

Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes

in a Changing Britain

The Conservative Governments' Record on Social Mobility: Policy Making 2015-2020

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CASE Social Exclusion Seminar 2nd December 2020

Outline

- Social mobility
- 'Inheritance'
- Conservative Governments' Manifesto pledges 2015-2020
- The Social Mobility Commission
- Policy making assessment

Social mobility

- The extent to which an individual's life chances are determined by their parental background (intergenerational)
- Sociologists tend to define social mobility in terms of social class or social status; economists in terms of income or earnings
- When there is a high association between parents' and children's socio-economic outcomes, social mobility is low
- In international rankings the UK is classified as a relatively high inequality and relatively low social mobility country
- To understand trends it is important to distinguish between absolute social mobility and relative social mobility
- The drivers of social mobility are multidimensional
- Strong policy focus on education

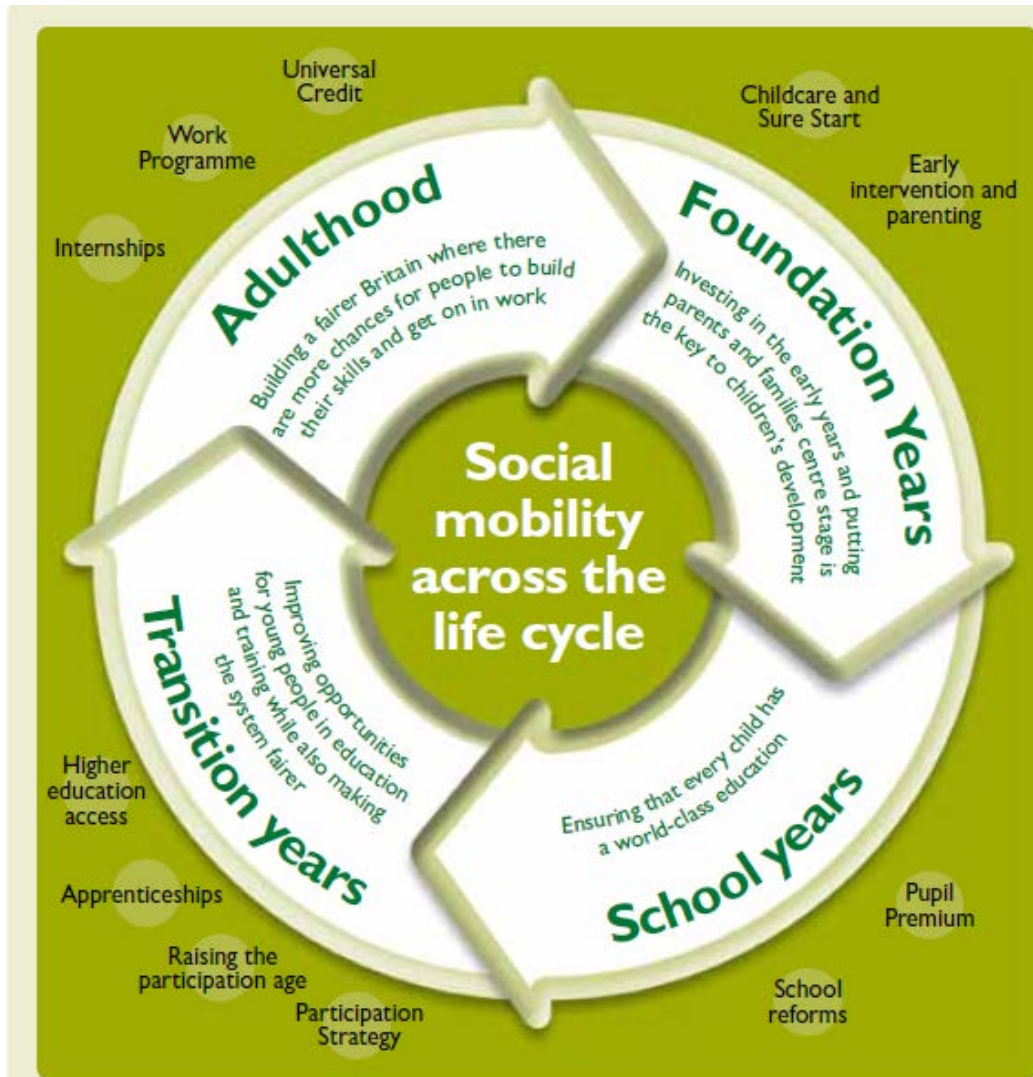
Social Mobility policy under the Coalition Government

Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility

“A fair society is an open society, one in which every individual is free to succeed. That is why improving social mobility is the principal goal of the Government’s social policy.

No one should be prevented from fulfilling their potential by the circumstances of their birth. What ought to count is how hard you work and the skills and talents you possess, not the school you went to or the jobs your parents did. This strategy sets out our vision of a socially mobile country, and how it can become a reality.”

Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility



"..our strategy is based on a lifecycle framework. Our goal is to make life chances more equal at the critical points for social mobility such as: the early years of development; school readiness at age five; GCSE attainment; the choice of options at 16; gaining a place at university or on an Apprenticeship; and getting into and on in the labour market. These are the crucial moments, where we can make the most difference."

Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility

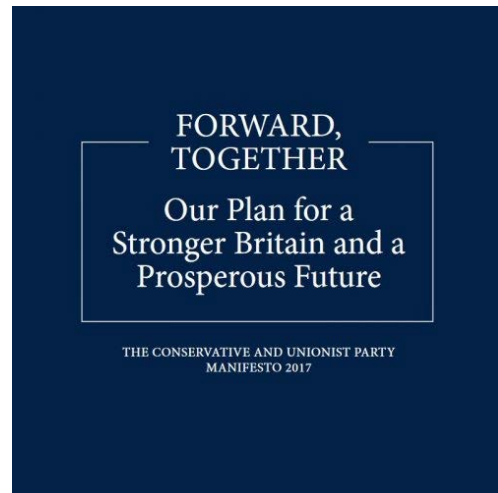
“Five broad principles underpin our approach.

- We take a **long-term view**. Social mobility is, by definition, a long-term challenge. Our investments and policy decisions will reflect that. There are no quick fixes.
- We will take a **progressive approach**, focusing most resources on those from disadvantaged backgrounds, but narrowing gaps in opportunity all the way up the income scale.
- We recognise that **Government does not have all the answers** and that improving social mobility requires the whole of society to play its part. We will challenge ourselves and others to do better, supported by greater accountability and transparency.
- We will adopt a ruthlessly **evidence-based approach**, channelling effort and finance in the ways most likely to impact positively on social mobility.
- Our plans to boost social mobility **impact across the life cycle** from the Foundation Years through school life, and the key transitions from education into the working world.”

Conservative party general election manifestos



2015: Strong Leadership. A Clear Economic Plan. A Brighter, More Secure Future



2017: Forward, Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future

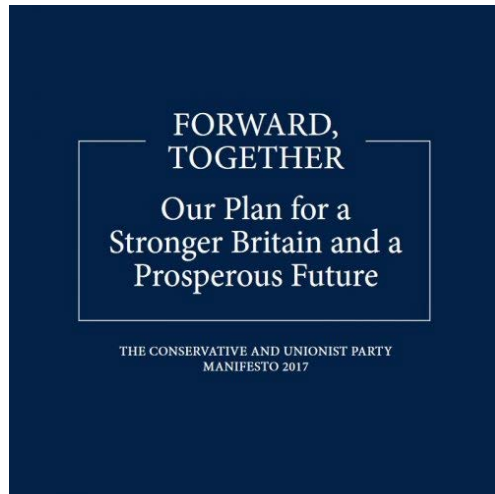


2019: Get Brexit Done: Unleash Britain's Potential

Conservative party general election manifestos



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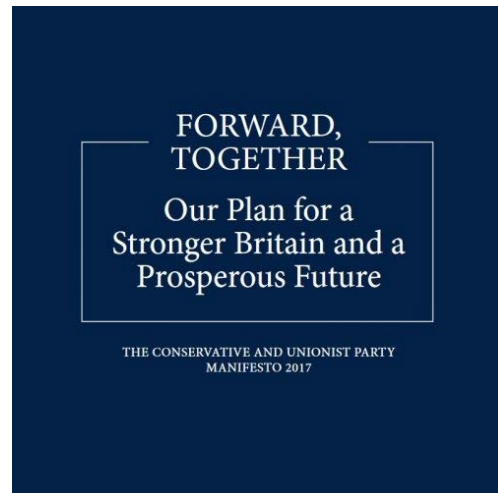
2019: Get Brexit Done: Unleash Britain's Potential

Mentions of 'Social Mobility': 2015=0; 2017=1; 2019=0

Conservative party general election manifestos



2015: Strong Leadership. A Clear Economic Plan. A Brighter, More Secure Future



2017: Forward, Together: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future

We want the most committed and capable people to come into public service, and for public services to be motors of social mobility – which is why we are looking at ways to make sure civil service recruitment is as diverse as possible, not only from the perspective of gender and race but social class too (p.43)



2019: Get Brexit Done: Unleash Britain's Potential

Mentions of 'Social Mobility': 2015=0; 2017=1; 2019=0

2015 Manifesto

1. An Economic Plan to Help You and Your Family

A strong economy to help you and your family

Better roads, trains and modern communications

2. Jobs for All

3. Cutting your taxes, making welfare fairer and controlling immigration

Cutting your taxes and building a fairer welfare system

Controlled immigration that benefits Britain

4. The Best Schools and Hospitals for You and Your Family

Giving your child the best start in life

Protecting and improving our National Health Service

Enabling you to enjoy our heritage, creativity and sports

Helping you build the Big Society

Making government work better for you

5. Securing Your Home and Your Neighbourhood

Helping you to buy a home of your own

Protecting and enhancing our natural environment

Guaranteeing you clean, affordable and secure energy supplies

Fighting crime and standing up for victims

Preventing terrorism, countering extremism

6. Dignity in Your Retirement

7. Keeping Our Country Secure

Stronger together: a Union for the 21st century

Real change in our relationship with the European Union

A Britain standing tall in the world

A stronger voice for our nation on the world stage

Keeping Britain safe

Tackling global challenges to make you safer and more prosperous



2017 Manifesto

Five giant challenges

1. A strong economy that works for everyone
2. A strong and united nation in a changing world
3. The world's great meritocracy
4. A restored contract between the generations
5. Prosperity and security in a digital age



3. The World's Great Meritocracy

Theresa May's Conservatives will deliver

- More good school places, ending the ban on selective schools and asking universities and independent schools to help run state schools.
- World class technical education, underpinned by prestigious new institutes of technology with the freedoms that make our universities great.
- A government unafraid to confront the burning injustices of the gender pay gap, racial disparity, the stigma of mental health and disability discrimination.
- *Protections for victims of domestic abuse in law through a new landmark Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill.*
- *Fairer markets for consumers and action on the cost of living, including a safeguard tariff cap to protect energy customers from unacceptable rises.*
- *Controlled, sustainable migration, with net migration down to the tens of thousands.*

2019 Manifesto

Get Brexit Done

We Will Focus On Your Priorities

We Will Unleash Britain's Potential

We Will Strengthen Britain In The World

We Will Put You First



Some progress under David Cameron's government

- Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Education from 2016 to 2018, took a strong interest in social mobility and developed a plan to put social mobility at the heart of education policy
- Published *Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: A plan for improving social mobility through education* in December 2017
- Resigned in January 2018 during a cabinet reshuffle, less than a month after launching the strategy

Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential

A plan for improving social mobility through education

Overarching Ambition

No community left behind. Putting real emphasis on the range of places where resources and additional targeting are needed the most, with our Opportunity Areas at the sharp end to tackle the most entrenched disadvantage.



