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1) Social stratification refers to society's [categorization](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categorization) of its people into groups based on [socioeconomic](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socioeconomic_status) factors like [wealth](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wealth), [income](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Income), race, education, gender, [occupation](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job), and [social status](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_status), or derived [power](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_(social_and_political)) (social and political). As such, stratification is the relative social position of persons within a social group, category, geographic region, or [social unit](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_unit).

Sociologists use the term social stratification to describe the system of social standing. **Social stratification** refers to a society’s categorization of its people into rankings of socioeconomic tiers based on factors like wealth, income, race, education, and power.

Social stratification is the main reason o relational set inequalities in economic, social, political and ideological dimensions. It is a system whereby people rank and evaluate each other. On the basis o such evaluation, one is rewarded with more wealth, authority, power and prestige. It is broadly organised into three parts: upper class, middle class and lower class on the basis of power and wealth. This has resulted in the creation of a number of levels within our society. Social stratification causes social disparity and many problems as it is an unjust system with monopoly of power and wealth in a particular group. It affects life chances, lifestyles and prestige. It creates emotional stress and depression for the people belonging to lower social stratum as they have unequal access to wealth, power and prestige.

It creates a huge gulf between the people in terms of their incomes and a range of measures associated with social position, education, health, and psychological well-being. It is distinctly perceived that disparity causes chaos in society. These are the stumbling blocks in the way to progress and development of the country. All societies suffer from stratification alone, but nations are also stratified in comparison to one another. Globalization aggravates the issue of stratification and creates larger rifts in race, class and gender statuses. Interdependence has led to competition between nations, growing gaps of upper and lower classes, negative race relations, and devaluation of women. Globalization and stratification are concepts that connect interactions among the people between and within nations. Globalization is the global integration of people, businesses, and governments. Sharing of economic, political and cultural systems affects the stratification our world’s societies. Social stratification is a system that our civilization uses to rank people in a hierarchy of status. Factors taken into account when creating this gradation include race, class and gender. Race is a social construction based off of physical features, not a biological fact. Classes refer to a certain group of people of similar status in wealth and power. For example, the middle class is usually known for living in suburbia and the working class would typically have low paying manufacturing job. Similar to race, gender isn’t biological. A person’s sex is biological; gender on the other hand is sociological and pertains to the extent of masculinity or femininity of someone. Through time what has remained constant is the fact that success is quantifiable, although in different societies what is being used to measure is different. Nonetheless, every society seen through history was constructed in a way where the people present are grouped in way that separates them whether it be by duties or status. In the society that we currently dwell in this divide is known as social stratification. Stratification, or more specifically social stratification, is defined as the hierarchal division of society according to rank or class. In American society what separates us from the next person is socioeconomic status. Higher social classes directly correlate with higher education levels, and the latter for the lower social classes. A good barometer to determine one’s success in the world that we live in is education, property, and influence. The distribution of property and influence is unequally circulated and it is for this reason that moving from one class to another proves to be extremely difficult. This unequal circulation has caused a divide in Americans, and in their ideas on how the government should respond to the divide present. This divide is a result of the fact that your social class affects your interactions with those around you.

2) **Social mobility**, movement of individuals, families, or groups through a system of social [hierarchy](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hierarchy) or stratification. If such mobility involves a change in position, especially in occupation, but no change in [social class](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-class), it is called “horizontal mobility.” An example would be a person who moves from a managerial position in one company to a similar position in another. If, however, the move involves a change in social class, it is called “vertical mobility” and involves either “upward mobility” or “downward mobility.” An industrial worker who becomes a wealthy businessman moves upward in the class system; a landed aristocrat who loses everything in a [revolution](https://www.britannica.com/topic/revolution-politics) moves downward in the system. One positive consequence of mobility has been a better use of individual aptitude. This has been aided by the expansion of educational opportunities in modern industrial nations. On the negative side, a high rate of vertical mobility may produce individual and societal [anomie](https://www.britannica.com/topic/anomie) (a term coined by the French sociologist [Émile Durkheim](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Emile-Durkheim)). The individual experiencing anomie feels socially isolated and anxious; in a larger, societal [context](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/context), generally accepted beliefs and standards of conduct are weakened or disappear.

Social mobility typically refers to vertical mobility, movement of individuals or groups up or down from one socio-economic level to another, often by changing jobs or marriage. Nonetheless, social mobility can also refer to horizontal mobility, movement from one position to another within the same social level, as when someone changes between two equally prestigious occupations. In some cases, social mobility is intergenerational, as when children attain a higher or lower status than their parents held. Other times, social mobility is intra-generational, meaning that a person changes status within their lifetime. A high level of intergenerational mobility is often considered praiseworthy and can be seen as a sign of equality of opportunity in a society.

