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Socio-Spatial Mobility in British Society

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Abstract:

The research reported in this paper examines the nature and extent of socio-spatial mobility in the United Kingdom. In contrast with previous studies, we do not only investigate who moves out of deprived neighbourhoods, but our models cover the entire spectrum of neighbourhoods and provide a more complete interpretation of the process of mobility across socio-spatial structures. We use the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to classify neighbourhoods defined as small areas containing approximately 1500 people. We use the data from all available waves of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) to trace moves between these neighbourhoods, classified into deprivation deciles. We define upward socio-spatial mobility as moving to neighbourhoods with lower levels of deprivation. The focus on residential choices and the outcomes – residential sorting – allows us to measure the fluidity of the British social structure. We show that restricted ability to compete for the better neighbourhoods combines with residence in neighbourhoods with relatively high degrees of deprivation to limit opportunities for social mobility. The analysis shows that education and income play critical roles in the ability of individuals to make neighbourhood and decile gains when they move. There are also powerful roles of being unemployed and being (and becoming) a social renter. Both these latter effects combine to seriously restrict the possibilities for socio-spatial movement for certain groups. The results suggest serious structural barriers to socio-spatial mobility in British society, barriers which are directly related to the organisation of the housing market.

Text: See [Discussion Paper No. 5861](#)



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