

Intergenerational Social Mobility and Health: A Cross-National, Individual-Level and Longitudinal Study

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Intergenerational social mobility is the process of moving from parental social position to individuals' own social standing in their adulthood. For instance, a person whose parents were farmers and she ended up becoming a lawyer, has experienced upward intergenerational social mobility. On the other hand, those persons whose parents were farmers and they are also farmers in their adult life are intergenerationally immobile. Social mobility is high up on the policy agenda in Poland as well as at the level of the European Union and internationally, exemplified in the recent World Bank report "Fair Progress". But does social mobility really matter in terms of the risk of becoming seriously ill or the timing of death? Put simply, is somebody coming from a humble working class background but worked their way up the career ladder to the professional position is less likely to become ill, or die later, just because they experienced upward mobility? If so, why exactly? This ambitious project, using novel scientific approaches and unique data-sets, would give answers to these highly policy-relevant questions.

The main goal of this study is to advance our understanding on the role of intergenerational social mobility in persisting inequalities in health between poor and rich people. It has two specific aims: First, to test how strongly the level and the pattern of intergenerational social mobility and health are related; and second, to investigate the potential explanations that link individuals' experience of intergenerational social mobility and their health outcomes. These questions are important as social mobility is one of the priority areas for the Polish government as well as at the level of the European Union. If it is found that, consistent with the project's expectations, intergenerational social mobility is significantly and causally associated with health, the ensuing debate will strengthen efforts to improve policies in the area of early years' interventions, quality of schooling, school-to-work transitions, and working lives measures. Policies should then focus on tackling barriers of various kinds that prevent children from disadvantaged social origins from experiencing intergenerational social mobility, not least from normative considerations of equality of opportunities and fairness but also in terms of their chances to enjoy long and healthy lives.