Life Stage Ambitions

Ambition 1. Close the word gap in the early years.



Children with strong foundations start school in a position to progress, but too many children fall behind early. We need to tackle development gaps, especially key early language and literacy skills.

Ambition 2. Close the attainment gap in school while continuing to raise standards for all.



The attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers at school is closing. But, these pupils still remain behind. We will build on recent reforms, and raise standards in the areas where it is now most needed.

Ambition 3. High quality post-16 education choices for all young people.

We need a skills revolution with business to make technical education world class. More people go to university than ever before, including more disadvantaged young people, but we need to expand access further to the best universities.



Ambition 4. Everyone achieving their full potential in rewarding careers.

We need to improve access for young people from lower income backgrounds to networks of advice, information and experiences of work. Working with employers, we will support adults to retrain/upskill during their careers.



Ways of Working

Identifying and spreading what works



Putting evidence at the heart of our approach; embedding and extending successful reforms; developing our evidence base further; and spreading best practice to where it is needed.

Building lasting success through partnership



Asking key partners - whether employers, business, educators, or civil society - to step up and join a united coalition which will rally behind this plan and these ambitions to unlock potential for all.

The Social Mobility Commission

- Originally created under the Child Poverty Act 2010 (now the Life Chances Act), which required the establishment of an independent **Child Poverty Commission** to monitor the effectiveness of the Government's Child Poverty Strategy. The Act enshrined in law Tony Blair's 2001 pledge to end child poverty by 2020 and the Commission monitored the government's progress towards meeting this goal.
- Renamed the **Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission** by the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
- In 2016, the Welfare Reform and Work Act abolished the Child Poverty Act, including the targets to reduce poverty and Commission was renamed the **Social Mobility Commission**
- From 2012 to 2017 the Chair of the Commission was Alan Milburn
- In frustration of the lack of progress, Alan Milburn and the Commissioners resigned in December 2017. Stating in his resignation letter to Theresa May: "It [the government] is understandably focused on Brexit and does not seem to have the necessary bandwidth to ensure that the rhetoric of healing social division is matched with the reality. I do not doubt your personal belief in social justice, but I see little evidence of that being translated into meaningful action."

The Social Mobility Commission - State of the Nation reports

- Published in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018-19.
- Each report makes an assessment of progress and a number of policy recommendations
 - 2013: ~37 recommendations
 - 2014: ~82 recommendations
 - 2015: ~25 recommendations
 - 2016: ~23 recommendations
 - 2017: ~18 recommendations
 - 2018/19: ~20 recommendations

Not always easy to count, some very specific and some very wide-ranging

The 2013 State of the Nation report

Identified keys that can unlock social progress:

- Adults being supported to be warm authoritative parents actively engaged in their children's education, particularly in the early years;
- High-quality, affordable and universal childcare that enables more parents to work and helps improve children's early development;
- High-quality schools and teachers relentlessly focused on raising standards, building social skills and closing attainment gaps;
- Clear accessible routes into work for those pursuing both vocational and academic education and training;
- Plenty of high-quality jobs throughout the country with good progression opportunities and fair recruitment processes;
- Family incomes that are supported by decent levels of pay and the right incentives to find employment and work enough hours;
- Society becoming less unequal over time and individuals with little wealth being supported to build assets.

Early years

Create a long-term plan with clear milestones to make **early years' provision universal, affordable and of a sufficiently high quality**, and to rebalance a long-held exclusive focus on institutional forms of childcare by doing far more to help parents to parent.

Education

Urge **schools to adopt a dual-mandate of raising the bar on standards and closing the gap on attainment** with more help for low attainers from average income families as well as low-income children to succeed in making it to the top, not just getting off the bottom.

Provide **extra incentives for teachers to teach in the worst schools**.

Colleges in the future being paid by the results they achieve for their students in the labour market and not the numbers they recruit.

Urge top universities to use contextual data and foundation degrees.

School to work

Set a challenging aim of eliminating long-term youth unemployment and reducing NEETHood below the European average by increasing learning and earning opportunities for young people who should be expected to take up those opportunities or face tougher benefit conditionality

Urge business leaders and the government to come together to **ensure that half of all firms offer apprenticeships and work experience** as part of a new effort to make it easier for 'the other 50 per cent' to pursue high quality vocational training.

Urge the Government to better resource careers advice.

The professions

Urge the professions to open their doors to a wider pool of talent by ending unpaid internships and recruiting more widely

Working life

Focus on **reducing in-work poverty** by looking again at the remit of the LPC to enable **raising of the minimum wage**, paying job agencies for the earnings people receive rather than the number of jobs and by reallocating Budget 2013 **funding for childcare** from higher-rate taxpayers to help those on Universal Credit meet more of their childcare costs.

Urge employers to accept that the taxpayer alone can no longer bridge the gap between earnings and prices through providing **higher minimum levels of pay and better career prospects, enabled by better skills**.

The Social Mobility Commission - State of the Nation reports



Time For Change: An Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility 1997-2017

June 2017

➤ The Commission, concerned about lack of progress, has on two occasions (2017 and 2020) undertaken assessments of government policies on social mobility and whether the government is delivering on the recommendations it has made.



Monitoring social mobility

2013–2020: Is the government delivering on our recommendations?



SMC Monitoring report 2020

The need for a strategic approach to social mobility RAG

summary: 4 questions: Red 2; Amber 2; Green 0

- *“Several departments have an impact, but there is no mechanism for coordinating social mobility strategy across Whitehall. All departments are required to consider the impact on gender, race and disability when forming policy, but so far there is no requirement to consider socio-economic impact. There is no minister in charge of tackling social inequality or social mobility and no unit in central government to drive this policy. Given the impact of COVID-19, this issue could not be more important. It is time that a dedicated and empowered Social Mobility unit sat at the heart of government.”*

Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016: Social Mobility Commission

A1C Promotion of social mobility, advice and reports

- (1) The Commission must promote social mobility in England.
- (2) The Commission must on request give advice to a Minister of the Crown about how to improve social mobility in England.
- (3) Advice given under subsection (2) must be published.
- (4) **The Commission must publish a report setting out its views on the progress made towards improving social mobility in the United Kingdom.**

Policy making challenges

- Although some policies can lead to improvements in the short-term, it will be many years before most will have an impact because of the intergenerational nature of social mobility
- There are clear weaknesses with the current situation where the Social Mobility Commission makes annual recommendations to Government but there is no duty on the Government to take-up these recommendations
- Limited effectiveness of fragmented policy design and 'marginal gains' approach which avoid dealing with structural drivers of low social mobility

Understanding recent patterns in intergenerational social mobility: differences by gender, education, ethnicity, and their intersections

Lindsey Macmillan and Abigail McKnight

2nd December 2020

CASE Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes Project
Funded by the Nuffield Foundation

Motivation

- Social mobility in the UK is low by international standards and has stagnated or declined for recent generations (Corak, 2013, Jerrim and Macmillan, 2015, Bukodi et al, 2015, Blanden et al., 2004)
- A limitation of our understanding is that we rely on large-scale surveys with individuals' childhood circumstances and their socio-economic status in adulthood
- Previous work has used the longitudinal birth cohort studies but difficult to update since 1970 and limited info on sub-groups

Motivation

- Rapid growth in diversity and inclusion agendas, such as Black Lives Matter and gender pay audits, shows the need to look beyond SES to consider intersections of gender, ethnicity
- Recent work has also highlighted important differences in the role of education and immigration history in understanding differences across groups (Li and Heath, 2016, Zwysen and Longhi, 2018, Platt, 2005a, 2005b, 2007).

Contribution

- The new LFS social mobility modules (since 2014) provide the opportunity to advance our understanding of rates of upward and downward mobility
- Our analysis provides the most up-to-date evidence on recent experiences of mobility, combining perspectives in the literature to give a comprehensive overview
 1. By gender, education, and ethnicity
 2. For intersections of gender, ethnicity and education
 3. Considering the role of origin class and immigration history

Structure

1. Related literature
2. Data and Methods
3. Results
 - trends over time
 - mobility rates by education and gender
 - mobility rates by ethnicity and gender
 - intersection of ethnicity and education by gender
4. Conclusions

1. Related literature

- Majority of class mobility literature has emphasised stability over time in absolute (and relative) mobility rates (Goldthorpe and Jackson, 2007, Erikson and Goldthorpe 2010)
- But recent work has highlighted changes *within* absolute mobility: increasing downward mobility and declining upward mobility rates (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018, Bukodi et al., 2015)
- This is attributed to the slow down in growth of occupations in NS-SEC 1 & 2 – restricting ‘room at the top’ (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018, Bukodi et al., 2015)

1. Related literature

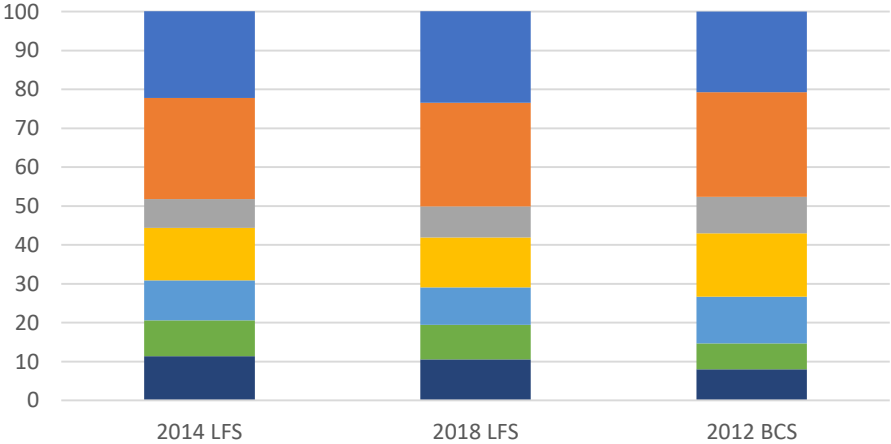
- Work from mid-2000s by Lucinda Platt highlighted differences in mobility rates by ethnicity, and mediating role of education in this process (Platt, 2005a, 2005b, 2007)
- More recently, Li and Heath (2016) have shown Pakistani and Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, and Black Africans faced lower rates of social mobility over past three decades
- Both highlight the important role of origin class differences and immigration history

