

Do you need to leave your home area to achieve a better life?

Stark geographical inequalities in economic prosperity in Britain must be urgently tackled to ensure that people from all backgrounds have opportunities to get on, says the Social Mobility Commission in its report, [Moving out to move on: understanding the link between migration, disadvantage and social mobility](#), published today (Thursday 23 July).

The report shows that those who move to London and the south-east still have much better job prospects, and earn higher pay than those who stay in their areas irrespective of their background.

'Movers' will on average earn 33% more than 'stayers' and are 50% more likely to have a degree. They typically move whilst in their 20s – often gravitating towards London and the south-east – and are more likely to end up in managerial or professional jobs, says the research.

However, the study, based on analytical data and interviews with 'movers' and 'stayers', shows that those from more privileged backgrounds are still far more likely to move to prosperous areas with greater opportunities than those from poorer backgrounds.

People from poorer backgrounds living in deprived areas usually miss out. Constrained by financial barriers such as affordable housing, they are more likely to stay in their areas. 'Stayers' are less likely to be in a professional or managerial job than 'movers' and often find themselves in low-paid work with fewer prospects.

If they do move, they are 4 times more likely to move to an area of similar – or worse – deprivation than to more prosperous regions.

But 'stayers' often benefit from greater well-being and a sense of community. Almost two-thirds (64%) of those surveyed were homeowners compared with 55% of movers. Quality of life, personal connections and low living costs were also cited as reasons for staying.

The research was carried out by the [Institute for Employment Studies \(IES\)](#). Dafni Papoutsaki, IES lead author, said:

Our research highlights the clear benefits and advantages to moving by those who can afford to but also underlines the important cultural, personal and familial reasons why people may choose to stay in the area where they grew up.

While moving towards more prosperous areas is linked to higher pay, those who move to affluent city centres do not necessarily have a better quality of life than those who stay where they grew up.

Policies that support both the individual and enhance infrastructure in less well-off areas can provide opportunities and a genuine choice of where to work and live, regardless of one's background.

Key findings from the report include:

- men who stay in the most deprived regions are 14.3% points less likely to be employed in higher occupation levels, compared with men who move
- only 36% of 'stayers' have a degree, compared with more than half (56%) of 'movers'
- only 28% of 'stayers' without a degree work in higher managerial occupations, while 42% of 'movers' without a degree achieve higher managerial jobs
- average gross monthly earnings for 'stayers' are just £1,739, compared with £2,327 for 'movers' – a 33% difference
- 'stayers' are less likely to be employed in a higher managerial or professional occupation (39%) compared with 'movers' (59%)
- women are more likely to move than men, with women 16% more likely to move between affluent areas

The commission suggests coronavirus (COVID-19) could transform internal migration by allowing more people to stay where they grew up and work from home. The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak could make life harder for people with low-paid jobs in more deprived areas, but it could also be a timely opportunity to revolutionise working patterns. The report urges employers to ensure geographically diverse workforces by not only recruiting near their physical headquarters but also setting up proper flexible working arrangements.

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Sandra Wallace, joint interim chair of the commission, and joint managing director Europe at DLA Piper said:

Home working has been successful for many employers and for particular job roles. It has also shown that people's views about where they want to live, and why they want to live there may be shifting.

The commission sees the report as a springboard for a deeper conversation with local leaders, including local councils, metro mayors, educators and employers to boost social mobility in coastal and rural areas.

Policy suggestions include:

- universities and colleges should work together to ensure local areas have a coherent and flexible offer for school leavers

- local authorities and employers should work together to identify and correct any mismatch between local skills and local needs
- digital infrastructure and skills, transport connections and good quality, affordable housing should be prioritised by local leaders to attract new people
- councils should work with metro mayors and community groups to strengthen cultural identity in every local community

Sandra Wallace said:

In our combined efforts to rebuild the economy after the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we must mitigate the trade-offs involved in becoming more socially mobile and ensure that opportunity relies much less on geography. People should not have to move to prosper.

Notes to editors

The commission board comprises of:

- Sandra Wallace, Interim Co-Chair, Joint Managing Director Europe at DLA Piper
- Steven Cooper, Interim Co-Chair, Chief Executive Officer C.Hoare & Co
- Alastair da Costa, Chair of Capital City College Group
- Farrah Storr, Editor-in-chief, Elle
- Harvey Matthewson, Aviation Activity Officer at Aerobility
- Jessica Oghenegweke, Presenter, BBC Earth Kids
- Jody Walker, Senior Vice President at TJX Europe (TK Maxx and Home Sense in the UK)
- Liz Williams, Chief Executive Officer of Futuredotnow
- Pippa Dunn, Founder of Broody, helping entrepreneurs and start-ups
- Saeed Atcha, Chief Executive Officer of Youth Leads UK
- Sam Friedman, Associate Professor in Sociology at London School of Economics
- Sammy Wright, Vice Principal of Southmoor Academy, Sunderland

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