A distinction can also be drawn between absolute social mobility, which refers to the total observed movement of people between classes, and relative social mobility, which is an estimate of the chance of upward or downward movement of a member of one social class in comparison with a member from another class. An example of absolute social movement is when a region’s economic development provides quality education to a social group that previously did not have access to education, thus raising the group’s literacy level and socioeconomic status. Relative social mobility might refer to the opportunities presented to a middle class child born in a particular area of the United States, who might be predicted to attain a college level education and a maximum income of $80,000, for example.

Social mobility can be enabled to varying extents by economic capital, cultural capital, human capital, and social capital. Economic capital includes a person’s financial and material resources, such as income and accumulated wealth. Cultural capital includes resources ranging from holding a graduate degree to having a grasp of a group’s customs and rituals, both of which may confer an advantage in job markets and social exchanges. Human capital refers to such individual traits as competence and work ethic, which may enable increased educational or professional attainment. Social capital includes the advantages conferred by one’s social network, such as access to professional opportunities and insider knowledge. These types of capital facilitate mobility by providing access to opportunities and the tools to acquire wealth and status. Societies present different opportunities for mobility depending on their systems of value. For example, Western capitalist countries are generally meritocratic. In such countries, social standing is based on such personal attributes as educational attainment, income, and occupational prestige. Thus, the degree of mobility in Western capitalist states depends on the extent to which individuals have access to educational and economic opportunity. By contrast, in countries where religious devotion is valued over economic standing, mobility may depend upon individuals’ access to religious rituals and shows of piety. In different countries or regions, the extent to which individuals have social mobility depends upon different factors.

*Types of Social Mobility*

Social mobility can take different forms, and people can experience different types of mobility in different stages of their lives. They type of mobility are now independent of one another and can often overlap. They are only distinguished for the purpose of analysis.

#### 1. Horizontal mobility

It occurs when a person changes their occupation but their overall social standing remains unchanged. For example, if a doctor goes from practicing medicine to teaching in a medical school, the occupation’s changed but their prestige and social standing remains the same. Sorokin describes horizontal mobility as a change in religious, territorial, political, or for family and other horizontal shifts with no change in the vertical position.

#### 2. Vertical mobility

It refers to a change in the occupational, political, or religious status of a person that causes a change in their societal position. An individual or social object moves from one social stratum to another. Vertical mobility can be ascending or descending.

Ascending involves an individual moving from a group in a lower stratum to a higher one or the creation of a similar group with a higher societal position, instead of side by side with its existing group. Descending mobility occurs for example when a businessman incurs losses in his business and is forced to declare [bankruptcy](https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/what-is-bankruptcy/), resulting in a move to a lower stratum of society.

#### 3. Upward mobility

It is when a person moves from a lower position in society to a higher one. It can also include people occupying higher positions in the same societal group. However, upward mobility, while seen as a good thing, can also come at a cost for individuals.

When a person moves upwards, they need to leave behind familiar surroundings such as family and places. They may also need to change their way of thinking and behaviour. The individual will need to adapt to the new environment as a result of their upward movement and adopt different behaviours in the new society.

#### 4. Downward mobility

Downward mobility takes place when a person moves from a higher position in society to a lower one. It can occur when someone is caught performing a [wrongful act](https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/top-accounting-scandals/) that can result in the loss of the position they currently hold. Downward mobility can be extremely stressful for people who face a rapid decline in their social status; they may find it hard to adapt to the new environment as it is not similar to the standard of living they are used to. Downward mobility is an example of the extent to which a society values equal opportunity and structure.

#### 5. Inter-generational mobility

Inter-generational mobility happens when the social position changes from one generation to another. The change can be upward or downward. For example, a father worked in a factory while his son received an education that allowed him to become a lawyer or a doctor. Such societal change also causes the generation to adopt a new way of living and thinking. Inter-generational mobility is affected by the differences in the parents’ and their offspring’s upbringing, changes in [population](https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/economics/demographics/), and changes in occupation.

#### 6. Intra-generational mobility

The intra-generational change in societal position occurs during the lifespan of a single generation. It can also refer to a change in position between siblings. One way is when a person climbs up the corporate ladder in their career. For example, an individual starts their career as a clerk and through their life moves on to a senior position such as a director. One sibling may also achieve a higher position in society than their brother or sister.