2. Data and Methods

- The UK Labour Force Survey (LFS) started collecting retrospective data about survey respondents' main earning parent when they were 14 from July-Sept 2014
- Class destination: NS-SEC based on current or last occupation (age 25-59)

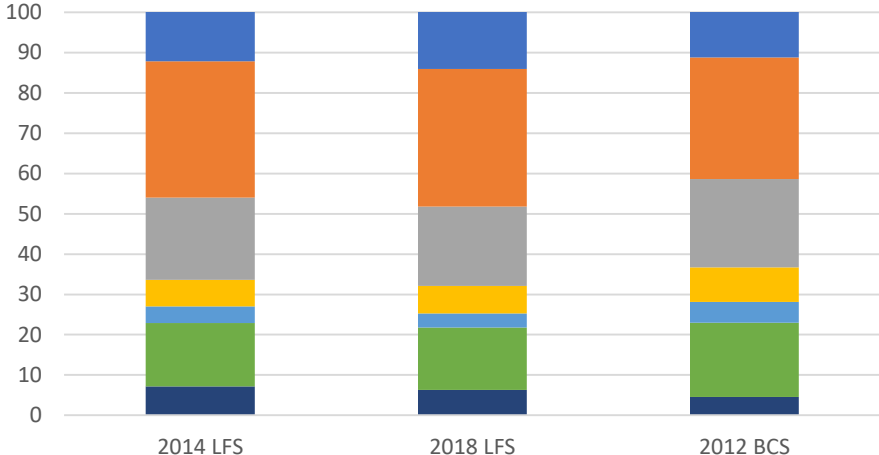
2. Data and Methods – Destination class distributions

Men



- Routine occupations
- Lower supervisory and technical occupations
- Intermediate occupations
- Higher managers and professionals
- Semi-routine occupations
- Small employers and own account workers
- Lower managers and professionals

Women



- Routine occupations
- Lower supervisory and technical occupations
- Intermediate occupations
- Higher managers and professionals
- Semi-routine occupations
- Small employers and own account workers
- Lower managers and professionals

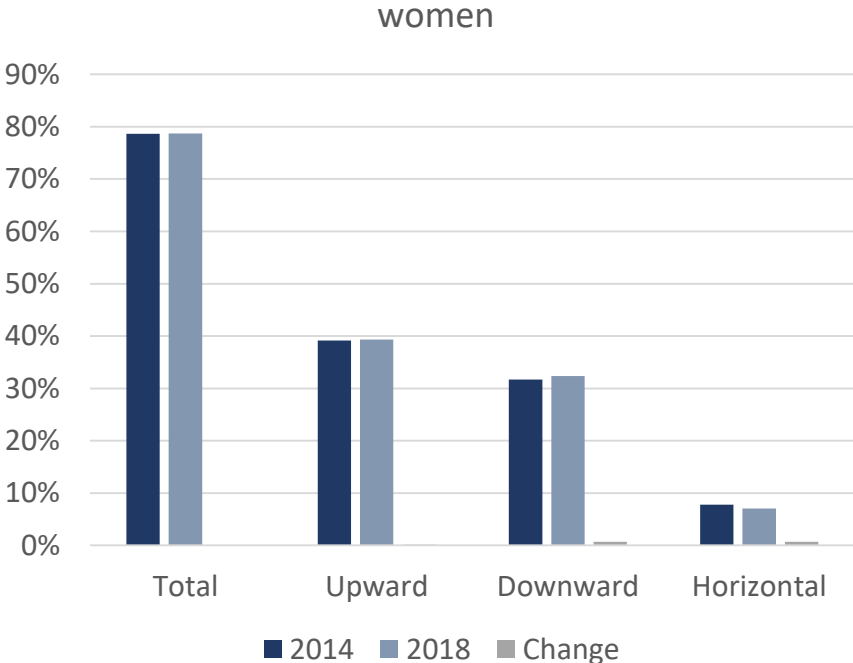
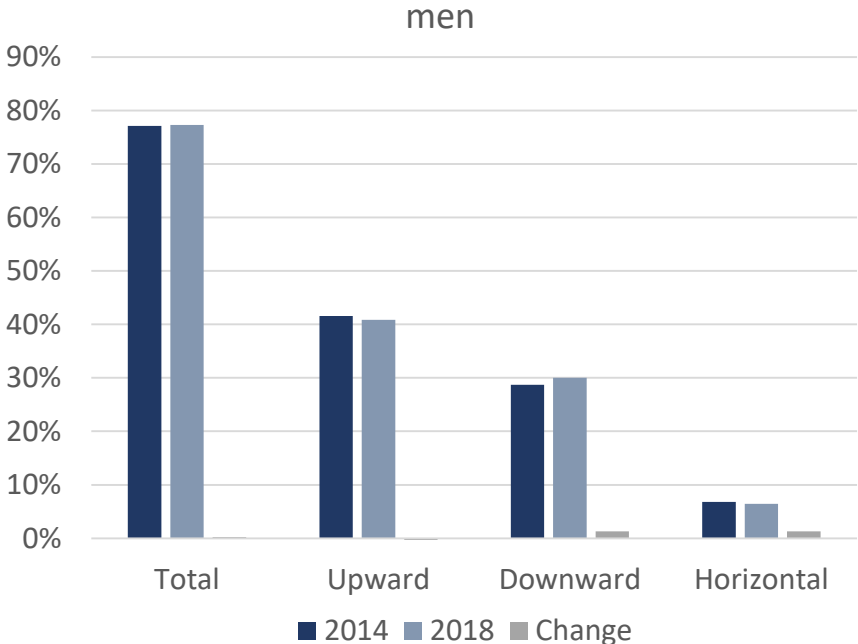
2. Data and Methods

- The UK Labour Force Survey (LFS) started collecting retrospective data about survey respondents' main earning parent when they were 14 from July-Sept 2014
- Class destination: NS-SEC based on current or last occupation (age 25-59)
- Class origin: NS-SEC of main earning parent (father in > 80% cases)
- Upward and downward mobility calculated using 7x7 transition matrices (N≈20,000 per year)

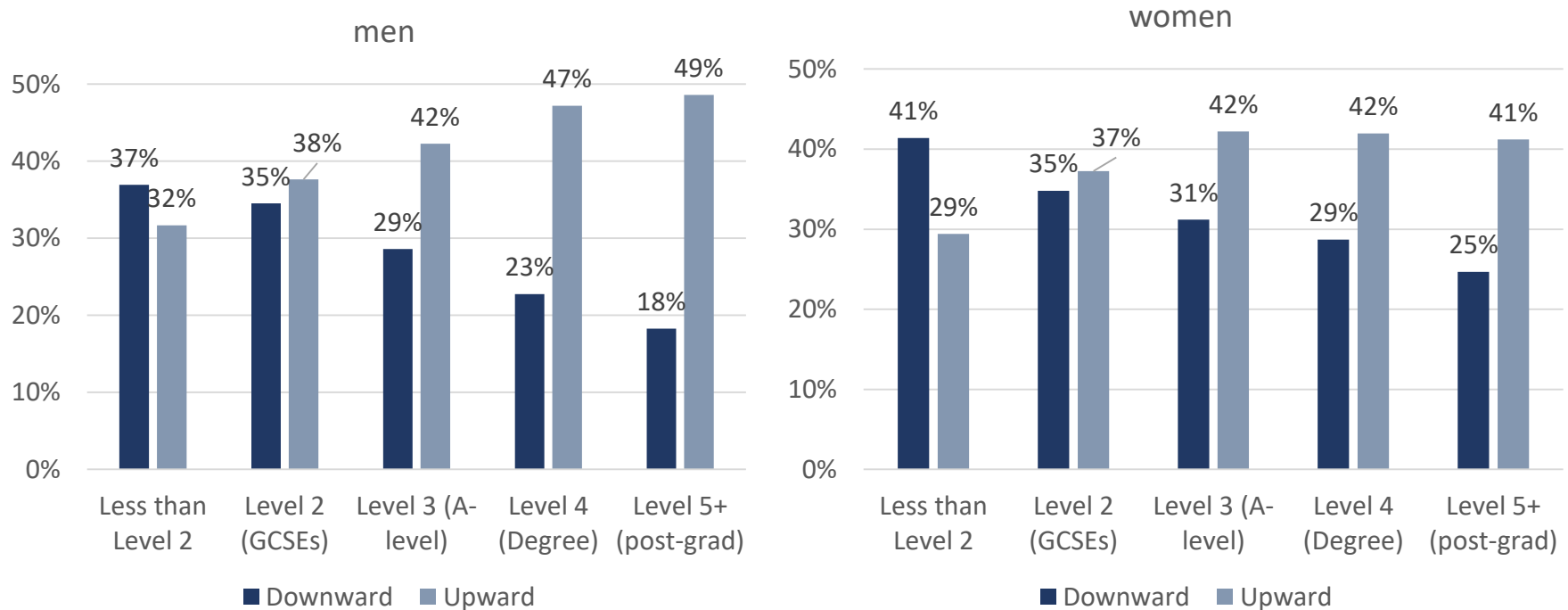
2. Data and Methods

- To measure differences in mobility rates between groups, including gender, ethnicity, education, and the intersection of these, we estimate probability of upward / downward movements using LPM
- Here we pool across 5 years of data (2014-2018 - $N \approx 100,000$) and condition on age, destination region, year of survey
- We further build our models to control for initial conditions, including a) origin parental NS-SEC, and b) first generation migrant status

