

CAREERS AND INTERGENERATIONAL INCOME MOBILITY

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AUTHORS

Haeck, Catherine
Laliberte, Jean-William

ABSTRACT

This paper uses census microdata linked with tax records to quantify the contribution of occupations to intergenerational income mobility. We document substantial segregation into occupations by parental income. Children of high-income parents are significantly more likely to pursue high-paying and more desirable occupations. Since parents may pass on their occupations to their children, we further describe patterns of intergenerational occupational following and show they vary substantially across occupations, with low-income occupations showing more persistence across generations on average. Yet, occupational persistence plays a limited role for income mobility, explaining only 10 percent of the income rank-rank relationship. (JEL J13, J16, J31, J62)