Americans worried about declining social mobility for a long time now

1982

1984
Americans worried about declining social mobility for a long time now

Note: Data slightly smoothed by locally estimated (lowess) regression. Red data points show recessions.
Actual mobility by year of birth

Men's mobility peaked among those born in the Great Depression.

Women's mobility peaked among boomers.

Millennials are the only cohort with more downward than upward mobility.

Source data on both parents: General Social Surveys, 1994–2016.
Actual mobility by year of birth

Men's mobility peaked among those born in the Great Depression

Women's mobility peaked among boomers

Millennials are the only cohort with more downward than upward mobility.

Intergenerational persistence (& mobility) depend on family structure

Education mediates much of the bivariate association

College as "great equalizer"
   Hout (1988)
   Torche (2011)
   Zhou (2019)
   Breen & Müller (2019)

**College graduates:** OD association null among college graduates

**Less than college degree:** OD association ~60% weaker than without education control (but still significant)

**Implication:** Inequality of college opportunity is a major factor in US intergenerational persistence
Inequality of college opportunity is a major factor in US mobility