3. Results – trends over time

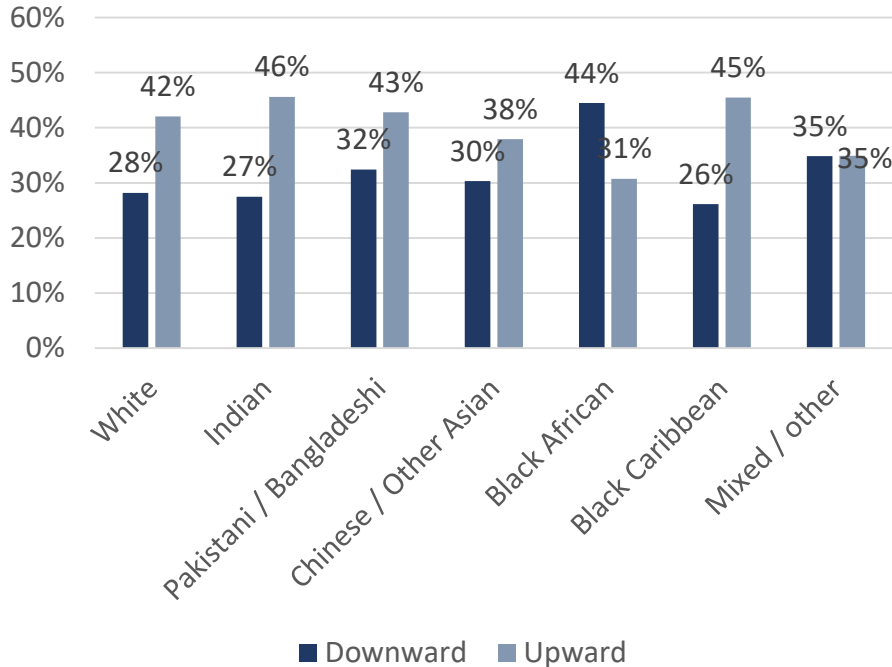


3. Results – mobility rates by education and gender

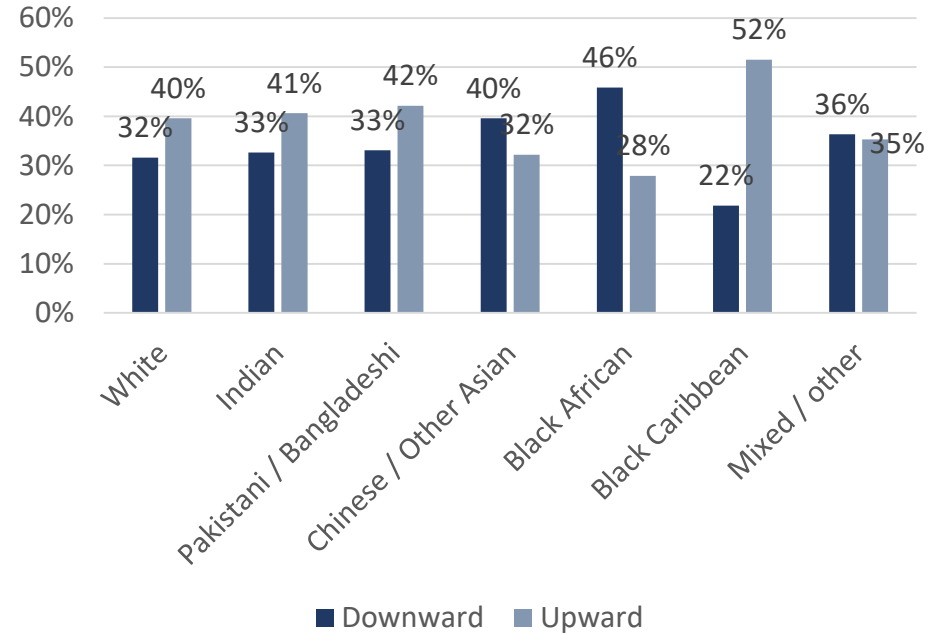


3. Results – mobility rates by ethnicity and gender

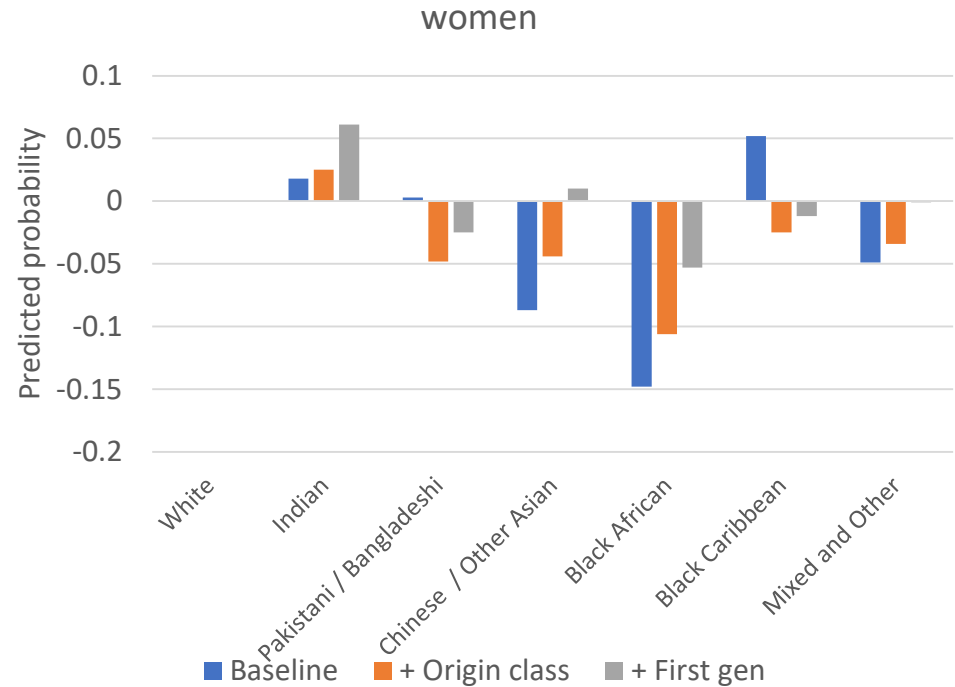
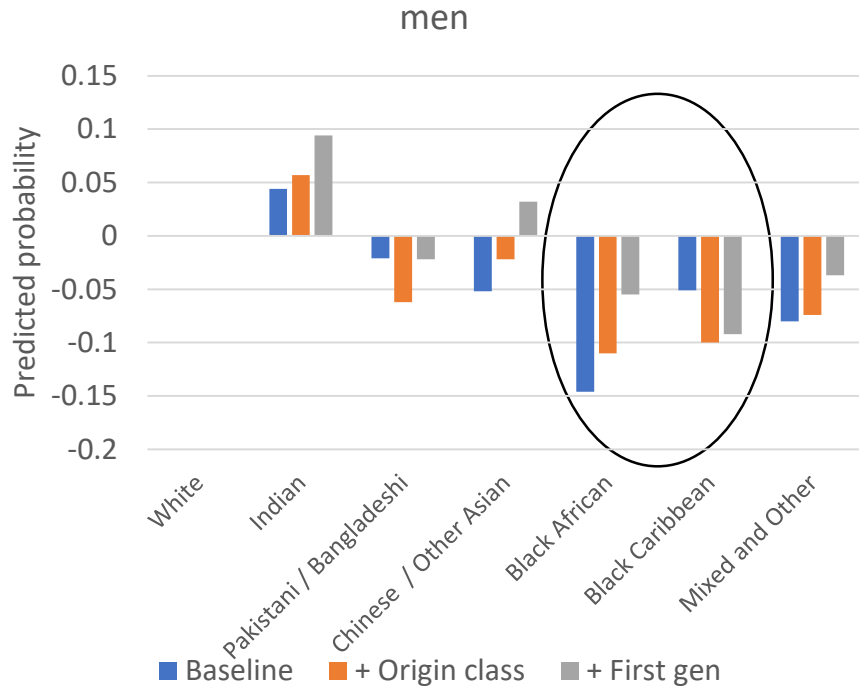
men



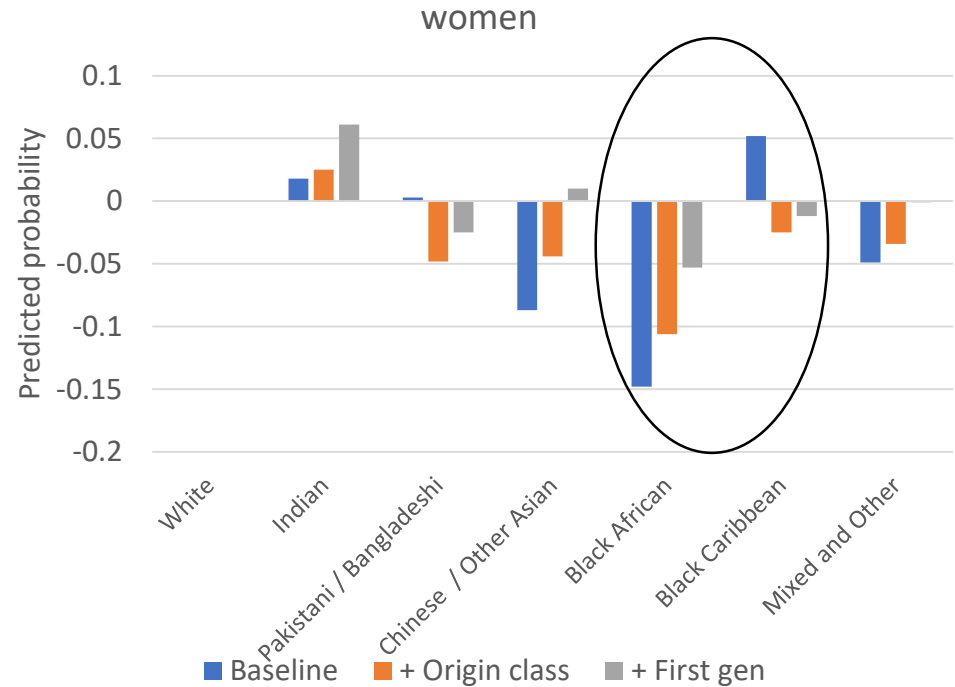
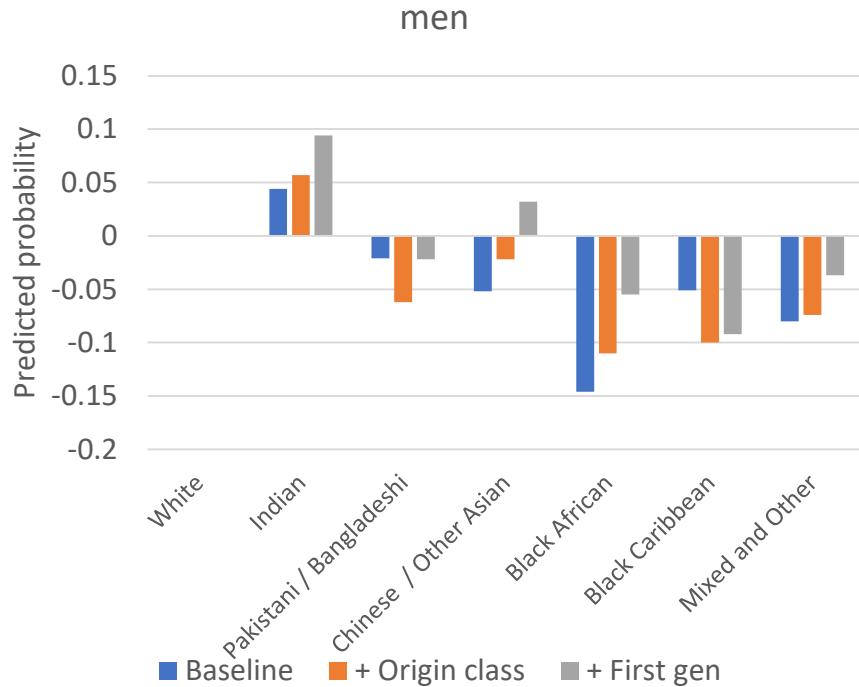
women



