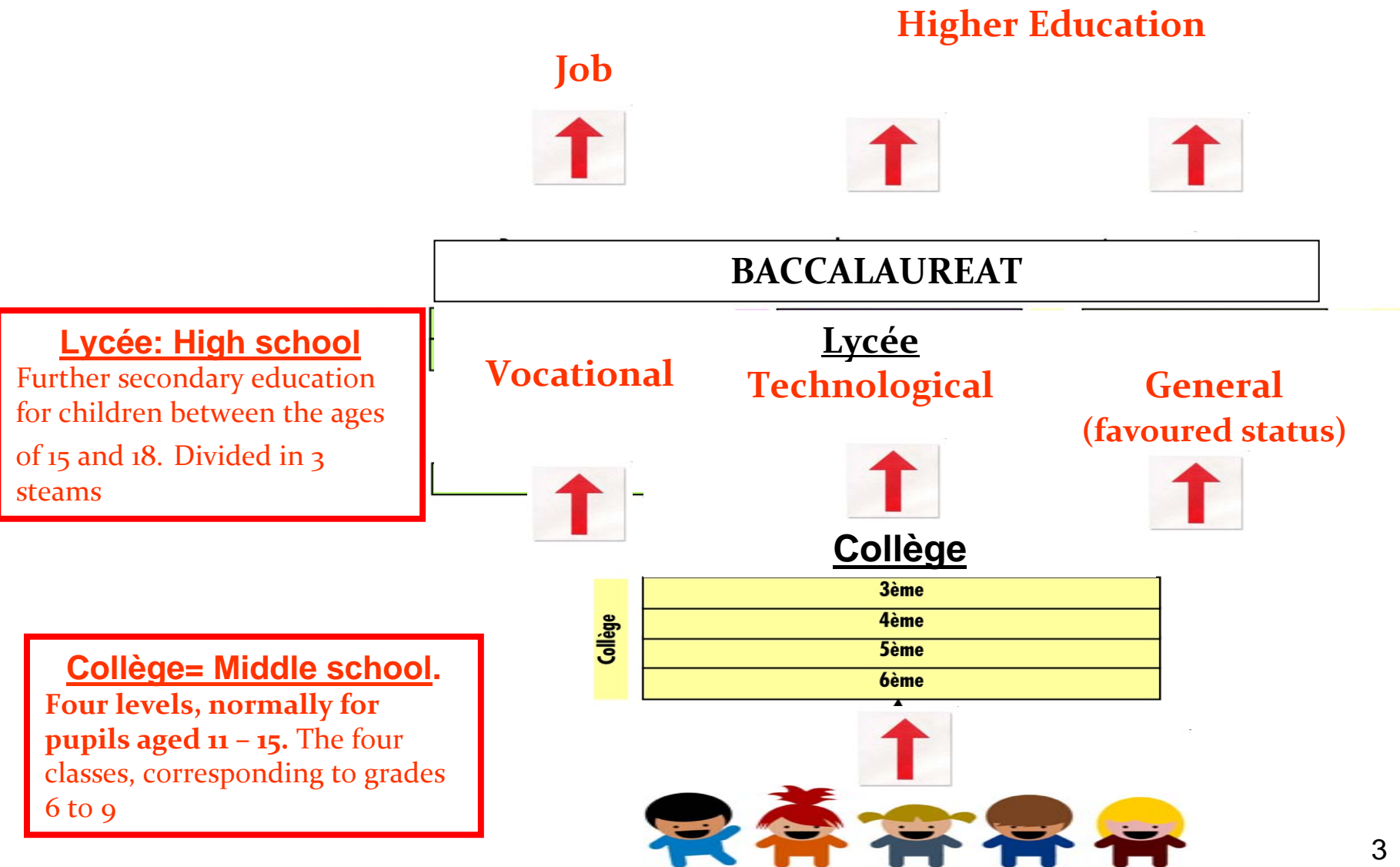


*“But the most troubling case... involves institutions like English public schools or Sciences-Po and the ENA, whose recruitment procedures are so obviously designed to guarantee them students already endowed through their background, with the dispositions they require that we have to wonder whether, as the Romans used to say, they aren’t merely —teaching fish to swim”*

