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Leaving Home in Post-War Sweden

*A Micro-level Analysis of the Determinants of
Leaving the Parental Home in Three Birth Cohorts*

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Abstract

To leave the parental home is an important transition for children as well as for their parents, since it is often the first move to independence through education, labor market participation, marriage, etc. In this paper we analyze the decision to leave home as a function of individual and family-related factors. The dataset used is derived from the Swedish Family Survey, conducted in 1992/93. In this paper a sample of 3 582 males and females in three birth cohorts (1949, 1959 and 1964) are analyzed, using survival analysis. We find that the first departure of children from the parental home differ between males and females and respond to place of origin and family context. Within family context, social as well as economic factors are important for leaving home. We also find some cohort differences in leaving home, indicating the importance of socioeconomic change and the different opportunities facing different cohorts in post-war Sweden.

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A Micro-level Analysis of the Determinants of Leaving the Parental Home in Three Birth Cohorts

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Introduction

For most people leaving the parental home is a crucial event on the path to acquire independence, and much of the scholarly attention to the leaving home process has also been devoted to this aspect (e.g. Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1993a, 1993b; Goldscheider et al., 1993). However, the process of children leaving home is also of crucial importance for educational attainment (White and Lacy, 1997), marriage patterns (e.g. Goldscheider and Waite, 1987), and the functioning of families and households; all with potentially great economic and social impact. The increasing importance of alternative transitions to adulthood and independent living of young adults before marriage that has been identified in previous research (Buck and Scott, 1993; Goldscheider and Waite, 1987; Heath, 1999) is also likely to have changed consumer demand, demand for housing, etc. in ways that have had far-reaching implications on general economic development.

A large majority of the rapidly increasing number of studies of the leaving home process during the last decade or so has been dealing with the United States (see e.g. White, 1994; Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1999 for a review). There is also an expanding literature on leaving home in several European countries (e.g. De Jong Gierveld et al., 1991; Ermisch and Di Salvo, 1997; Galland, 1997; Heath, 1999; Holdsworth, 2000; Iedema et al., 1997; Juang et al., 1999; Kerckhoff and Macrae,

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1992; Murphy and Wang, 1998; Silbereisen et al., 1996). For Sweden, however, much less attention has been devoted to the process of leaving home, although there has been a few studies including Swedish experience (Zhen Yi et al., 1994) or analyzing when children left home and to what type of residence (Lundberg and Modig, 1984; Löfgren, 1990; Mörck et al., 1986). In a recent article Nilsson and Strandh (1999) also analyzed the leaving home experience of the 1973 birth cohort, from 1985 to 1995, focusing on the impact of education and labor market attachment for the decision to leave home. In many ways this article contributes to a better understanding of the Swedish leaving home experience by making a multivariate analysis using micro level individual data. However, the analysis is based on one single birth cohort (1973); a cohort facing quite special circumstances at the time of leaving home due to the economic crisis of the early 1990s with high youth unemployment forcing many young adults to prolonged coresidence with their parents.

Our purpose is to fill some of the remaining gaps in our understanding of the leaving home process in Sweden by analyzing the leaving home experience of three different birth cohorts (1949, 1959 and 1964). The analysis will focus not only on various determinants of leaving home at family and individual level, but also on changes over time and how they might be connected to the more general economic development. We also distinguish between different pathways out of the parental home (i.e. leaving home for independent living or marriage/cohabitation) as well as between different types of activity following the exit from the parental home (education, employment or other activities).

Theoretical considerations and previous studies

In the previous literature there has been a strong emphasis on the importance of distinguishing different pathways out of the parental home when studying the determinants of leaving home (e.g. Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989). Some explanatory variables seem to have very different effects depending on whether the child is leaving to marriage or to premarital residential independence (Avery et al., 1992; Buck and Scott, 1993). Leaving home for single independent living or marriage/cohabitation are two obvious pathways out of the parental home. In the literature focusing on the role of leaving home in acquiring independence from parents, one has also distinguished various forms of institutional semi-autonomous living, e.g. college dormitories, military

service, etc. (e.g. Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989). In Sweden it can be assumed that, thanks to free tuition and a public transfer system with rather generous student grants and loans, leaving home to attend university is more of a step towards independence than might be the case in the United States, which ought to imply that semi-autonomous living is of less relevance in the Swedish case.

