

Press release: SMC relaunch with 12 new commissioners and bigger research budget

Young people are the most pessimistic about their chances of moving up in society with just 1 in 7 thinking their generation has the most opportunity to do so, new [research](#) shows.

Published to coincide with today's (11 December 2018) launch of the Social Mobility Commission, the survey revealed deep unease in Britain about the gap between the rich and the poor. It shows that people think the government, employers and schools are doing too little to help the less advantaged get a fair chance in life.

The findings show just 15% of 18 to 24 year olds think their generation has the best chance of moving up in society. Just 13% say their generation will have the best standard of living, and 12% believe they will fare best in terms of personal finances, compared to older generations.

The social mobility barometer polls of over 5,000 people and is carried out by YouGov. The Social Mobility Barometer 2018 report discloses that the over 65s are much more likely to think that apprenticeships offer the best opportunity for progression, compared to the young people that many of these roles are aimed at. Younger people, in comparison, thought higher education offered a better opportunity.

Dame Martina Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission said:

If we fail to act too many young people will continue to face challenges getting into colleges, universities and employment. We all need to do more to tackle these issues, but there needs to be renewed focus from government, educators and employers.

40% of people think it is getting harder for those from disadvantaged backgrounds to move up in society. Over half of the respondents think central government should be doing more to improve social mobility, followed by local government, (39%) schools (36%) and employers (36%).

Dame Martina will announce that the government has allocated an extra £2 million to commission new research and evidence from next April, as she introduces her 12 new commissioners at the relaunch.

Dame Martina said:

I am delighted the government is showing its commitment to the Social Mobility Commission by providing an initial £2 million for

research and evidence in our first full year of operating as a new commission. This will enable us to start expanding our research base and deliver on our role to promote social mobility throughout the country.

The 12 commissioners bring a range of expertise from education, business and academia, and are from diverse backgrounds, many with their own social mobility journeys. This diversity of experience and background will bring a wider range of perspectives to the work of the commission. This includes a better grasp of the issues facing young people today – 3 commissioners are under 23 and are passionate about using their voice to help young people.

Saeed Atcha, 22, one of the new commissioners and founder of the magazine Xplode said:

I believe there is always a need to have young voices at the table so I'm thrilled to be representing young people and bringing their voice to the fore. The poll shows they are pessimistic about their future and they do not have the right opportunities. It's vital that we take urgent steps to address this.

Dame Martina said:

We are a group of people with real-life experiences who are prepared to challenge government, business and society as a whole, to create a fair system where people can thrive.

Matthew Fell, CBI UK, Chief Policy Director, said:

Creating the conditions for an inclusive economy matters hugely to business. We should leave no stone unturned in looking for the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs and business leaders, in all parts of society.

Business is already doing lots, and can do even more. Whether it's helping to develop new, high-quality apprenticeships or providing young people with insights into the world of work, business has a vital role to play in improving social mobility.

The commissioners will start drawing up their priorities next week. For their first year, these are expected to include a focus on vocational education and skills. In the new year the commission will be releasing a social mobility toolkit for employers and, in March, will set out their annual State of the Nation assessment of social mobility in Great Britain.

Other key findings from the Social Mobility Barometer 2018 report include:

- nearly half, (46%), of people saying that life chances depend heavily on your background and who your parents are – only a third think that everyone, regardless of background, has a fair chance to get on
- 75% say there is a large gap between social classes with only 14% saying the gap is small.
- there are big regional variations with 83% of people in the North East thinking there is a large gap between social classes, falling to 73% in the south of England and East Midlands
- 44% of those aged 25 to 49 years think social mobility is getting harder, with just 18% thinking it is getting easier
- overall people think those born between the 1960s and 1970s – the baby boomers – had the most opportunity to move up in society

1. Read the Social Mobility Barometer 2018 report.
2. All figures, unless otherwise stated are from YouGov Plc. The total size of the poll was 5,520 adults. Initial fieldwork was completed in March 2018. A supplemental survey of 1,656 adults in Great Britain was conducted between 9 and 10 October 2018. The survey was carried out online and figures have been weighted and are representative of UK adults aged 18+.
3. The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory, non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social mobility in England. It consists of 13 commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.
4. Alongside Dame Martina Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission and Group Chief Executive of the Prince's Trust, the 12 Social Mobility Commissioners are:
 - Alastair da Costa, Chair of Capital City College Group
 - Farrah Storr, Editor-in-chief of Cosmopolitan
 - Harvey Matthewson, volunteer, and part-time Sales Assistant at Marks & Spencer
 - Jessica Oghenegweke, Project Co-ordinator at the Diana Award
 - Jody Walker, Senior Vice President at TJX Europe (TK Maxx and Home Sense in the UK)
 - Liz Williams, Group Director of Digital Society at BT
 - Pippa Dunn, Founder of Broody, helping entrepreneurs and start ups
 - Saeed Atcha, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Xplode magazine
 - Sam Friedman, Associate Professor in Sociology at London School of Economics
 - Sammy Wright, Vice Principal of Southmoor Academy, Sunderland
 - Sandra Wallace, Managing Partner UK and Joint Managing Director Europe at DLA Piper
 - Steven Cooper, most recently, Chief Executive Officer Barclaycard Business, moving to Chief Executive Officer C.Hoare & Co
5. The functions of the commission include:
 - monitoring progress on improving social mobility
 - providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social

mobility

- undertaking social mobility advocacy