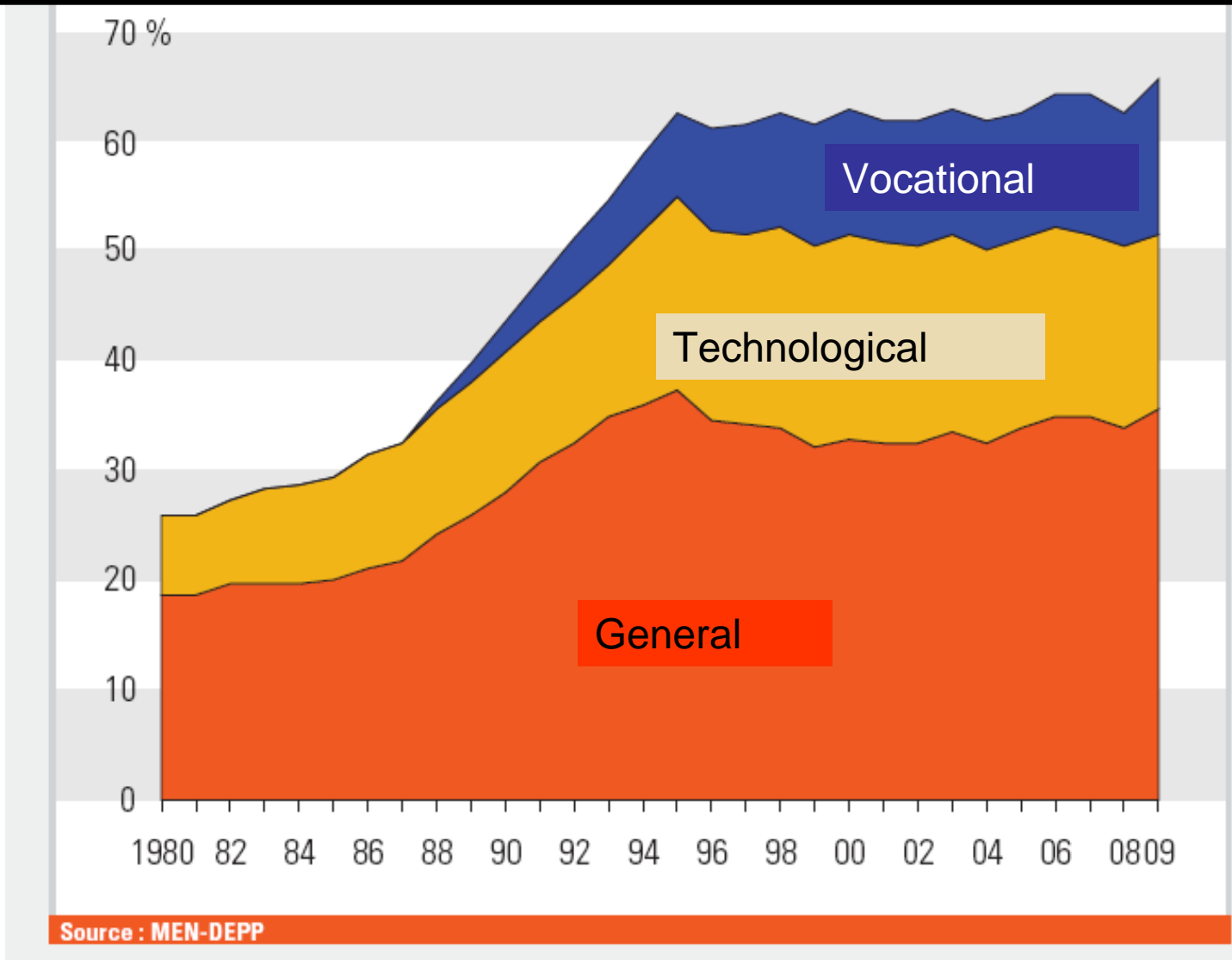
**Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*: 1996**

In Bowen (2011)

