

# Intergenerational mobility in Mozambique Is the social elevator broken?

**A recent study provides new insights into intergenerational social mobility in Mozambique, focusing on education and occupation, as well as multidimensional and subjective well-being. This adds an important perspective to existing national poverty and well-being assessments. While progress is found, the study highlights persistent barriers to mobility.**

The study on intergenerational mobility in Mozambique draws from new data on education, occupation, multidimensional well-being, and subjective well-being from a recent survey of vulnerable households in Maputo, Zambezia, Sofala, and Nampula provinces—the Vulnerable Lives Survey (VLS) 2024. The survey gathers detailed demographic and socioeconomic information about households, including retrospective data on the educational and occupational backgrounds of respondents' parents.

This makes possible the examination of the dynamics of mobility across generations and analysis of the influence of household characteristics on these outcomes at the individual level. The findings provide evidence for policies aimed at breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty.

The analysis of social mobility using the VLS compares the self-reported situation of individuals born largely before independence (i.e., 40 years old or more at the time of data collection) with their parents' socioeconomic status. This allows us to focus on comparing outcomes in adulthood for these two generations and sets the base for future research on the long-run implications of economic shocks for intergenerational mobility.

### Fragmented progress in intergenerational mobility

Educational mobility shows strong progress in Mozambique, with nearly half (44.4%) of respondents surpassing their parents' educational attainment. However, immobility persists, particularly among those whose parents had no formal education and among women.

In contrast, occupational mobility is less common, with almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents at the same occupational level as their parents. Moreover, only 15.2% experience upward mobility, compared to about 20% facing downward mobility. Having parents who are farmers is associated with pronounced immobility—58.4%

### FINDINGS

Almost half the respondents experienced upward mobility in education, surpassing their parents' education levels. However, immobility is strikingly prevalent among those whose parents had no formal education

Occupation mobility is more limited, with two-thirds of respondents remaining in similar occupational categories as their parents. The transition from farming to off-farm work is particularly limited, reflecting weaknesses in the structural transformation of the economy

There is upward mobility in multidimensional and subjective well-being, although regional disparities are marked

The determinants of upward mobility vary significantly across dimensions. Female respondents are less likely to experience upward educational and occupational mobility, while the effect of childhood circumstances is mixed. Spatial factors are strong determinants of mobility in most dimensions

of individuals surveyed are farmers and grew up in families where farming was also the main occupation (see Figure 1).

The intergenerational transition from farming to off-farm work is rare, with only 10.7% finding a different occupation than their parents. Moreover, the share of respondents in farmwork increased moderately compared to the previous generation (75% compared to 69.1%). These findings highlight persistent challenges, whereby educational mobility does not consistently or easily translate to better occupational outcomes. This reflects weak structural transformation of the economy and limited growth of non-farm (decent) job opportunities in Mozambique.

## Regional differences in well-being

Intergenerational mobility in multidimensional well-being, measured using the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)—also used in the National Poverty Assessments—shows there has been notable improvements, with about 60% of respondents from poor childhood households in non-poor ones today. However, upward mobility is much more pronounced in the South (nearly 80%), compared to the North and Centre (around 45%), as illustrated in Figure 2. In other words, the North and Centre experience higher immobility, implying multidimensional poverty is much more persistent in these locations.

Mobility in subjective well-being, based on respondents' self-assessments using four different household types, also shows strong upward mobility, with more than half (54.8%) of the sample reporting intergenerational improvements. However, regional disparities here align closely with those observed in multidimensional mobility. Accordingly, upward subjective mobility is again more prevalent in the South than the Centre and North.

## Determinants and associations between mobility dimensions

The study on social mobility investigates the determinants of upward mobility in each of the four outcome dimensions (education, occupation, and multidimensional and subjective well-being) by regressing a variable that indicates upward mobility on key demographic and geographic factors, as well as characteristics of childhood households.

Gender plays a significant role in upward mobility in education and occupation, with female respondents consistently being less likely to experience upward movement. The role of the gender of the respondent is less clear in multidimensional and subjective mobility. Childhood household dynamics also influence mobility: having a female household head in childhood is positively associated with the educational mobility of the respondent, while factors like polygamy and maternal death hinder it, but do not significantly affect occupational mobility. Geographically, respondents from the Centre and South are less likely to experience upward mobility in education. However, respondents from the South have markedly better outcomes in multidimensional and subjective mobility.

Looking into the relationships between mobility outcomes across dimensions reveals very limited association between outcomes in education, occupation, and multidimensional and subjective well-being. Pairwise correlations indicate a lack of association, especially between education and occupation, which exhibit a near-zero correlation. This disconnect underscores potential mismatches between education and labour market circumstances. The only partial exception is the correlation between mobility in

## IMPLICATIONS

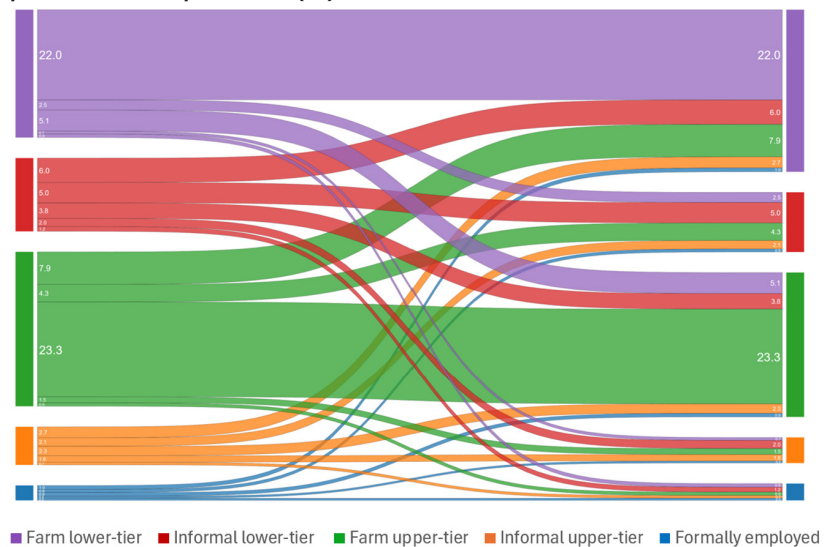
Successful and sustained development is associated with high rates of intergenerational social mobility. In Mozambique, while the social elevator is not broken and substantial gains have been made in education and well-being, weak occupational mobility indicates more should be done to enhance opportunities and reduce deprivation

The weak association between educational attainment and occupational mobility suggests that continued efforts in improving education access and quality must go together with enhancing job creation, especially stimulating demand for both skilled and unskilled labour

It is critical to promote broad-based structural transformation to build pathways for moving out of subsistence farming and low-tier occupations

Addressing gender and regional disparities is also critical to raise social mobility

FIGURE 1 | Sankey diagram: flow of occupational attainment between parents and respondents (%)



NOTE | The chart shows the movement of individuals (right-hand side) between occupation categories relative to their parents' categories (left-hand side). The width of each flow corresponds to the percentage of individuals transitioning from one category to another.

multidimensional and subjective well-being, which indicates that improvements in multidimensional poverty are somewhat aligned with individuals' perceptions of well-being.



This Research Brief is based on the **Intergenerational Social Mobility in Mozambique: Insights from the Vulnerable Lives Survey 2024** report, produced under the **Inclusive growth in Mozambique (IGM)** programme.