

Abstract for the 21st Nordic Demographic Symposium 2019

”Young adults’ intentions and the decision to leave the parental home in Europe”

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BACKGROUND

Young adults’ decision-making processes lie at the heart of life course transitions and the transition to adulthood. But although “choice” and “decision-making” consequently feature in many studies of leaving home behavior, actual decision-making processes of leaving home are understudied in demographic research.

OBJECTIVE

This study’s research objective, therefore, is to comparatively examine young adults’ decision-making processes of leaving home across European countries. I map beliefs and influences on leaving home intentions according to a framework provided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

DATA AND METHODS

I apply the TPB model to young adults’ decision to leave the parental home and test it by using structural equation modeling (SEM) on data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) for five European countries (N = 4,663).

RESULTS

Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are simultaneous determinants of leaving home intentions for men and women across the five countries, even when age is controlled for. But young adults’ attitudes (towards self-realization and their economic and financial situation) are decidedly more important than perceived behavioral control for the formation of leaving home intentions. In turn, age and partnership status are relevant background factors for attitudes and subjective norms.

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CONCLUSION

This study makes a methodological contribution by exploiting an underused element of the GGS – the TPB measures – to study contemporary leaving home decision-making. It has shown the usefulness of the TPB – with some caveats regarding perceived behavioral control – for capturing how young adults make the decision to leave the parental home, echoing prior research applying it to fertility intentions. Therefore this study constitutes a first, important empirical foundation to further untangle how young adults' decision-making processes – in different European country settings – intersect to shape pathways out of the parental home.