# From "collège unique" to college: the paradoxical French pipeline



# Share of students passing the Baccalauréat in each stream (1980-2000)



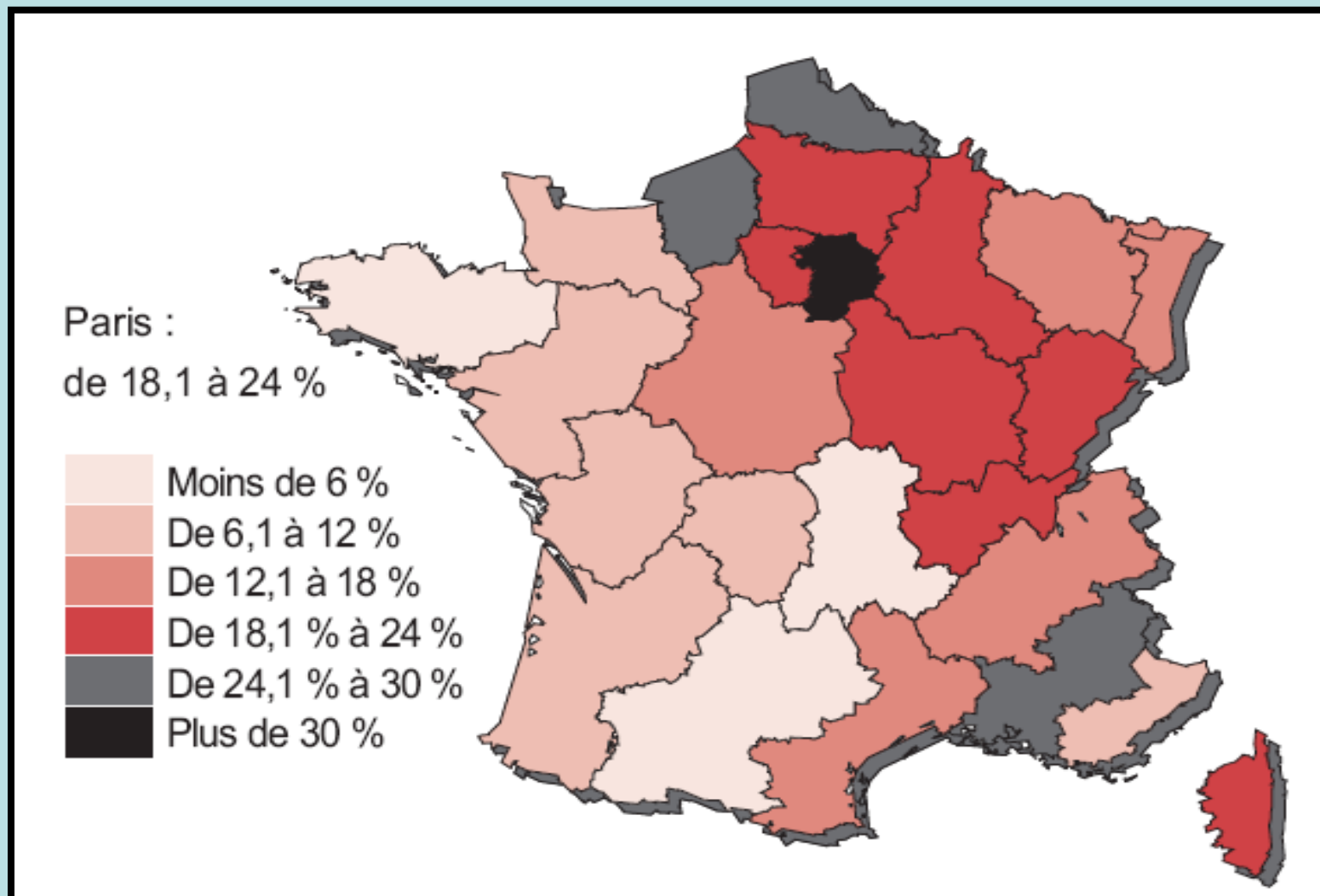
## Social background of students obtaining the baccalauréat

	Général	Technologique	Professionnel
Agriculteurs exploitants	55,3	22,7	21,9
Artisans, commerçants, chefs d'entr.	49,3	23,9	26,9
<b>Upper class background</b>	<b>75,3</b>	15,5	9,2
Professions intermédiaires	57,6	25,9	16,5
Employés	48,1	29,7	22,2
<b>Working-class background</b>	<b>33,2</b>	<b>28,4</b>	<b>38,3</b>
Retraités – Inactifs	41,3	28,6	30,1
<b>Ensemble</b>	<b>53,2</b>	<b>24,2</b>	<b>22,4</b>

Lecture : en 2009, 33,2 % des bacheliers enfants d'ouvriers ont obtenu un baccalauréat général, 28,4 % un baccalauréat technologique et 38,3 % un baccalauréat professionnel.