3. Results – prob of upward mobility, cond on initial conditions

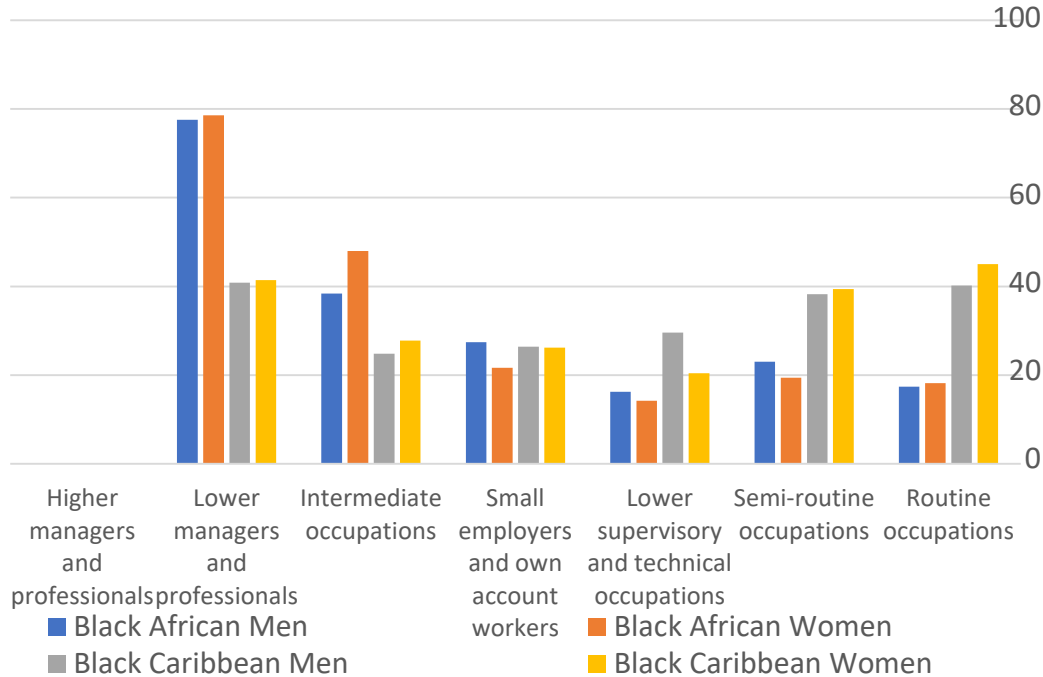


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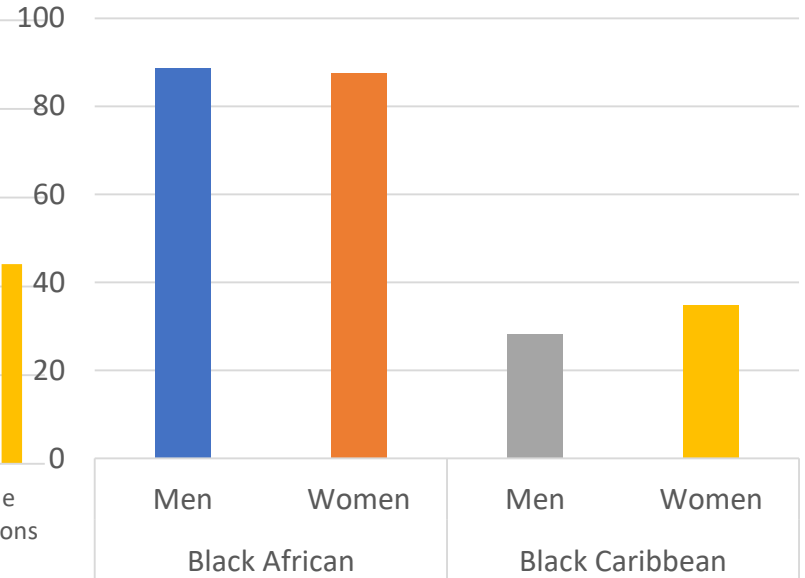


3. Results – initial conditions of Black African and Caribbean

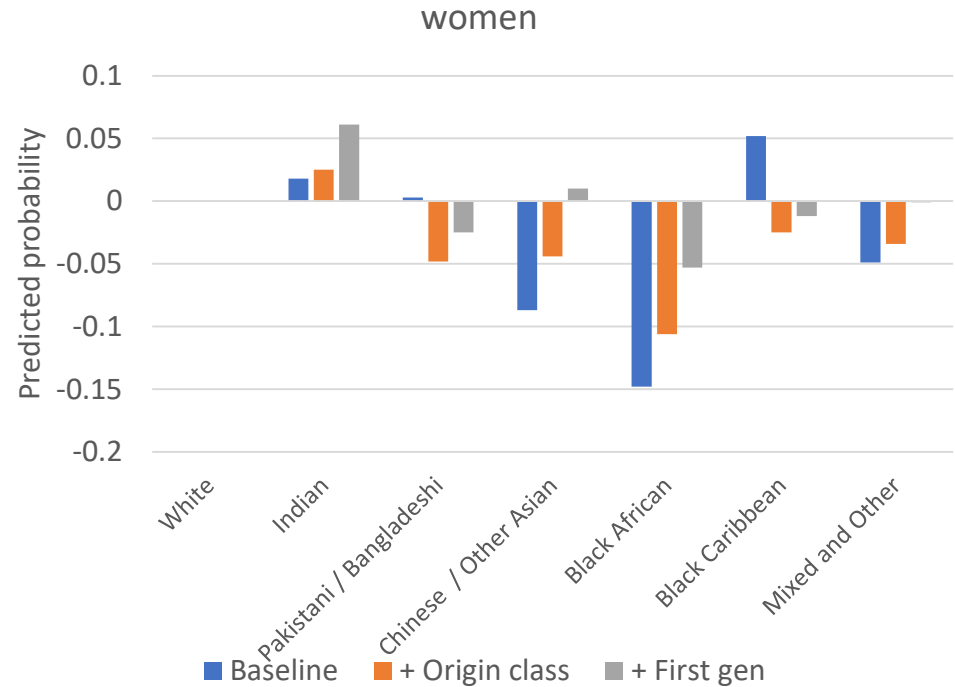
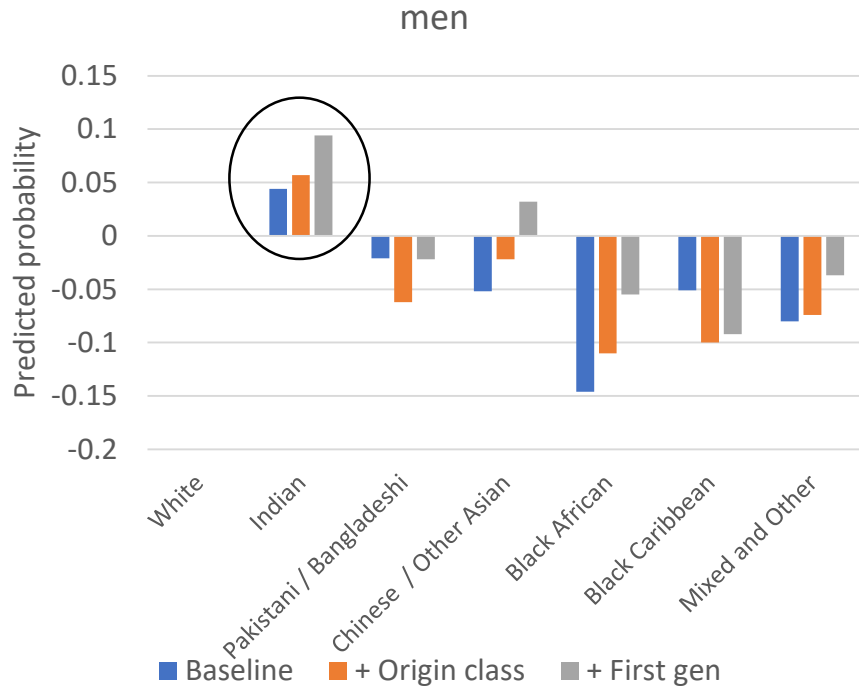
Origin class



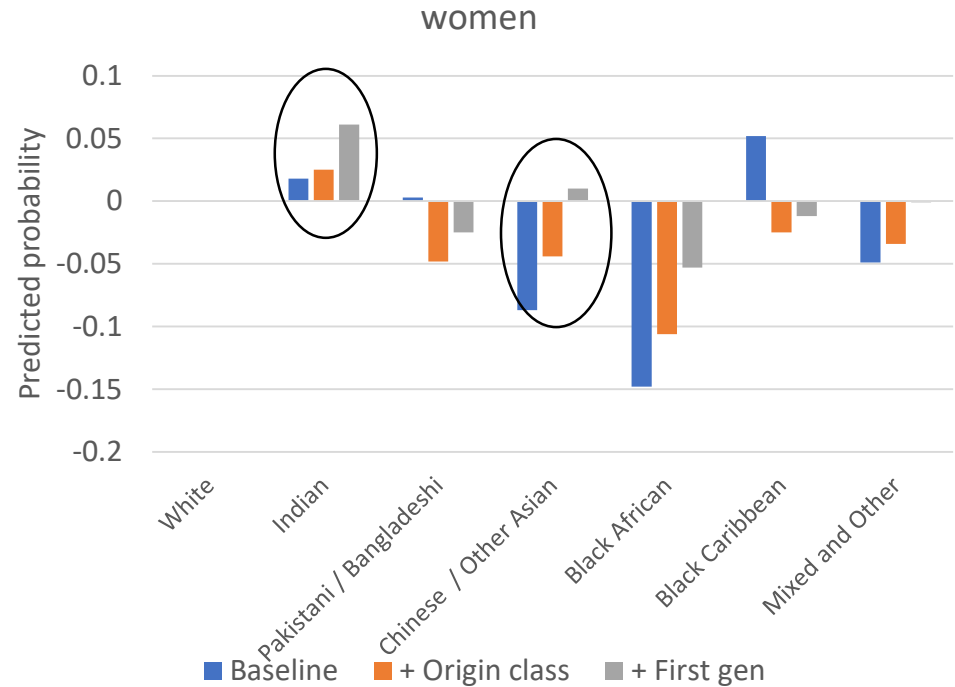
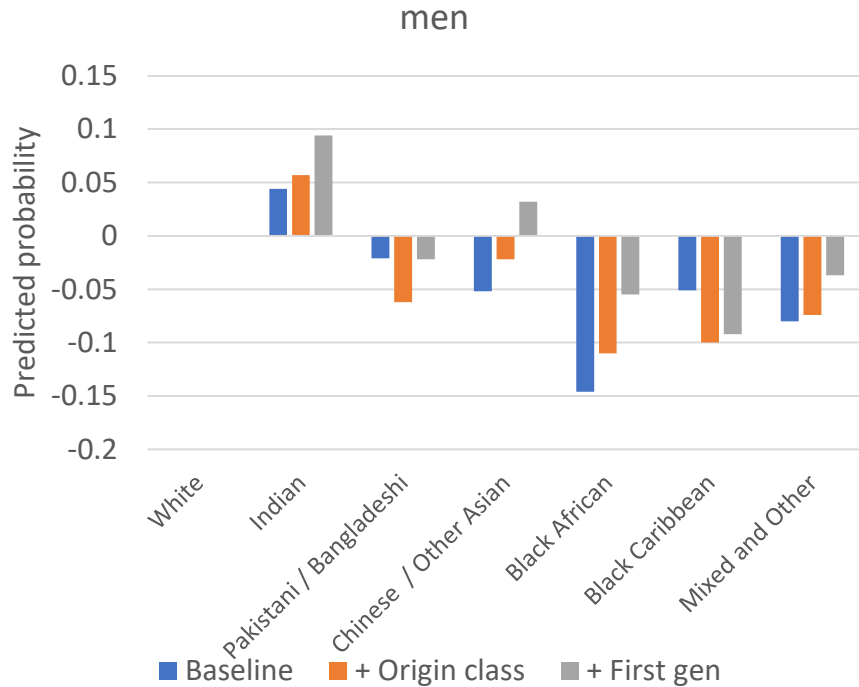
First Generation



