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Set at Birth? Intergenerational Mobility for Protected Characteristics in England and Wales

William King
Matthew Mayhew
Suzi Robertson
Hannah Teare
Rebecca Williams
Vasileios Antonopoulos

There has been much previous analyses carried out in the area of intergenerational mobility. Usually, mobility is defined through differing lenses, which include: earnings mobility, social class mobility, occupational class mobility and educational mobility. These measures are used extensively to point towards the inequality that may or may not exist in the area of interest being analysed, as well as the opportunity of outcomes for the next generation, or lack thereof.

One of the key findings across many cross-country comparisons (Solon, 2012. Jantti et al. 2006) is that the UK has a relatively high earnings elasticity, i.e. a child's earnings in the UK are more dependent on what their parents earn in comparison to other countries. OECD (2018) additionally provided measures of social class and educational persistence showing: relative to other countries, in Great Britain education is more persistent across generations and social class is less persistent.

One issue with most intergenerational mobility studies is the need to use longitudinal or cohort studies, which are often associated with smaller sample sizes, attrition and less than ideal population coverage. The chosen dataset for this analysis is the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study (ONS LS). This dataset has great benefit over other longitudinal datasets and cohort studies as it is a 1% sample of the England and Wales Census. Since it is a Census, it suffers from less issues of sample sizes and attrition. Out of the many studies created, only a few have implemented the ONS LS. These studies include that of Buscha & Sturgis (2018), who analyse general mobility trends across men and women defined through changes in NS-SEC. This study, and most others however, have no focus on protected characteristics, how these may be drivers in and of themselves.

The objective of this study is to assess how intergenerational mobility in England and Wales has changed across time, what are its drivers, and how this differs across protected characteristics. Analysis will be carried out from 1971 to 2011 using longitudinal data at 10 year intervals to

show how mobility has changed across time between parents and their children's outcomes. Protected characteristics that will be analysed include ethnicity, country of birth and health status. Social mobility will be assessed through three lenses: highest qualification, standard Occupation class and (NS) Socio economic class.

These three categories and the chosen dataset (ONS LS) present particular issues when analysing parents' and resulting children's outcomes, which would be of interest to inequality researchers - namely changes in classifications as society changes, and appropriate mobility mechanisms. The paper will suggest some ways to deal with the former, such as focusing on empirically defined 'top' jobs as they evolve across time. Additionally, different mechanisms which may play out at different stages of life are implicitly tested - such as the distinct impact of a parent's job when children are younger, and when they are teenagers, and the resulting outcome on those children when adults, as well as their progression trajectories.

The output of the analysis will take two forms: summary statistics and regression models. Summary statistics will aim to show how educational, social and occupational mobility have changed across time for differing protected characteristics at the top level. Then, more detailed regression analysis will be presented to understand the factors which influence mobility, or lack thereof. It will also enable the control for different drivers of social mobility, as well as how they potentially interact with other factors.

Refs

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