Source : MEN-DEPP (OCEAN)

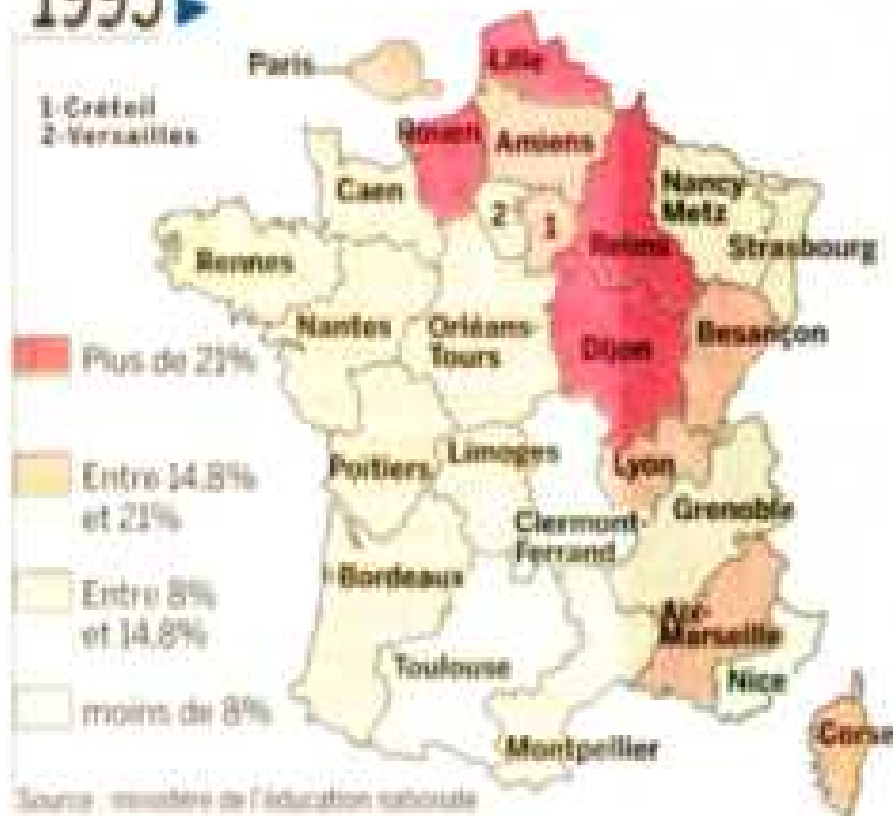
## Share of French students in « Priority Education Zones » in 1999



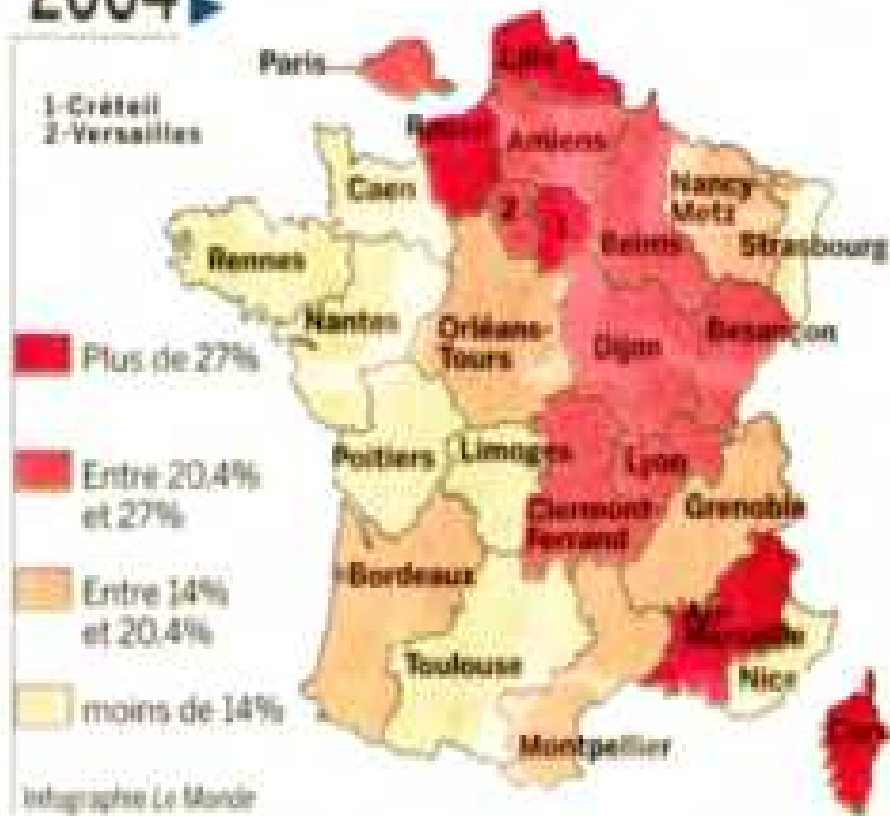
# High schools in « Education priority zones », more and more...