#### Factors Affecting Social Mobility

There are some factors that can affect social mobility in any given society according to Ololube (2012, p. 90). They include:

■ Hard work: Hard work can be the key to success. Processes of social mobility depend on it. Those who do not concentrate on hard work in some cases do not move up on the social ladder.

■ Inherited wealth: Inherited wealth can also influence social mobility in society. Children, wards, and relatives who inherit money, landed properties and other properties tend to climb the social ladder.

■ Level of education: Education is seen as the mover and shaker in the social mobility process. People ascend or descend the class system based on their levels of education. It is presumed that the higher one’s level of education the greater one’s chances of moving up the social ladder and the education of parents according to (Tomul & Polat, 2013) has impact on children’s school achievement.

■ Luck: It is presumed that the movement up and down the social ladder depends to some extent on luck. However, movement based on favouritism, nepotism, political or religious affiliation, race, and ethnicity may all be mistaken as movements based on luck (Ololube, 2011, 2012).

■ Marriage: Marriage is a determinant of social mobility. A man or woman from a very poor background who weds a wealthy person may move up the social ladder verse-versa.

■ Societal values and norms: Nigerians are materialistic; get-rich-quick mentalities are now the norm and society seems to value this outlook very much. Those who resent hard work seek to get rich as quickly as possible to enable them move up the social ladder.

*Causes of Social Mobility*

The under listed are some of the causes of social mobility:

■ Desire for higher education: People, especially youths, engage in the process of social mobility for the purposes of higher education. They move to urban areas or travel abroad to obtain new and additional qualifications and this move or seeking can affect social mobility.

■ Desire for better living standards: The desire for better living standards can trigger the process of social mobility. People struggle to realise this desire and in the process often migrate from rural to urban areas or travel abroad for greener pastures. This is a common phenomenon in Nigeria.

■ Development of new communications and media: The development of mass and media communication are responsible for social mobility. People now find it much easier to identify and travel to countries which champion social mobility.

■ Geographical environment: In this situation people migrate to areas where the geographical conditions are conducive to their advancement - where the geographical conditions are considered to be good. For example, in extreme winter people may migrate to plain cities.

■ Conducive political and economic situations: In cases where there are conducive and suitable political and economic conditions, people take active part in the process of social mobility. The position and status of individuals continues to change with the progress of the country. This is more evident in developed countries like the United Kingdom, United State of America, France, and Switzerland.

#### Positive Effects of social stratification on Social Mobility

■ Improvement in living standards: social stratifications and standards of living are in part based on occupation (Lin and Xie 1988). Aside from the obvious impact that income has on someone’s standard of living, occupations also influence social standing through the relative levels of prestige they afford. Employment in medicine, law, or engineering confers high status. Teachers and police officers are generally respected, though not considered particularly prestigious. At the other end of the scale, some of the lowest rankings apply to positions like waitress, janitor, and bus driver and it influence social mobility to bring about improvements in the living standards of people. People change their professions or move from rural to urban areas, which ultimately improve their living standards.

■ Improvement in national unity: Social mobility causes people to move to other parts of the country. In doing so they interact with new cultures, which increase social interaction with different communities. On a large scale, such interaction increases national unity and solidarity.

■ Greater affinities for personal freedom: Due to social mobility, level of education increases, which invariably results in an increase in affinities for personal freedom.

■ Obsolete customs: When people interact with new cultures they learn new customs, tradition, and norms. People may adopt certain positive traditions that replace negative or obsolete norms.

*Negative Effects of social stratification on social Mobility*:

■ Ethnic and cultural problems: Social stratification can influence Social mobility negatively in order to have a negative impact on the demography of a territory. It can create a state of collision between the interests of different groups, which, in turn, can create problems of social disorder. The constant standoff between Muslims and Christians and also in social class in Nigeria is one example.

■ Increases in crime: it influences Social mobility to increase in crime rate. Because of social mobility has a taste for lavish lifestyles has been encouraged in people as they forgo hard work for get-rich-quick schemes. In addition, in the absence of the head of the family, children can become delinquent which also leads to increased crime.

■ Unemployment: social stratification influences Social mobility in the aspects of increase unemployment. In every society, some professions are highly valued. Consequently, people move to those professions in great numbers. As a result of this, they disregard or devalue other older professions which people may no longer want to fill. The different levels of social stratification have made it had for people to get employed especially those in the lower class.

■ Unequal division of population: Social mobility can bring about the unequal distribution of population in industrial areas and cities.