

PUBLICATIONS

Not by Bread Alone: Mobility Experiences, Religion, and Optimism about Future Mobility

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Americans are quite optimistic about their chances of upward mobility, but sometimes even they have their doubts. The authors examine how mobility experiences boost or dampen American optimism about mobility and how the relationship is connected to religion. The authors find that Americans whose subjective financial situations have recently worsened are less optimistic, whereas those whose situations have improved are more optimistic. Objective measures of mobility were not connected to optimism. The authors also found that men affiliated with historically black Protestant denominations and Hispanic Catholic men and women are more optimistic than the religiously unaffiliated. Additionally, downward mobility is associated with different outcomes for different groups: very small drops in optimism among Hispanic Catholic women but unusually large drops among mainline Protestant and Hispanic Catholic men. The authors encourage more study of Hispanic Catholic women because their experiences may be useful for preserving optimism among other Americans during tough economic times.

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