

How do French people look at equality of opportunity?

By Michel Forsé (CNRS) and [Maxime Parodi](#)

Do the French people believe in equal opportunity? The Dynegal survey asked the question in 2013 to a representative sample of 4,000 individuals, whose responses were very mixed. In a [recent article in the *Revue de l'OFCE* \(no. 146, 2016 \[in French\]\)](#), we show that it is the middle classes who prove to be a little more convinced than others by the idea that schooling gives everyone a chance and that one's success in life does not depend on social origin. This result is in line with the thesis by Simmel that makes the middle-class the site of social mobility.

The survey also raises questions about the link between the belief in equal opportunity and social expectations in terms of recognition of merit and equality of results. As might be expected, the less one believes in equality of opportunity, the less one defends the recognition of merit, and the greater the demand for equality of results. On the other hand, French people who are perfectly convinced that everyone has the same chance of success defend not only the recognition of merit, but also equality of place. This unexpected result highlights, in fact, a risk inherent in a society that is conceived of as totally meritocratic: the risk of completely discrediting the losers and of not finding them a place in society.