

Press release: SMC relaunch with 12 new commissioners and bigger research budget

Young people are the most pessimistic about their chances of moving up in society with just 1 in 7 thinking their generation has the most opportunity to do so, new [research](#) shows.

Published to coincide with today's (11 December 2018) launch of the Social Mobility Commission, the survey revealed deep unease in Britain about the gap between the rich and the poor. It shows that people think the government, employers and schools are doing too little to help the less advantaged get a fair chance in life.

The findings show just 15% of 18 to 24 year olds think their generation has the best chance of moving up in society. Just 13% say their generation will have the best standard of living, and 12% believe they will fare best in terms of personal finances, compared to older generations.

The social mobility barometer polls of over 5,000 people and is carried out by YouGov. The Social Mobility Barometer 2018 report discloses that the over 65s are much more likely to think that apprenticeships offer the best opportunity for progression, compared to the young people that many of these roles are aimed at. Younger people, in comparison, thought higher education offered a better opportunity.

Dame Martina Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission said:

If we fail to act too many young people will continue to face challenges getting into colleges, universities and employment. We all need to do more to tackle these issues, but there needs to be renewed focus from government, educators and employers.

40% of people think it is getting harder for those from disadvantaged backgrounds to move up in society. Over half of the respondents think central government should be doing more to improve social mobility, followed by local government, (39%) schools (36%) and employers (36%).

Dame Martina will announce that the government has allocated an extra £2 million to commission new research and evidence from next April, as she introduces her 12 new commissioners at the relaunch.

Dame Martina said:

I am delighted the government is showing its commitment to the Social Mobility Commission by providing an initial £2 million for

research and evidence in our first full year of operating as a new commission. This will enable us to start expanding our research base and deliver on our role to promote social mobility throughout the country.

The 12 commissioners bring a range of expertise from education, business and academia, and are from diverse backgrounds, many with their own social mobility journeys. This diversity of experience and background will bring a wider range of perspectives to the work of the commission. This includes a better grasp of the issues facing young people today – 3 commissioners are under 23 and are passionate about using their voice to help young people.

Saeed Atcha, 22, one of the new commissioners and founder of the magazine Xplode said:

I believe there is always a need to have young voices at the table so I'm thrilled to be representing young people and bringing their voice to the fore. The poll shows they are pessimistic about their future and they do not have the right opportunities. It's vital that we take urgent steps to address this.

Dame Martina said:

We are a group of people with real-life experiences who are prepared to challenge government, business and society as a whole, to create a fair system where people can thrive.

Matthew Fell, CBI UK, Chief Policy Director, said:

Creating the conditions for an inclusive economy matters hugely to business. We should leave no stone unturned in looking for the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs and business leaders, in all parts of society.

Business is already doing lots, and can do even more. Whether it's helping to develop new, high-quality apprenticeships or providing young people with insights into the world of work, business has a vital role to play in improving social mobility.

The commissioners will start drawing up their priorities next week. For their first year, these are expected to include a focus on vocational education and skills. In the new year the commission will be releasing a social mobility toolkit for employers and, in March, will set out their annual State of the Nation assessment of social mobility in Great Britain.

Other key findings from the Social Mobility Barometer 2018 report include:

- nearly half, (46%), of people saying that life chances depend heavily on your background and who your parents are – only a third think that everyone, regardless of background, has a fair chance to get on
- 75% say there is a large gap between social classes with only 14% saying the gap is small.
- there are big regional variations with 83% of people in the North East thinking there is a large gap between social classes, falling to 73% in the south of England and East Midlands
- 44% of those aged 25 to 49 years think social mobility is getting harder, with just 18% thinking it is getting easier
- overall people think those born between the 1960s and 1970s – the baby boomers – had the most opportunity to move up in society

1. Read the Social Mobility Barometer 2018 report.
2. All figures, unless otherwise stated are from YouGov Plc. The total size of the poll was 5,520 adults. Initial fieldwork was completed in March 2018. A supplemental survey of 1,656 adults in Great Britain was conducted between 9 and 10 October 2018. The survey was carried out online and figures have been weighted and are representative of UK adults aged 18+.
3. The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory, non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social mobility in England. It consists of 13 commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.
4. Alongside Dame Martina Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission and Group Chief Executive of the Prince's Trust, the 12 Social Mobility Commissioners are:
 - Alastair da Costa, Chair of Capital City College Group
 - Farrah Storr, Editor-in-chief of Cosmopolitan
 - Harvey Matthewson, volunteer, and part-time Sales Assistant at Marks & Spencer
 - Jessica Oghenegweke, Project Co-ordinator at the Diana Award
 - Jody Walker, Senior Vice President at TJX Europe (TK Maxx and Home Sense in the UK)
 - Liz Williams, Group Director of Digital Society at BT
 - Pippa Dunn, Founder of Broody, helping entrepreneurs and start ups
 - Saeed Atcha, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Xplode magazine
 - Sam Friedman, Associate Professor in Sociology at London School of Economics
 - Sammy Wright, Vice Principal of Southmoor Academy, Sunderland
 - Sandra Wallace, Managing Partner UK and Joint Managing Director Europe at DLA Piper
 - Steven Cooper, most recently, Chief Executive Officer Barclaycard Business, moving to Chief Executive Officer C.Hoare & Co
5. The functions of the commission include:
 - monitoring progress on improving social mobility
 - providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social

mobility

- undertaking social mobility advocacy
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To coincide with relaunch, we're publishing the 2018 social mobility barometer. It shows a deep divide between rich and poor and pessimism amongst the young.