## Part des collégiens en zone d'éducation prioritaire

1995



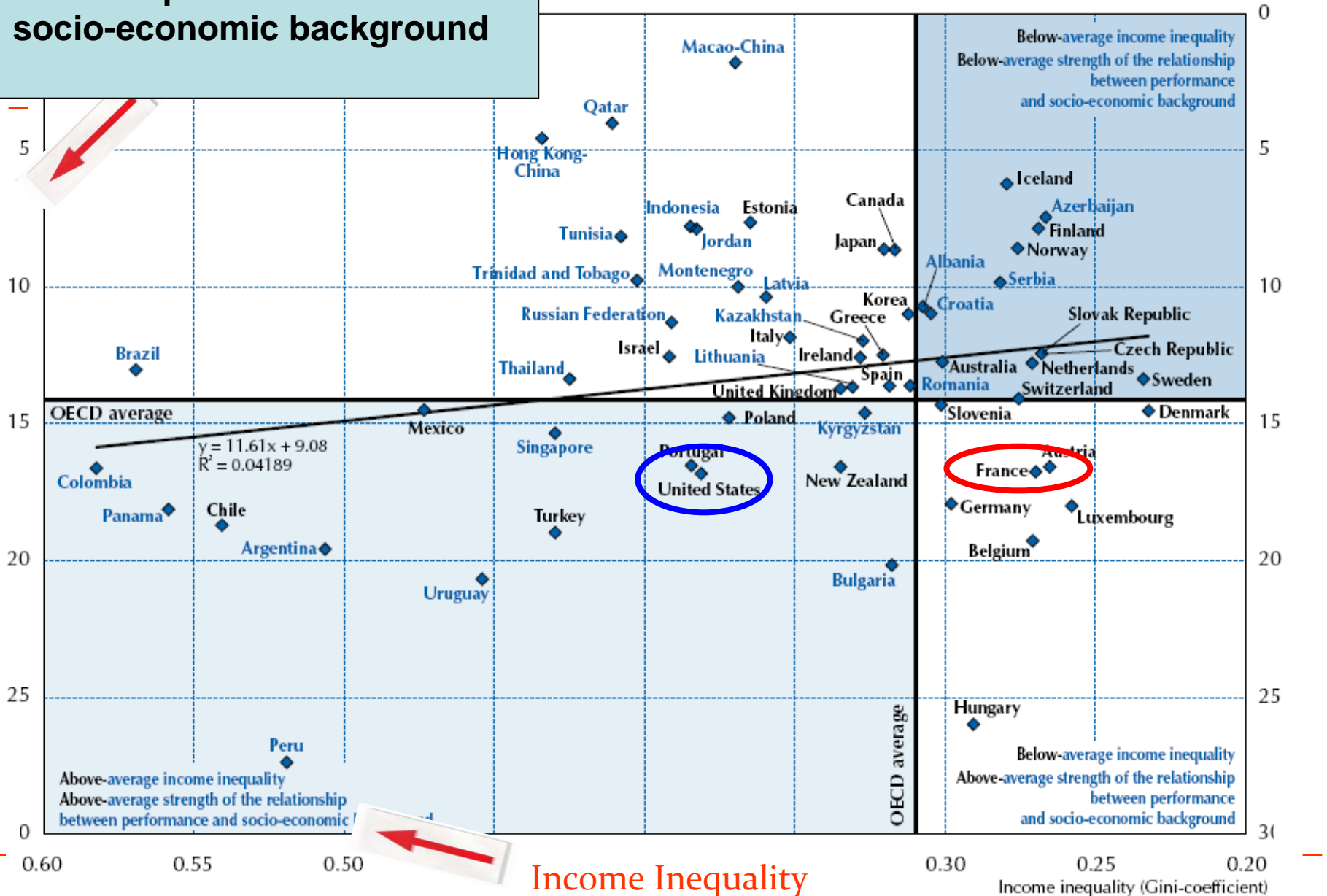
2004



# PISA 2009

## Strenght of the relationship between performance and socio-economic background

Strength of the relationship between performance and the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (Percentage of explained variance in student performance)





Higher quality or equity than OECD average

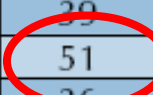
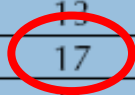
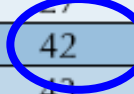
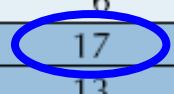
At OECD average (no statistically significant difference)

