

# SOCIAL MOBILITY IN ENGLAND



**SOCIAL MOBILITY REFERS TO CHANGES IN A PERSON'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS COMPARED TO THEIR PARENTS OR OVER THEIR LIFETIME.**



## CLOSING THE GAP

About 50 per cent of children born in 1970 to graduate parents could expect to get a degree, compared to 16 per cent of children in non-graduate households.

	1970	1989
graduate household	50	55
non-graduate household	16	30

That gap closed dramatically for those born in 1989: about 30 per cent of children born into non-graduate households obtained a degree compared to 55 per cent of those born to graduates.

## Has it become easier to be the first in your family to get a degree?

In 2022, around 368,000 people in England obtained a first degree according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

To better understand changes in social mobility, researchers have looked at the chances of becoming the first in your family to get a university degree.

This map shows that probability has changed over time, in different regions of England, by tracking the progress of people born in 1958, in 1970 and in 1989. Does where you grow up make a difference to your life chances?

### Key

- 1958 cohort**  
Probability of getting a degree by age 33 if neither of your parents went to university
- 1970 cohort**  
Probability of getting a degree by age 26 if neither of your parents went to university
- 1989 cohort**  
Probability of getting a degree by age 25 if neither of your parents went to university

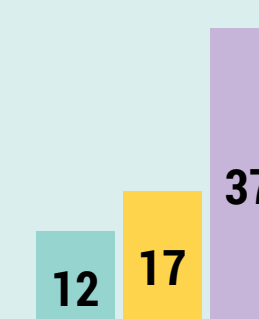
Probabilities are rounded to the nearest percentage.



	1958	1989
	11	30

## A DEGREE IF PARENTS HAD NOT BEEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

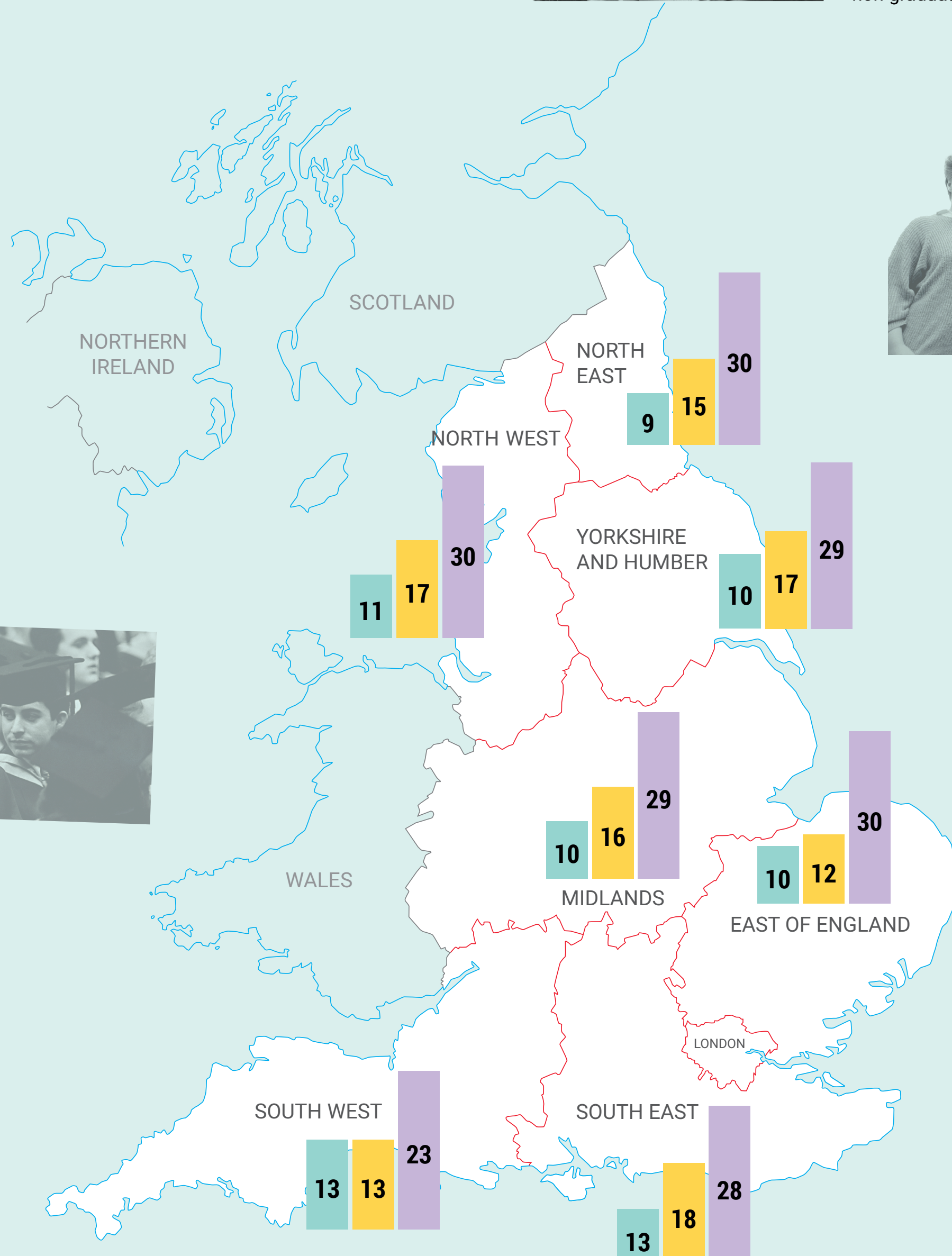
Children born to non-graduate parents in 1989 were almost three times more likely to get a degree than those born in 1958. Graduation rates for those who were the first in their family to go into higher education rose from 11 to 30 per cent.



## LONDON'S SUCCESS STORY

Greater London has seen significant success in educational social mobility. For those born in London in 1958, the probability of getting a degree if neither parent had gone to university was 12 per cent. This jumped to 37 per cent for those born in 1989 – the highest of all English regions.

In 1970, children born in Yorkshire and the Humber, and the North West, had the same odds of being the first graduate in the family as in London (17 per cent). By 1989 they had fallen behind to 29 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.



## LONDON AND THE SOUTH WEST IN 1989

The probability of being the first in your family to obtain a degree for those born in the South West in 1989 was 23 per cent – the lowest of all regions in England and 14 percentage points less than the highest, London (37 per cent).

### Images

1950s school girls wearing aprons with their domestic science teacher, posing for a group photo outside their high school or secondary school. *Alamy*  
 Village Primary school 1970s England. *Alamy*  
 Secondary schoolchildren in the 1980s. *Alamy*  
 LSE: Student notice board on the 1970s;  
 Population Studies Group 1988-1989. *LSE Library*  
 A university graduation ceremony in the 1980s. *Alamy*

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### FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE RESEARCH



Research funded by:  

 Economic and Social Research Council