

Types of Social Mobility

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

1. Horizontal mobility

This 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 likely remain the same. Sorokin describes horizontal mobility as a change in religious, territorial, political, or other horizontal shifts with no change in the vertical position.

2. Vertical mobility

This refers to a change in the occupational, political, or religious status of a person that causes a change in their societal position. An individual 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, resulting in a move to a lower stratum of society.