Lower quality or equity than OECD average

**PISA  
(2009)  
Assessing  
inequality:  
Student  
performance  
and social  
background**

OECD

	Mean reading score	Percentage of boys below proficiency Level 2	Percentage of girls below proficiency Level 2	Percentage of resilient students	Percentage of variance in student performance explained by students' socio-economic background	Slope of the socio-economic gradient
OECD average	493	25	13	8	14	38
Korea	539	9	2	14	11	32
Finland	536	13	3	11	8	31
Canada	524	14	6	10	9	32
New Zealand	521	21	8	9	17	52
Japan	520	19	8	11	9	40
Australia	515	20	9	8	13	46
Netherlands	508	18	11	8	13	37
Belgium	506	21	14	8	19	47
Norway	503	21	8	6	9	36
Estonia	501	19	7	9	8	29
Switzerland	501	22	11	8	14	40
Poland	500	23	7	9	15	39
Iceland	500	24	10	7	6	27
United States	500	21	14	7	17	42
Sweden	497	24	10	6	13	43
Germany	497	24	13	6	18	44
Ireland	496	23	11	7	13	39
France	496	26	14	8	17	51
Denmark	495	19	11	6	15	36
United Kingdom	494	23	14	6	14	44
Hungary	494	24	11	6	26	48
Portugal	489	25	11	10	17	30
Italy	486	29	13	8	12	32



# Socio-economic background and reading performance

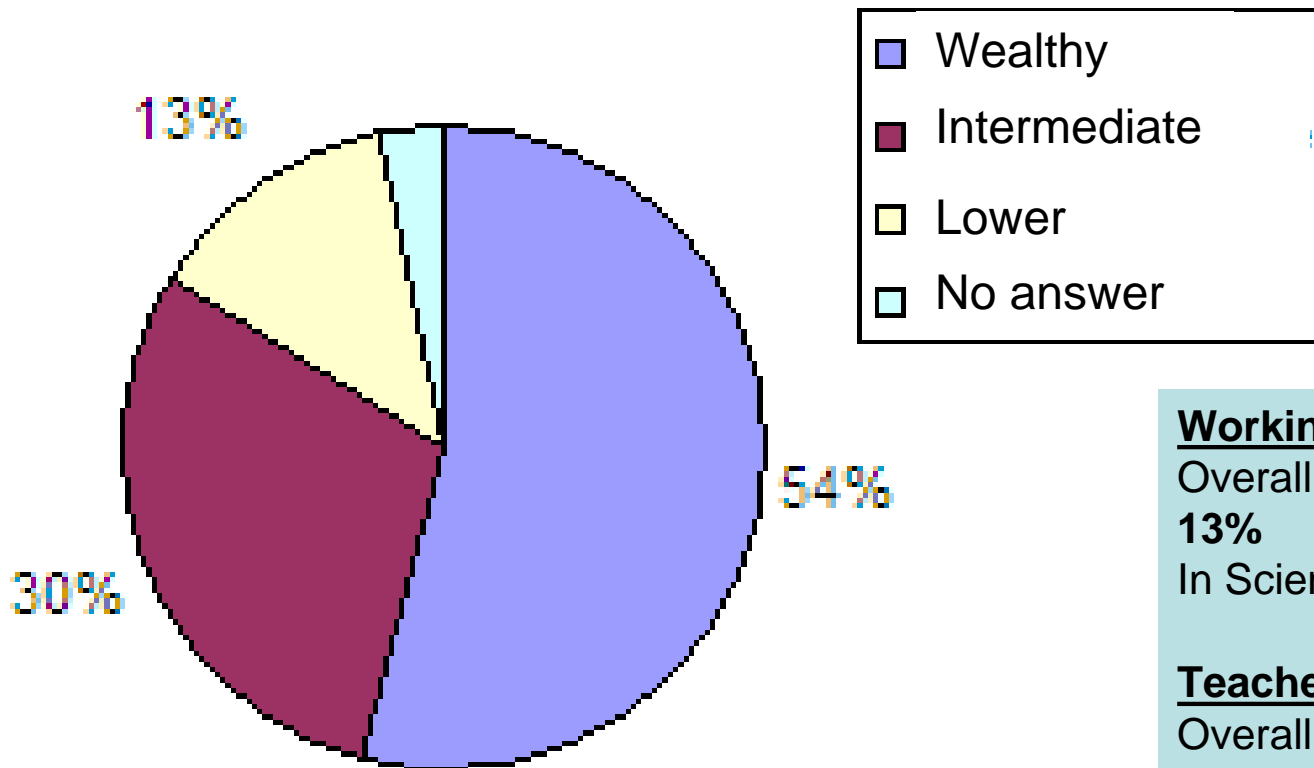
(PISA 2009)

The *strength* of the gradient measures the *strength* of the association between student performance and background: that is, it measures the proportion of the variation in student performance that is accounted for by socio-economic background.