Turning to the determinants of the decision to leave home, gender can be assumed to be important since men and women differ when it comes to education, labor market opportunities, age at marriage, military service, roles in the household, etc. Previous studies for a number of countries have found pronounced gender differences both in the overall timing of leaving home and in what factors that are important behind the leaving home decision. Overall, women seem to leave home earlier than men both in the United States (Avery et al., 1992; Buck and Scott, 1993; Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989; Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1993a), Sweden (Nilsson and Strandh, 1999; Wall, 1989; Zhen Yi et al., 1994) and other European countries (Heath, 1999; Juang et al., 1999, Wall, 1989; Zhen Yi et al., 1994). This earlier leaving home for women can in many cases be attributed to an earlier age at marriage (Avery et al., 1992; Buck and Scott, 1993; Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1993a; Kerckhoof and Macrae, 1992; Murphy and Wang, 1998), although some studies have indicated that women are also more likely than men to leave to premarital residential independence (see e.g. Goldscheider et al., 1993). The impact of several of the explanatory factors also appears to differ between men and women, which will be discussed below, when looking at the other determinants.

Many studies, so far, have only analyzed the experience of one single birth cohort why they cannot tell us anything about the dynamics in leaving home over time. As will be indicated below, there have been substantial changes in the timing of leaving home over time, which indicates that different cohorts have experienced quite different social and economic circumstances as they have approached the age of leaving home. In addition, marriage patterns and attitudes toward premarital residential independence have also changed. In their study of Britain, Murphy and Wang (1998) found clear cohort differences in the timing of leaving home. These cohort effects, however, were not linear, but changed over time. Following improved economic conditions during the 1960s and early 1970s children started to leave home earlier than before, but as a result of the worsening economic conditions and higher youth unemployment in Britain after 1975, this trend was reversed.

There could be reasons to believe that young adults in rural areas were more likely to co-reside with their parents until marriage due to more traditional or family oriented values in rural areas. On the other hand, the opportunity to get employment or go to school without leaving the parental home has been, and still is, greater in urban areas, which might imply that young people in rural areas were more likely to move in order to get a job or get into college. The evidence from the previous literature also seems to suggest that children in rural areas left home earlier than in urban areas both in Britain (Heath, 1999) and the United States (Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989). Furthermore, it seems that city dwellers are particularly less likely to leave home to marriage (Buck and Scott, 1993) and semi-autonomous living (Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989). The latter finding is probably accounted for by the fact that it is possible for urban youth to remain at home while going to college, which is not the case for those living in rural areas. The lower likelihood of leaving for marriage in urban areas is probably due to the greater importance of single independent living in urban areas, making people less likely to remain at home until marriage, and instead living independently before marriage.

One of the potentially most important determinants of leaving home is the situation in the parental family. For example, experiencing a divorce is likely to increase the likelihood of leaving home prematurely due to conflicts in the parental home, the introduction of step-parents following remarriage, or to the fact that experience from a non-traditional family form makes the child more independent and perhaps less family oriented. Several studies have found these kinds of effects on leaving home of living in non-traditional family forms (e.g. Buck and Scott, 1993; Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1998; Holdsworth, 2000; Juang et al., 1999). Avery et al., (1992) found no overall effect of living in a one-parent family on the likelihood of leaving home. Separating different pathways out of the parental home, however, showed that children in one-parent families actually had a higher risk of leaving home to independent living, but a lower risk of leaving for marriage. There is also evidence that stepchildren have a tendency to leave home earlier than children growing up with both their biological parents (Heath, 1999).

Another aspect of the family situation of potential relevance for the decision to leave home is the composition of the parental household. It has been argued that changes during the last couple of decades towards a less authoritarian family ideology have made it possible for young adults to obtain a high degree of freedom and independence without

leaving the parental home (Galland, 1997). However, it is easy to imagine that children growing up in more crowded homes, i.e. having more siblings, would experience greater difficulties in combining freedom and independence with remaining in the parental home, which would make them more inclined to leave home early. There is also plenty of evidence in the literature that children with more siblings leave home earlier (Buck and Scott, 1993; Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989; Heath, 1999; Holdsworth, 2000; Juang, 1999), and that they are less likely to stay home until marriage (Avery et al., 1992; Buck and Scott, 1993). The gender-specific pattern is less clear however. In some cases the number of siblings seems mostly to affect women (Buck and Scott, 1993; Juang et al., 1999), while it seems to be males who are affected in other cases (Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989).

