



# A study of inter-generational mobility

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## **Highlights**

- A good measure of progress in a household is inter-generational mobility — an improvement in social status from the previous generation.
- A recent paper, “Intergenerational Mobility in India: Estimates from New Methods and Administrative Data” by Sam Asher et al, tries to answer this by using a novel method to parse data from various India Human Development Surveys and the Socio-Economic Caste Census of 2011.
- The paper studies educational mobility from the 1950s to the 1980s birth cohorts instead of income mobility, as data on income mobility that link parent and child wages are rare and unavailable in a structured manner.

## **Research findings**

- The researchers find that there is rising mobility among the SCs and STs post-liberalisation, but among Muslims, except in J&K, there has been declining inter-generational mobility.
- This is a significant finding as Muslims are not generally studied as marginalised in India.
- They find that mobility in urban areas is significantly higher than in rural areas; the mobility gap between urban and rural locations is about equal to today’s gap between higher caste Hindus and SCs”.
- Among the STs, the remote districts where they are present explain the 59% upward mobility gap with the forward or other reference groups.
- The researchers also present estimates on mobility by geographic location by parsing data for sub-districts and towns on a high-resolution map.
- They find that upward mobility — the average education rank attained by sons born to fathers who are born in the bottom half of the father education distribution — is much higher in the southern States (except for pockets in Karnataka and Telangana), Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and J&K.
- The north-central and eastern regions of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, southern Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, parts of West Bengal and Odisha and the north-eastern States (barring Manipur) have relatively lower upward mobility.
- The average income and education in rural areas and the average education, size and low segregation in urban areas are the strongest predictors of upward mobility.
- The researchers find that on average, children are most successful in exiting the bottom of the education distribution in places that are in south India, are urban, or in general have higher average education levels.