

Young adults' migration to cities in Sweden: Do siblings pave the way?

Clara H. Mulder, Gunnar Malmberg and Emma Lundholm

Background

Moves of young adults for education and work form a large share of the influx of people into Sweden's large cities. Hardly anything is known about how these moves are connected with moves of family members.

Objective

We investigate the role of the residential locations of siblings in young adults' choices whether to move to Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö/Lund or Uppsala. Our point of departure is the paving-the-way hypothesis, stating that young adults value the presence of a sibling at a migration destination and are particularly likely to move to that destination. Our alternative hypothesis is the migration propensity hypothesis, stating that those whose siblings have migrated are socialized towards migration and are more likely to migrate to any destination.

Data and method

We use register data for the full Swedish population of young adults aged 18-28 in the years 2011-2013 and separate multinomial logistic regression analyses by gender of moving to each of the four Swedish cities or migrating elsewhere, versus not migrating.

Results

We find strong support for the paving-the-way hypothesis, but only moderate support for the migration propensity hypothesis. We also find that particularly having a sibling who is of similar age or older in the city of destination matters, whereas having a highly educated sibling there, or a sibling who is enrolled in education, matters less. Given the other sibling effects, having a sister in the city of destination is positively associated with moving there for young women but negatively for young men.

Conclusions

Although we do not know whether the siblings actually support each other's moves to the cities, we find strong evidence that the locations of siblings are important to young adult migration.