The social status of the family can also be expected to be an important determinant of leaving home, although we can expect the effect to be much smaller today than in the past when the household functioned as both a production unit and a consumption unit (cf. Dribe, 2000). In theory, higher parental income can be used both to subsidize independence for the young adults and privacy for the parents, or to facilitate the opportunity to get married by transferring resources to buy housing, etc. This would work to increase the likelihood of leaving home. It is, however, also possible that larger parental resources could discourage leaving home by providing better conditions in the parental home, making children reluctant to leave. Furthermore, it is highly likely that parents want to use their resources to discourage premature marriages, and instead invest in higher education for their children. Hence, the direction of the effects of parental resources is not straightforward, and is very likely to depend on the specific situation concerning how higher education is financed, to what extent young people contribute to the household economy, marriage customs, housing availability and cost, etc. in different countries.

Previous results seem to show evidence of all these mechanisms and effects. Some studies find that children, particularly men, are more likely to leave home with higher parental income (Buck and Scott, 1993; Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989; Nilsson and Strandh, 1999), while the effect seems to be the opposite in other cases (Whittington and Peters, 1996). It is also vital to distinguish between different pathways out of the parental home, as well as between children of different ages, when studying the effects of parental income on the risk of leaving home. Even if parents do not use their resources to encourage younger children to leave home early to marry they may facilitate marriage and

household formation for older children (Avery et al., 1992). In some cases higher parental income also seems to be associated with a higher likelihood of leaving home to go to college (Ermisch, 1996).

Frequently, a higher level of parental education also appears to increase the likelihood of leaving home to independent living or college dormitories, etc., while lowering it for marriage (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1993a; Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989; Heath, 1999), which, at least for the United States, has been interpreted as an indication that children with better educated parents have less traditional values and attitudes and therefore are less inclined to remain at home until marriage (Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1989). Buck and Scott (1993), however, found evidence that overall gender differences in the age at leaving home are smaller when parents are more educated because girls are not leaving home as early as when parents are less educated.

If we only focus on the employment status of the mother, there is not much evidence to draw upon in the previous literature. Goldscheider and DaVanzo (1989) found that children whose mothers had a professional occupation when the child was in high school had a higher likelihood of leaving home in the early 1970s, while this effect disappears later. For Britain one study found that children to less educated mothers, or mothers with a manual job, left home later (Murphy and Wang, 1998), while, in another study, sons, but not daughters, to working mothers were more likely to leave home to partnership (Holdsworth, 2000). For Spain the same study found both sons and daughters to working mothers to leave home at higher rates than children to non-working mothers, but in this case the effect was limited to those leaving home for reasons other than partnership, which, however, is a rather untypical pathway out of the parental home in Spain (Holdsworth, 2000).

Finally, it is also reasonable to expect children with employment and income of their own to be more likely to leave home, since they have the opportunity to buy themselves independence and freedom, or get married and establish a household of their own. This is also commonly found in empirical studies (Avery et al., 1992; Ermisch and Di Salvo, 1997; Nilsson and Strandh, 1999; Whittington and Peters, 1996). Furthermore, while being unemployed in some cases seems to increase the likelihood of leaving home in order to search for a job (Ermisch and Di Salvo, 1997; see also Holdsworth, 2000), higher rates of unemployment in society generally seem to delay nest-leaving (Buck and Scott, 1993; Ermisch and Di Salvo, 1997). This can probably be explained by the fact that higher rates of unemployment make young

people's outlook of the future more pessimistic, making them more hesitant to establish an independent household, while being more likely to continue into higher education. Spells of unemployment, on the other hand, increase the likelihood of a young adult returning to the parental home (Ermisch, 1996), probably because of economic problems following the loss of the job.

Data and methods

The empirical analysis is based mainly on the *Swedish Family Survey*, which is a retrospective survey made by Statistics Sweden in 1992/93, including a large number of questions related to demographic and social aspects of household and family behavior. 6 498 persons were first sampled and 4 984 persons participated and were successfully interviewed (for a fuller description of the survey and an analysis of the attrition process, see Statistics Sweden, 1996:1). This paper uses a sample of three birth cohorts that include both males and females (1949, 1959 and 1964), and consists of a total of 3 671 individuals. 53 individuals had to be excluded since they could not state when they left home, and another four individuals were excluded because they were not included in the part of the register picturing the educational and occupational history. The result is a sample of 3 582 individuals, of which 31 were still living at home at the time the survey was undertaken.

The survey provides information on the social and economic background and upbringing of interviewees, dates of leaving home and the formation of an independent household, and information on highest education and present employment as well as a detailed history of education, employment and other activities from age 17 onwards.