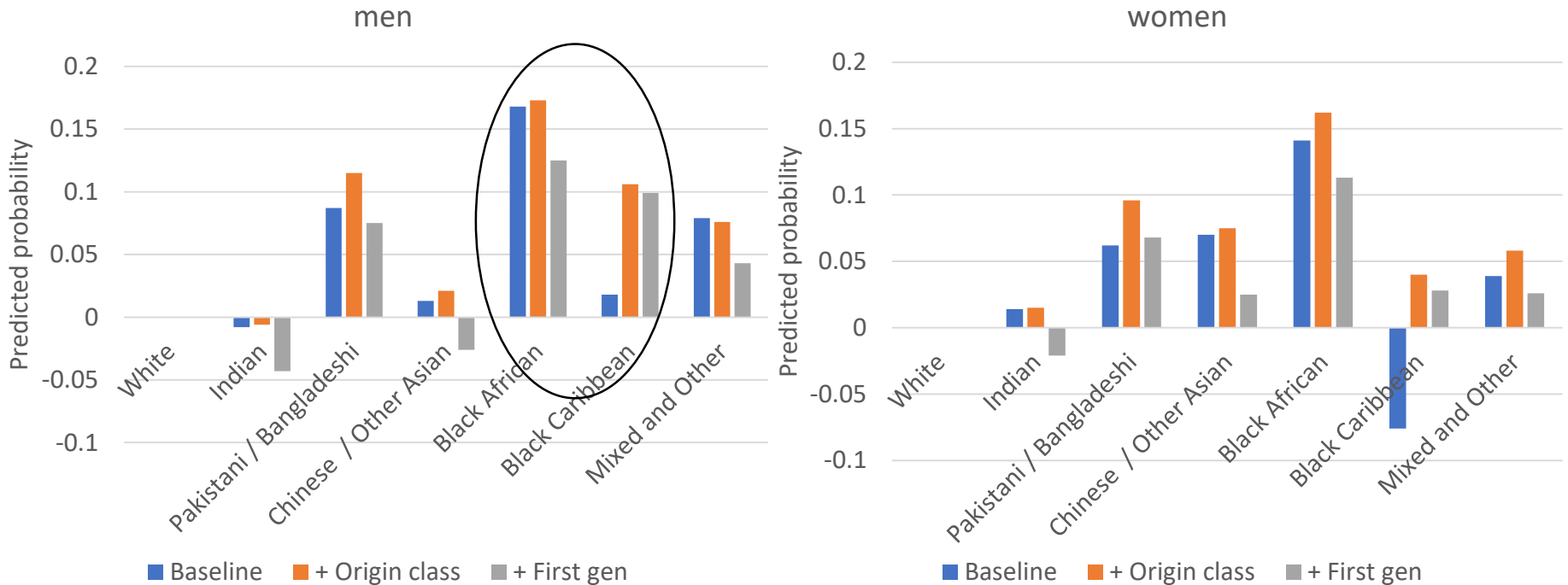
3. Results – prob of upward mobility, cond on initial conditions



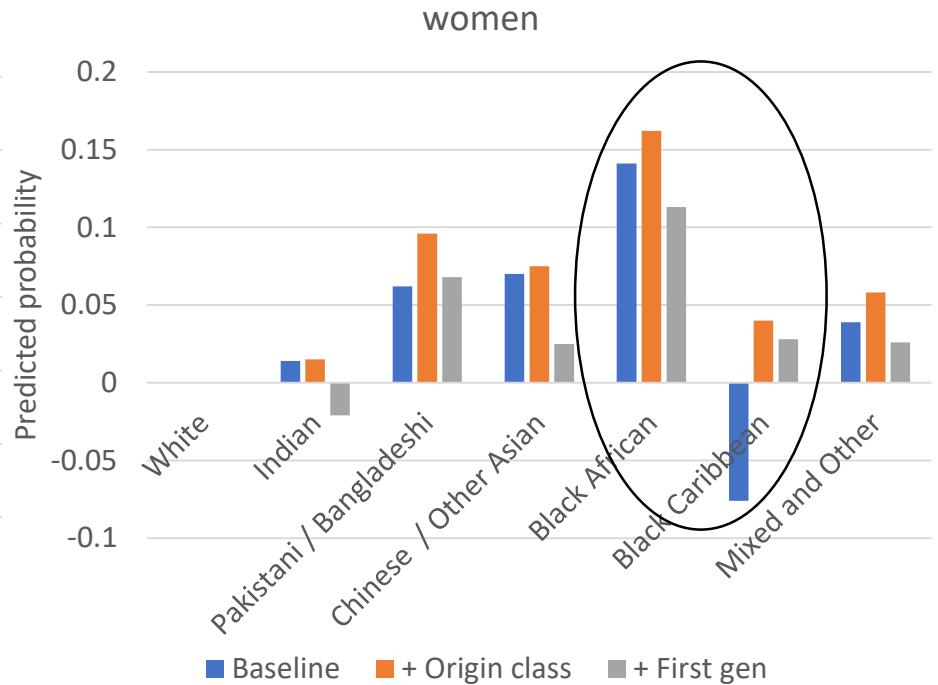
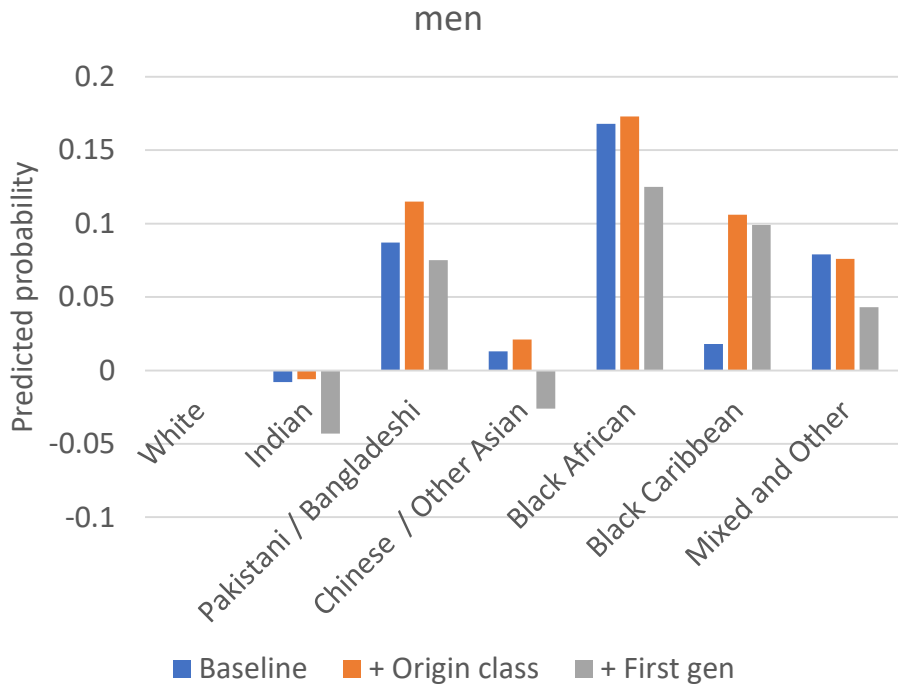
3. Results – prob of upward mobility, cond on initial conditions



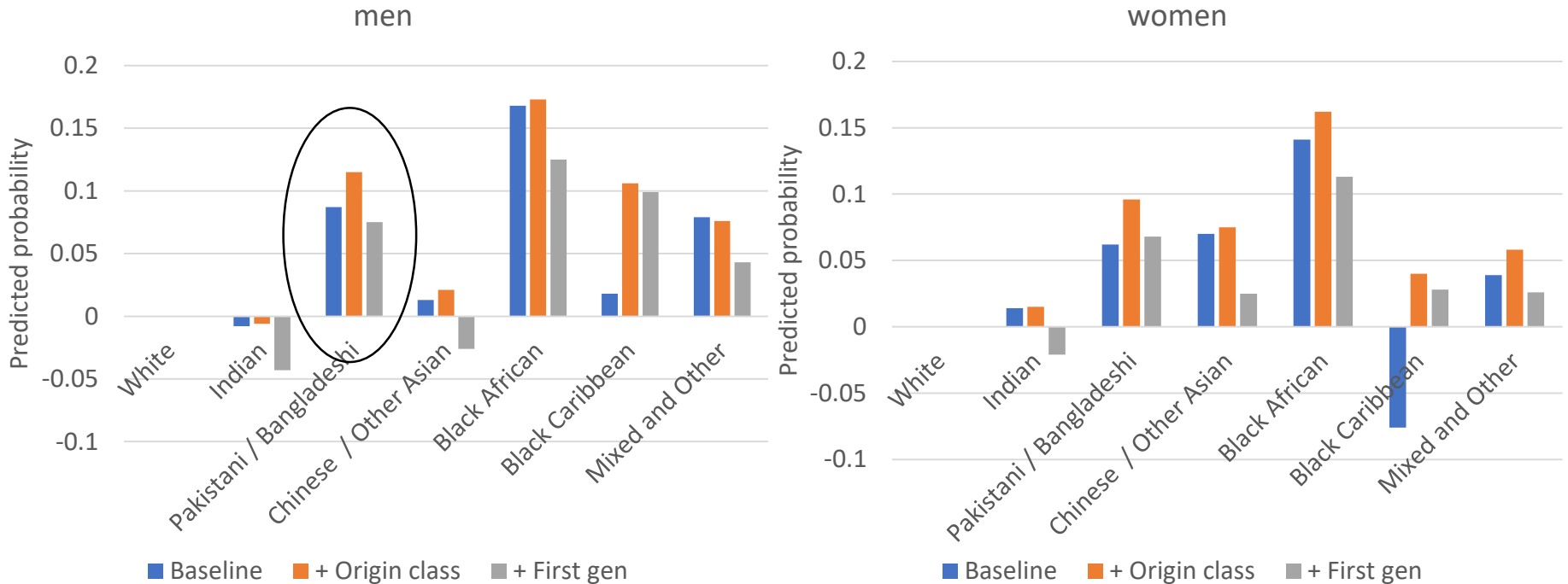
3. Results – prob of downward mobility, cond on initial conditions