Press release: £100 million for renewable energy projects in Africa to provide electricity to 2.4 million people a year

Developers of small-scale solar, wind, hydro and geothermal projects will be supported to harness each country's natural resources.

Press release: £100 million for renewable energy projects in Africa to provide electricity to 2.4 million people a year

- hundreds of thousands of people will get electricity for the first time thanks to UK government funding announced at COP24 in Poland
- £100 million extra funding to the Renewable Energy Performance Platform will support up to 40 new renewable energy projects in sub-Saharan

Africa

- projects funded by the new investment could help cut carbon emissions equivalent to those created by 800,000 cars a year

Hundreds of thousands of people in sub-Saharan Africa will get access to electricity for the first time thanks to an extra £100 million of funding from the UK government.

The new investment triples funds for the Renewable Energy Performance Platform (REPP), to support up to 40 more renewable energy projects over the next 5 years. The new funding could unlock an extra £156 million of private finance into renewable energy markets in Africa by 2023.

Developers of small-scale solar, wind, hydro and geothermal projects will be supported to harness each country's natural resources, and the electricity generated is expected to provide 2.4 million people a year with new or improved access to clean energy. Power produced from new projects funded is expected to save around 3 million tonnes of carbon over their lifetime, compared with fossil fuel generation – the equivalent to the emissions from burning 21,000 railway cars of coal or from 800,000 cars in a year.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said:

At home we're world leaders in cutting emissions while growing our economy and abroad we're showing our international leadership by giving countries a helping hand to shift to greener, cleaner economies.

This £100 million will help communities harness the power of their natural resources to provide hundreds of thousands of people with electricity for the first time. Building these clean, reliable sources of energy will also create thousands of quality jobs in these growing green economies.

The new investment is in addition to £48 million previously committed to the REPP. The programme is already supporting 18 renewable energy projects in a range of countries from Tanzania to Burundi. These projects, featuring solar, wind, biomass, hydro and geothermal technologies, are expected to provide new or improved access for more than 4.5 million people over the project lifetimes, creating 8,000 jobs during development and operation.

Expected results from some of the 18 projects already receiving support from REPP are:

- hydropower from the Nzoia River in Kenya, providing 290,000 people with energy and creating 330 jobs
- solar power for 70,000 people in Kilosa, Tanzania, including for 6,000 people who will have access to energy for the first time, creating 75 jobs in total
- mini grids in Nigeria which will provide 72 rural villages with pay-as-you-go clean, reliable energy, creating 2,500 jobs during construction

and 430 when it's up and running

- biomass plants in Ebolowa and Edea, Cameroon, providing enough clean energy for 520,000 people in a rural area creating 460 jobs
- solar power to provide electricity for 87,600 people and business in Burundi, creating 300 part-time jobs and 50-full time posts
- a hydropower plant creating enough power for more than 90,000 people for the first time in a remote part of Tanzania, creating 80 jobs in total

The funding is part of the UK's commitment to invest £5.8 billion in international climate finance by 2020 to encourage ambitious action from other governments, the private sector and communities in the global effort to tackle climate change.

To date, UK climate finance has:

- supported 47 million people cope with the effects of climate change
- provided 17 million people with improved access to clean energy
- installed 590MW of clean energy.

At COP24 the UK also announced:

- £15.6 million to help countries vulnerable to climate change have a voice in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations
- £771,000 to help developing countries take part in COP24
- an additional £45 million to the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions' (NAMA) Facility, co-founded by the UK, to help reduce emissions within an economic sector
- an additional £1 million for the Global Innovation Lab, which helps innovative climate finance proposals move more quickly to implementation and attract funding

1. For more information, [visit the REPP website](#).

2. Earlier this year the UK government announced:

- a £60 million technical assistance programme that supports Clean Growth and accelerated emissions reductions in developing countries
- £106 million to help developing countries construct more energy efficient buildings

Statement to parliament: Secretary of State: Statement to Parliament in

response to the CJEU's ruling on the Wightman Article 50 case

With permission, Mr Speaker, I will now make a statement on the judgment issued by the European Court of Justice this morning on the Wightman case.

Mr Speaker, today, the European Court of Justice has delivered its judgment on the question of the revocability of an Article 50 notice. The Court has found that the UK has the right, in accordance with its constitutional requirements, to unilaterally revoke the notification of its intention to withdraw from the EU.

We note the judgment from the European Court. It is their role to provide rulings on the interpretation of EU law.

This judgment clarifies the law. The judgement does not in any way change our policy. That the Government knows this course is possible, just as many undesirable actions are possible, does not change the fact that such an approach is hypothetical and the Government has no intention of doing it.

The Government's firm and long-held policy is that we will not revoke the Article 50 notice. This position has not changed. To do this, or indeed to hold a second referendum, would be to undermine the result of the 2016 referendum and the professed will of this House to give effect to that result.

This House voted to hold the referendum and promised to deliver it. 544 members of this House voted to give the British public their say, with just 53 opposed. Almost three quarters of the electorate then took part in the 2016 referendum, resulting in 17.4 million votes to leave the European Union. This is the highest number of votes cast for anything in UK electoral history, making this referendum the biggest democratic exercise in our history.

This House then voted again to empower the Prime Minister to notify under Article 50 and voted yet again to repeal the European Communities Act.

The Government remains focused on its task and its mandate, and delivering a deal which honours the 2016 referendum result. We will be leaving the EU on the 29th of March next year.

I commend this statement to the House.