As a complement to the survey data, we use census data, from the early decades of the twentieth century until the 1990s. Censuses provide rather detailed statistical information about leaving home and enables us to gain insight into the long-term pattern of leaving home. For single-year age groups there is information about the proportion still living in the parental home and those registered elsewhere¹.

The age at leaving home can be viewed as a survival time living in the parental household, which makes it useful to employ survival analysis in the study of leaving home. In the following section the

¹ The Swedish censuses only take notice of moves that lead to registration and a new residence.

proportion of children living with parents will be illustrated by the Kaplan-Meier estimate of the survival function, and in the multivariate analysis of section five we use the Cox proportional hazards model to estimate the effects of various determinants (covariates) on the hazard of leaving home. The distinguishing feature of the Cox model, compared to other proportional hazards models, is that it does not require any specification of the baseline hazard, which implies that we need not to make any assumptions concerning the shape of this underlying hazard function. The model can be written as:

$$h_i(a) = h_0(a) e^{\beta x(i)}$$

where $h_i(a)$ is the individual hazard of leaving home for the i^{th} individual as a function of age, $h_0(a)$ is the baseline hazard, $x(i)$ is the vector of covariates for the i^{th} individual, and β is the vector of parameters being estimated.²

Each observation in the dataset represents an individual and indicates the survival time in the parental home, i.e. the age at leaving home, as well as the values on a number of covariates. Individuals who never had left home at the time of the interview were censored at this time. No time-varying covariates are included in the analysis.

The pattern of leaving home in Sweden

Census data from 1990, as shown in table 1, indicates that early nest-leaving is uncommon in modern Sweden and that few leave home before 17. The leaving home process does not really start until age 18 and the completion of secondary school, which has become almost universal. By age 25, most people have left their parental home. Young women leave home earlier than young men. In 1990, more than 25 percent of the girls had left home and got a new residence at age 18, whereas among girls aged 19 and 20, 50 percent still resided with their parents. At age 25, 95 percent of the young women had left the parental home. Young men leave home about a year later than girls. At age 19, a good 25 percent of the boys had left home and by age 21, less than 50 percent still lived with their parents. At age 25, 89 percent had left the parental home. To a certain extent, the one year delay in the leaving

² For details on estimation procedures see any standard textbook on survival analysis (e.g. Collett 1994).

Table 1. The proportion of children living in the parental home at different ages in 1990 (percent).

Age	Males	Females
16	97	96
17	96	94
18	84	77
19	72	57
20	59	39
21	44	25
22	32	16
23	22	11
24	16	7
25	12	5

Source: Statistics Sweden, Statistiska Meddelanden Be 15 SM 9301.

home process of young men can be explained by the fact that only men do military service and thus start higher education or enter the labor market and independent adult life about a year later than do young women.

For the majority of young people, the transition to adulthood is the same as to leave the parental home to set up an independent household. The transition to adulthood and leaving the parental home is clearly an important process of liberation in the lives of young people. When and how this process takes place does not only depend on individual ability and aspirations but also depends on labor market opportunities, education and the supply of housing, all factors that have varied a lot, in accordance with business cycle patterns, during the twentieth century and that also are somewhat gender-specific in their effects.

The mean age at leaving home in early twentieth century Sweden was 21 for women and 23 for men (Statistics Sweden, 1994, p. 51). However, among the cohorts born during the first decades of the century, some left home as early as age 13 and about 15 percent had left home at 16 in order to support themselves or help their family (see table 2). Despite this, the mean age at leaving home has decreased over time and leaving home has become more concentrated in age. Women and men born in the 1930s and later were, on average, about 19 and 20 respectively when they left home and in the 1950s cohort, it had become uncommon to leave home as a young teenager. On the other hand, it was not uncommon for children in early twentieth century to still live with their parents by age 25, since they often did not to move until marriage. In early twentieth century about half of all young men, and about a third

Table 2. Proportion of children having left the parental home at different ages by sex and birth cohort (percent).