The *slope* of the gradient line measures the steepness of the average relationship between reading performance and socio-economic background. The slope shows how much students' performance changes, on average, with a change of one unit on the index of socio-economic status.

	OECD	US	France
Strength of the gradient	14	17	16,7
Slope of the gradient	38	42	51

# Social background of students attending high performance tracks in higher education (preparatory classes to *grandes écoles*) in 2005



## Working class:

Overall French population= 13%

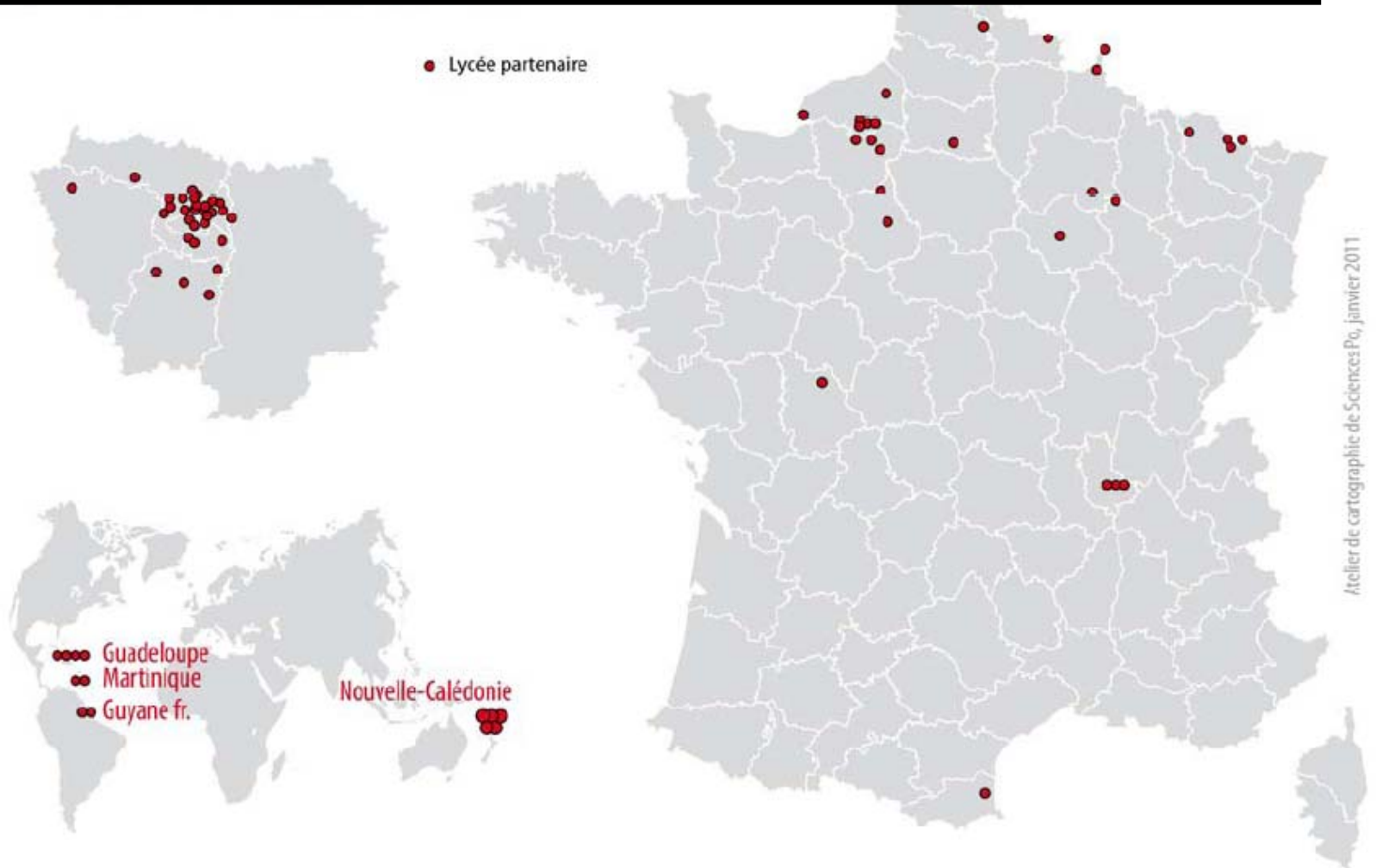
In Sciences-Po = 4%

## Teachers:

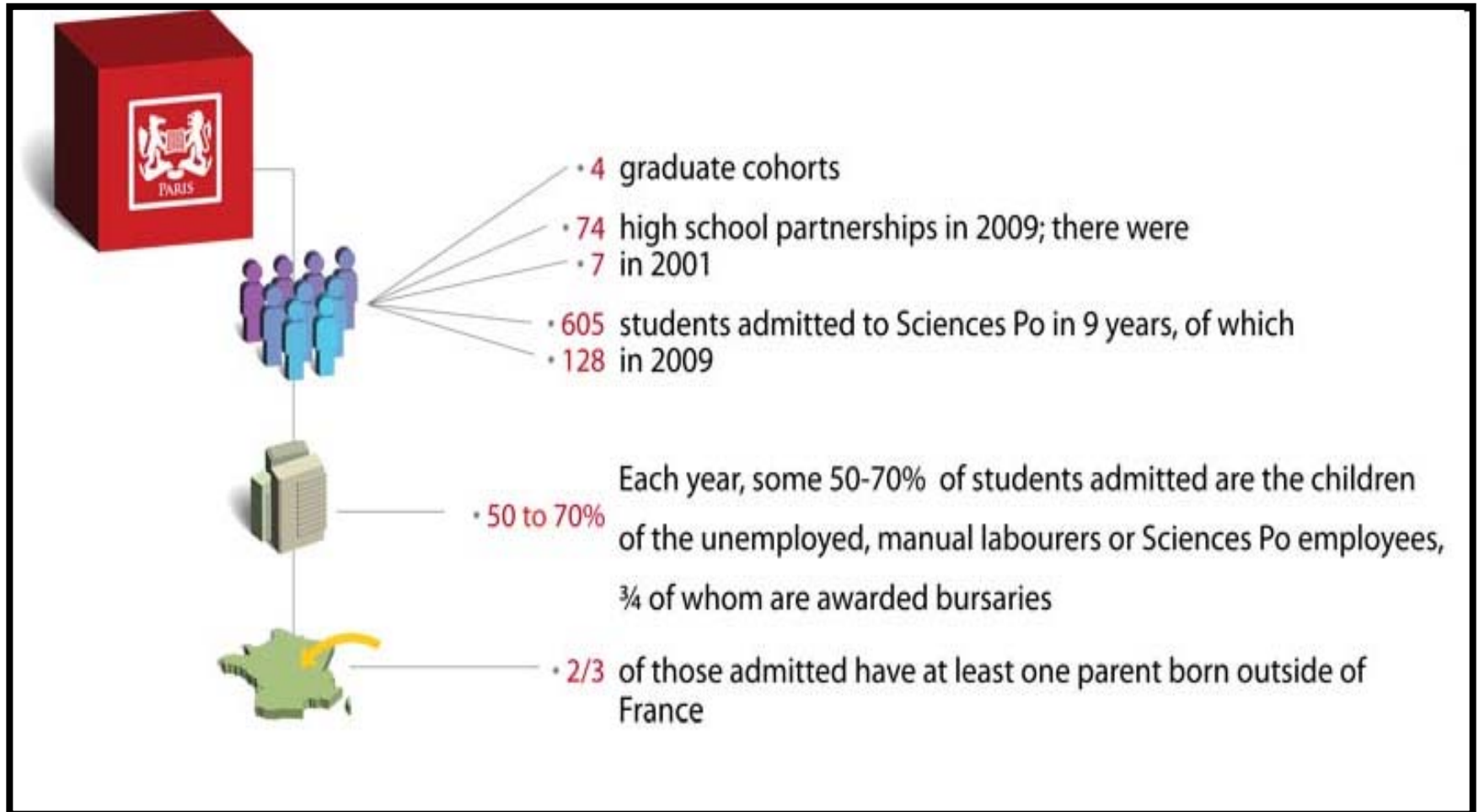
Overall French population=3,5%

In Sciences-Po=15%

# Sciences-Po « Conventions Education Prioritaire » 86 affiliated high schools in Education priority areas



# Sciences-Po Equal Opportunity and Diversity Program





# France and the US: toward race-neutral Affirmative action?