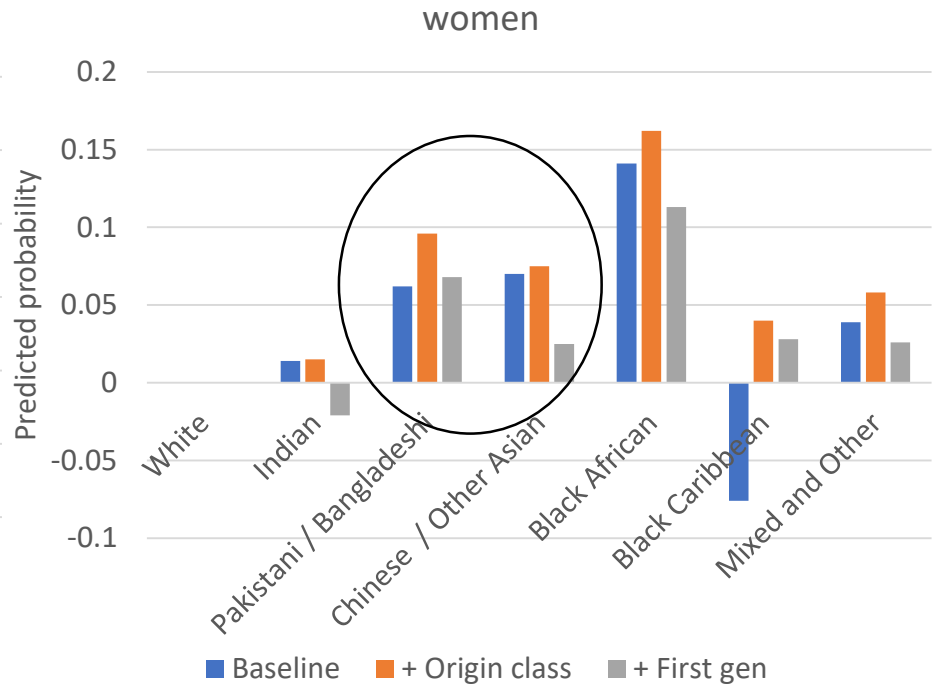
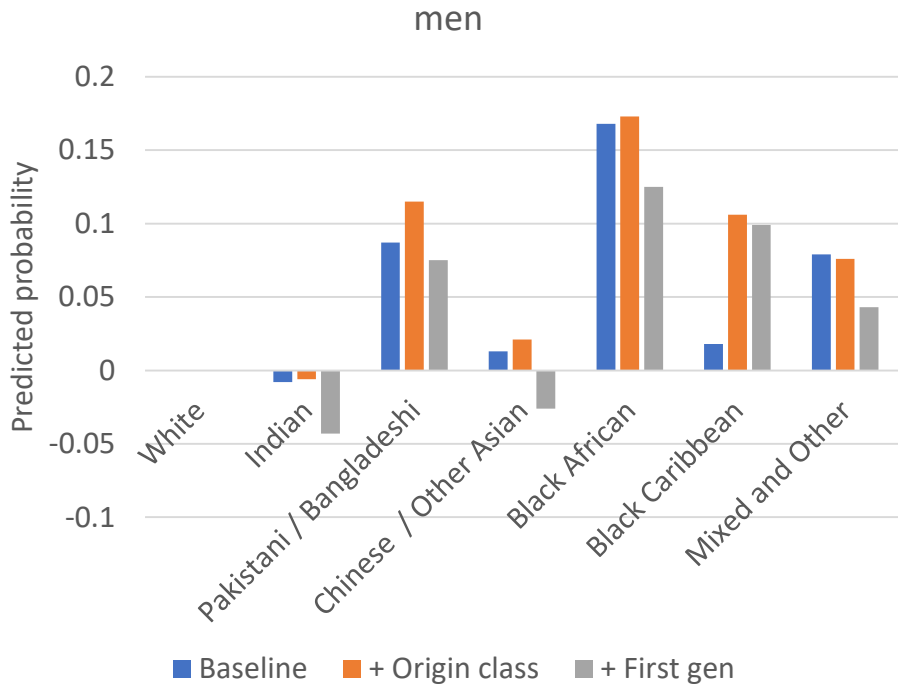
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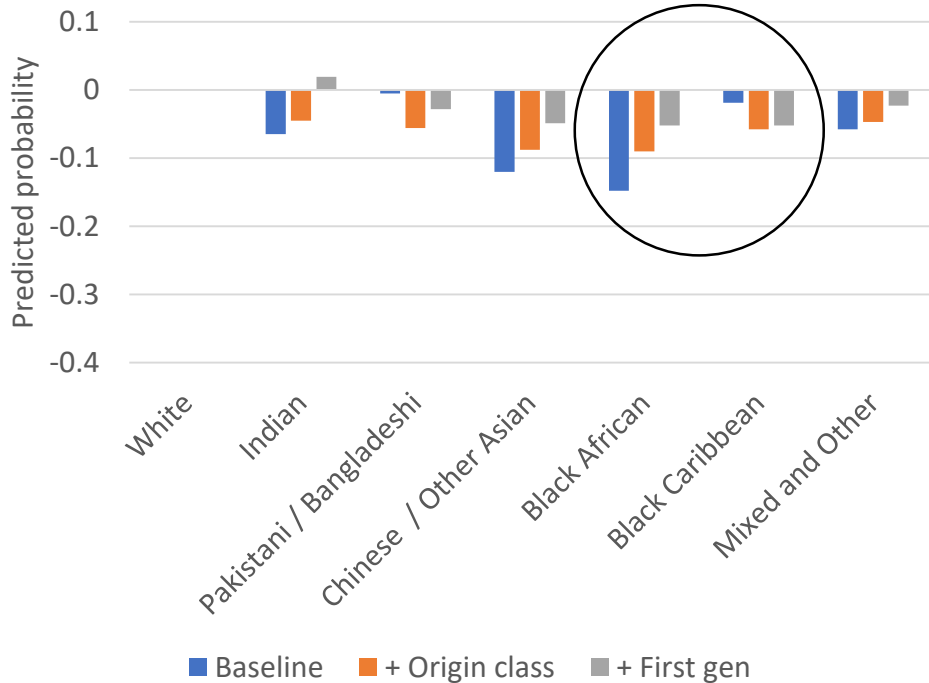


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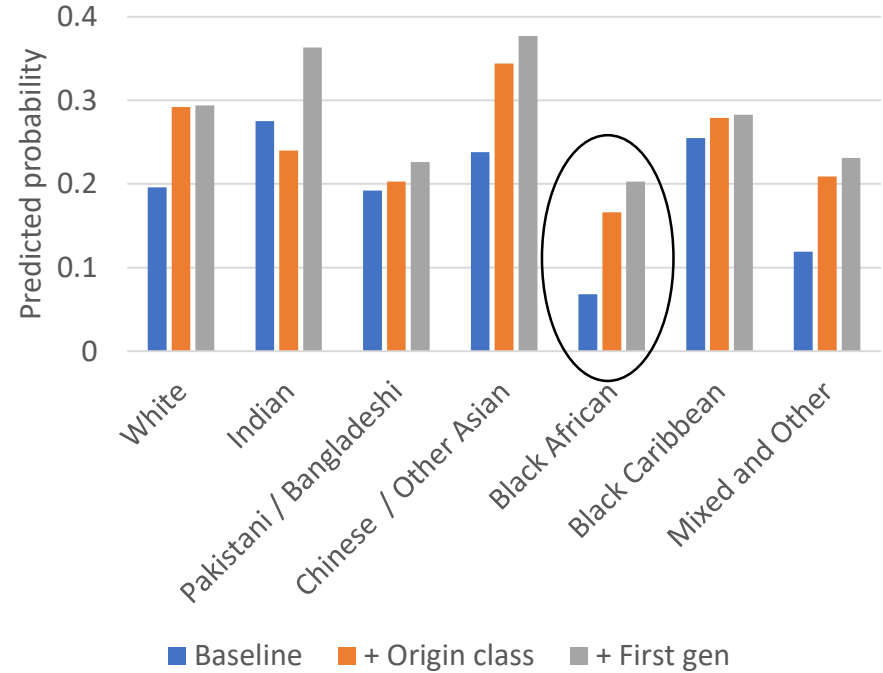


