

Social mobility barometer poll results for 2019

People living in the north-east are the most pessimistic about their chances to progress in the area they live in, with more than half feeling marginalised, new research shows today (21 January 2020).

The [Social Mobility Commission's 2019 poll](#) underlines stark regional differences about people's perceptions of their life prospects. Just 31% of people living in the north-east think there are good opportunities to make progress in their own region compared with 74% in the south-east and 78% of Londoners. Only 48% of those in the north-west felt this optimism.

Published to coincide with the first anniversary of the new commission, the poll reveals deep unease in many regions about whether people have the same access to good education, jobs and housing as those living in the south. This 'northern wall' played out dramatically in the general election and has already become a focus of Boris Johnson's new government.

These stark figures, showing a much broader sense of regional unease, highlight the need to make greater efforts to improve social mobility in schools, further education, training and job security in many regions outside the south-east.

The social mobility barometer, a poll of just under 5,000 people carried out by YouGov, also disclosed that more than half (52%) of those questioned felt the government was not doing enough to help the least well-off. Almost twice as many people felt it was becoming harder rather than easier to move up in society.

Dame Martina, chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said:

This poll is a 'call to action' for this government to do more to help social mobility. Politicians at national and local level must listen to it. Regions which have been marginalised for decades should get the investment they need to provide opportunities for young people so they don't have to move out to move up.

The survey also suggested that although people felt there had been improvements in education compared to when their parents went to school this did not translate into a better standard of living or job security.

Overall 63% of people felt they were better off than their parents in terms of education they received but only 29% felt they had better job security. Fewer than half felt they had a better standard of living.

This suggests that the focus on improving educational opportunities

may have started to pay off but much more attention is needed on training, jobs, and pay levels, said Dame Martina.

The majority of people continue to feel there are fewer opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to better-off peers, including going to a top university, owning their own home and having access to quality childcare.

The poll also coincides with the publication of the commission's first [research report this year into further education](#). The report, led by Learning and Work Institute, will be launched at an event in central London today, and looks at which interventions work best to help disadvantaged learners access and achieve in further education.

The commission is now [urging the government to set up an independent What Works Centre for Further Education and Adult Learning](#). With a proposed budget of £20 million over the next 5 years, the centre would act as a knowledge and research hub; translating the best available evidence and testing a variety of approaches to ensure resources for poorer students, who make up the bulk of students in further education, are targeted more effectively.

Fay Sadro, head of evidence at Learning and Work Institute said:

Against the backdrop of continued funding pressures on further education and adult learning, there is an urgent need to share knowledge across the sector, improve judgments about investments through the use of evidence and support an increase in research and experimentation.

The study is the first of a series of research projects which the commission is publishing this year covering mental and physical health, downward mobility, apprenticeships and geographical differences in social mobility. Next month it will launch a social mobility toolkit to help employers recruit and train those from poorer backgrounds.

Other main findings from the Social Mobility Barometer poll include:

- almost half of people (44%) say that where you end up in society is largely determined by your background, Just over a third (35%) feel that everyone has a chance to get on
- the majority of people (77%) think there is a large gap between the social classes in Britain today
- twice as many middle class people think their background gave them an advantage in their education (50%) compared to almost half (48%) of those aged 65 and over
- only a third (30%) of 18 to 24 year olds think that everyone in Britain today has a fair chance compared to almost (48%) of those aged 65 and over
- 50% of people think central government should be doing more to improve social mobility and to ensure opportunity for all – 38% felt local

government should do more and 37% felt schools should do more

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 4,860 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 11 to 18 March 2019. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). YouGov is registered with the Information Commissioner, and is a member of the British Polling Council.

The Social Mobility Commission is an independent 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 UK and to promote social mobility in England.

The commission board comprises:

- Dame Martina Milburn (Chair)
- Alastair da Costa, Chair of Capital City College Group
- Farrah Storr, Editor-in-chief, Elle
- Harvey Matthewson, Aviation Activity Officer at Aerobility and Volunteer
- Jessica Oghenegweke, Broadcast and Digital Coordinator at The Roundhouse
- 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, 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
- Sandra Wallace, Joint Managing Director Europe at DLA Piper
- Steven Cooper, Chief Executive Officer C.Hoare & Co

*GB:[Great Britain]