3. Results – prob of upward mobility, by ethnicity and education

non-graduate men



graduate men

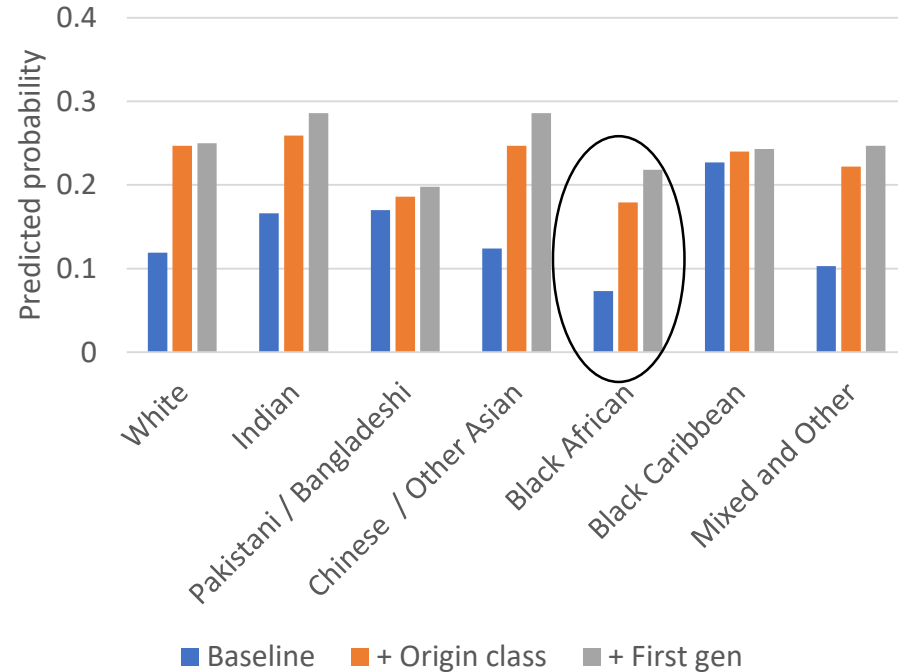


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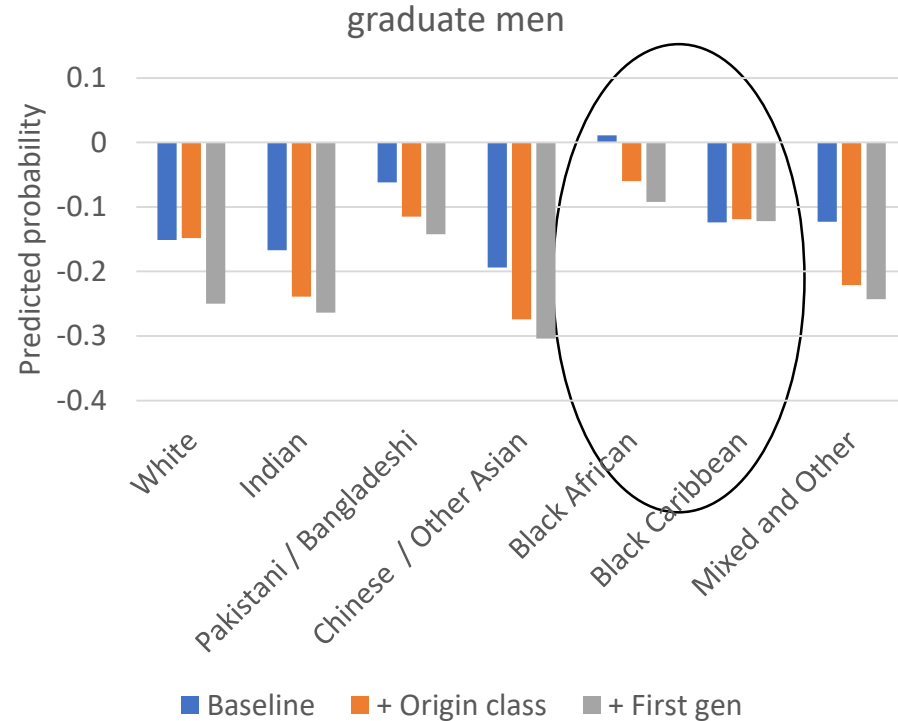
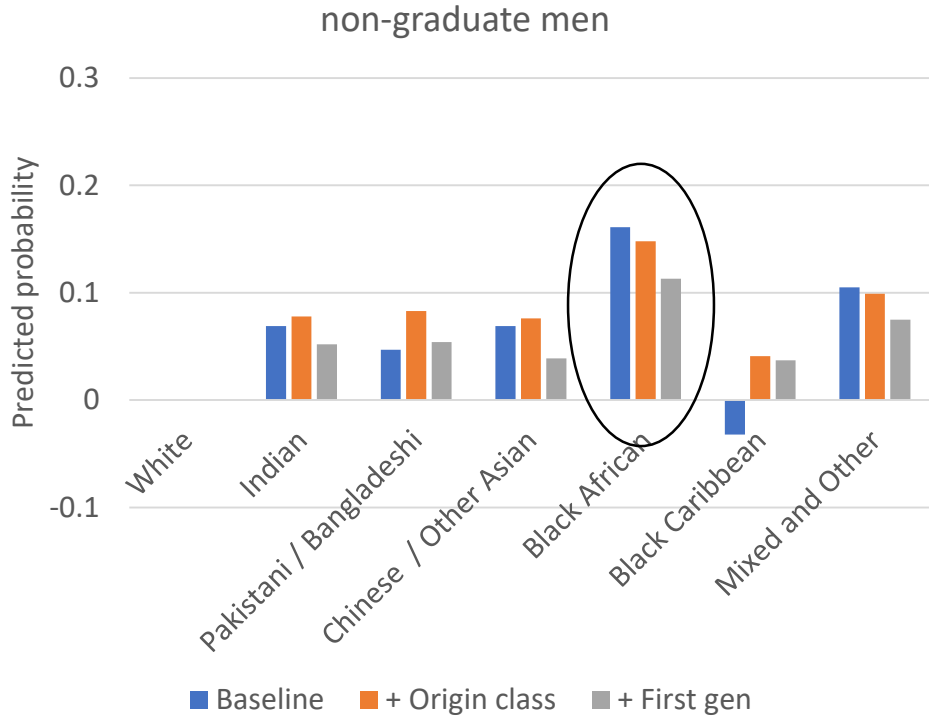
non-graduate women



graduate women

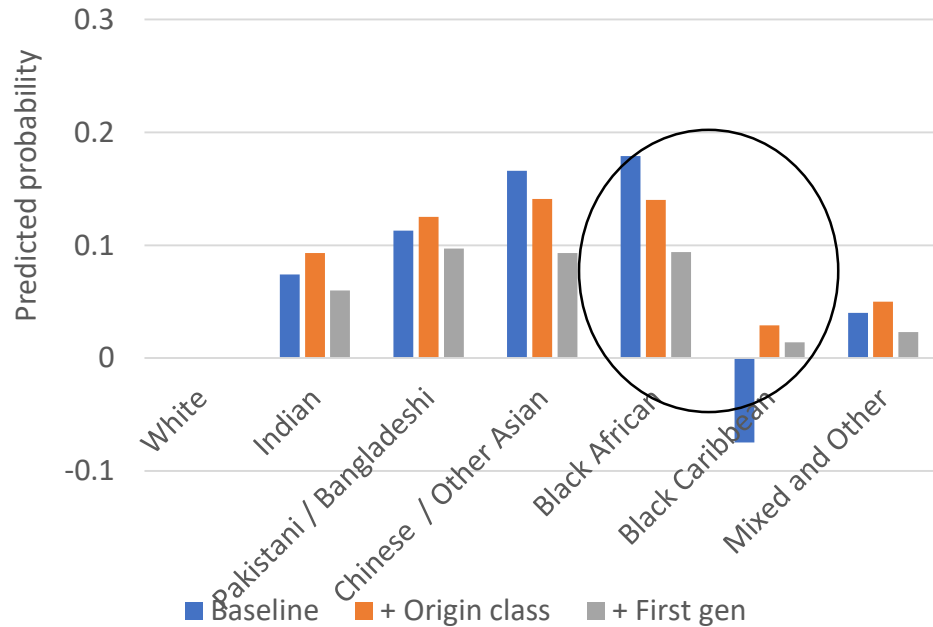


3. Results – prob of downward mobility, by ethnicity and education

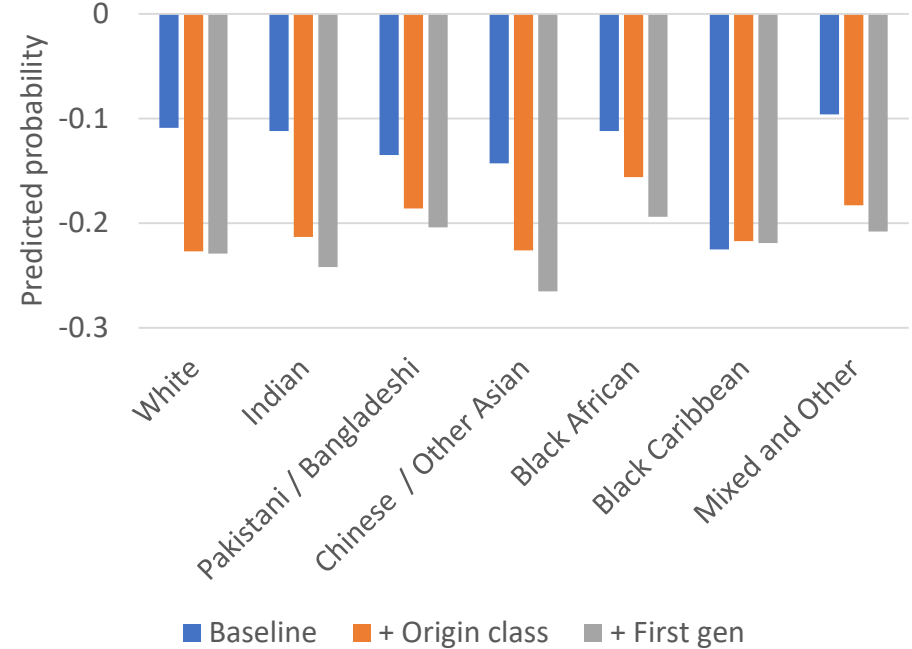


3. Results – prob of downward mobility, by ethnicity and education

non-graduate women



graduate women



4. Summary

- Raw patterns in upward and downward mobility masking some important differences across groups
- Black African men and women, and Black Caribbean men are less likely to be upwardly mobile and more likely to be downwardly mobile than other ethnic groups
- Black Caribbean women look more favourable in the raw data but this advantage disappears in our models
- Indian men and women are more likely to be upwardly mobile while Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and women are more likely to be downwardly mobile

4. Summary

- The findings for Black African men and women are driven, in part, by their higher social origins and the high proportions of first generation immigrants
- There is a fairly symmetrical pattern across education levels for this group with graduate Black African men/women having similar mobility chances to non-graduate White counterparts, while non-graduate Black African men/women face even greater constraints

4. Summary

- The findings for Black Caribbean men and women are more complex
- When taking into account origin class and immigration status, Black Caribbean men fare worse than might be expected – they have lower chances of upward and higher chances of downward mobility.
- Black Caribbean women's apparent advantage disappears when we control for initial conditions – looks to be non-grad
- Non-graduate Black Caribbean men have lower probabilities of upward mobility than other groups
- Graduate Black Caribbean men have higher probabilities of downward mobility than other groups

4. Conclusions

- Initial conditions matter when accounting for relative chances of upward and downward mobility between men and women from different ethnic backgrounds
- Our findings support the narrative of first generation migrants having their true class position ‘suppressed’ as is the case now for Black African migrants
- While education is clearly a protective factor in improving chances of upward mobility and reducing chances of downward mobility, the nature of this varies across groups
- Particularly concerning findings here for second generation Black Caribbeans?