Cohort	Males at age:				Females at age:			
	16	18	20	25	16	18	20	25
1900s	13	21	30	52	18	32	45	71
1910s	12	22	31	55	12	27	41	74
1920s	11	24	38	65	15	31	46	82
1930s	9	24	39	75	10	29	54	90
1940s	6	18	38	81	5	26	56	94
1950s	2	14	37	85	3	27	66	96

Source: Statistics Sweden 1994, table 4.1). Retrospective interview 1984/85 ("At what age did you leave home?")

of all young women, still lived in their parental home by 25. Today, young people leave home with a different pattern; fewer leave home early, but most people have left home at age 25. The explanation behind this changing pattern of leaving home can probably be found in increasing urbanization, expansion of education, new gender roles and attitudes regarding men's and women's economic and social roles and family formation. Table 2 also shows that during the entire twentieth century, the age at leaving home has varied somewhat more for men than for women, but this difference has declined somewhat over time, making the leaving home patterns for men and women increasingly similar to one another.

Turning to the picture given by the Swedish Family Survey, table 3 shows the mean ages at leaving home by sex and cohort. As was shown above by census figures, males leave home about a year later than females (at c. 20 years for males compared to c. 19 years for females). While there is not much of a change over time in the mean ages at leaving home for males, it seems to decline somewhat for females. To provide a better picture of the entire process of leaving home figure 1 and 2 display the proportion of children still living in the parental home (and never having left) at different ages. Figure 1 clearly shows the difference between men and women in the timing of leaving home. Before age 17 very few have left home, but after this age the process is quite rapid, so by 25 less than ten percent have never lived outside the parental home, and by 30 almost everyone have left. Thus, the process of leaving home can be said to take place between 17 and 25, and is most rapid between 18 and 23. The difference between the sexes can be seen already at age 17 and it takes until in the late 20s before this difference disappears. From figure 2 it appears as if the differences

Table 3. Mean ages at leaving the parental home for the first time.

Cohort	Males			Females		
	Mean	Standard deviation	N	Mean	Standard deviation	N
1949	20.4	3.4	615	19.3	2.8	653
1959	20.4	2.9	369	18.6	2.3	663
1964	20.2	2.6	611	18.9	2.2	640
All	20.3	3.0	1595	18.9	2.5	1956

Source: The Swedish Family Survey, see text.

Figure 1. Kaplan-Meier estimates of the proportion remaining in the parental home by sex.

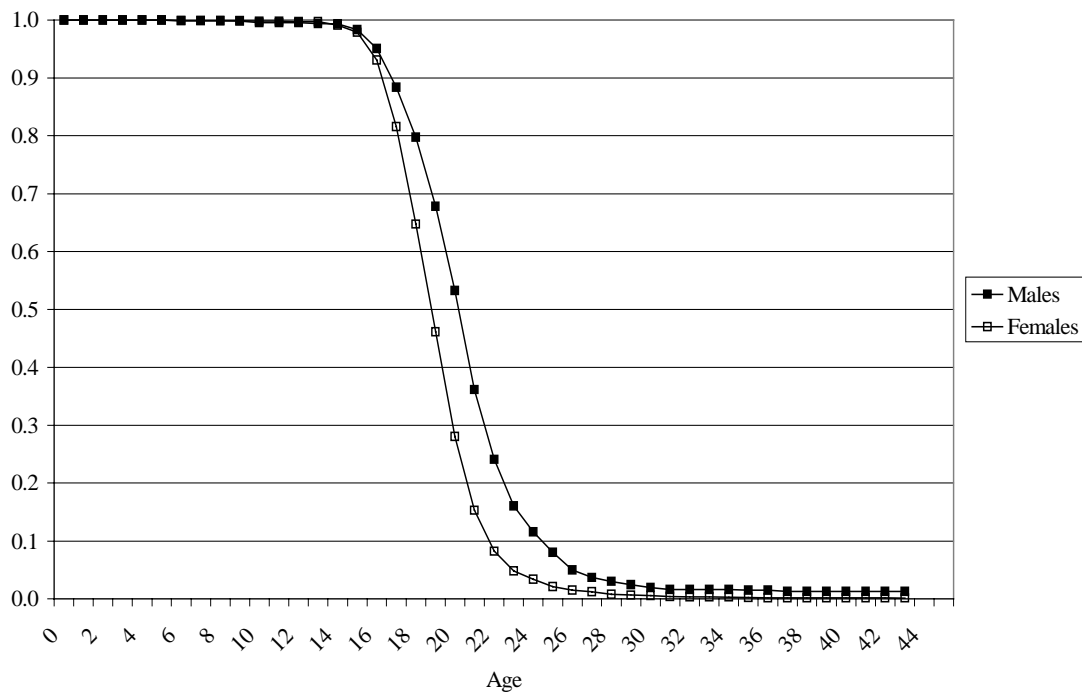
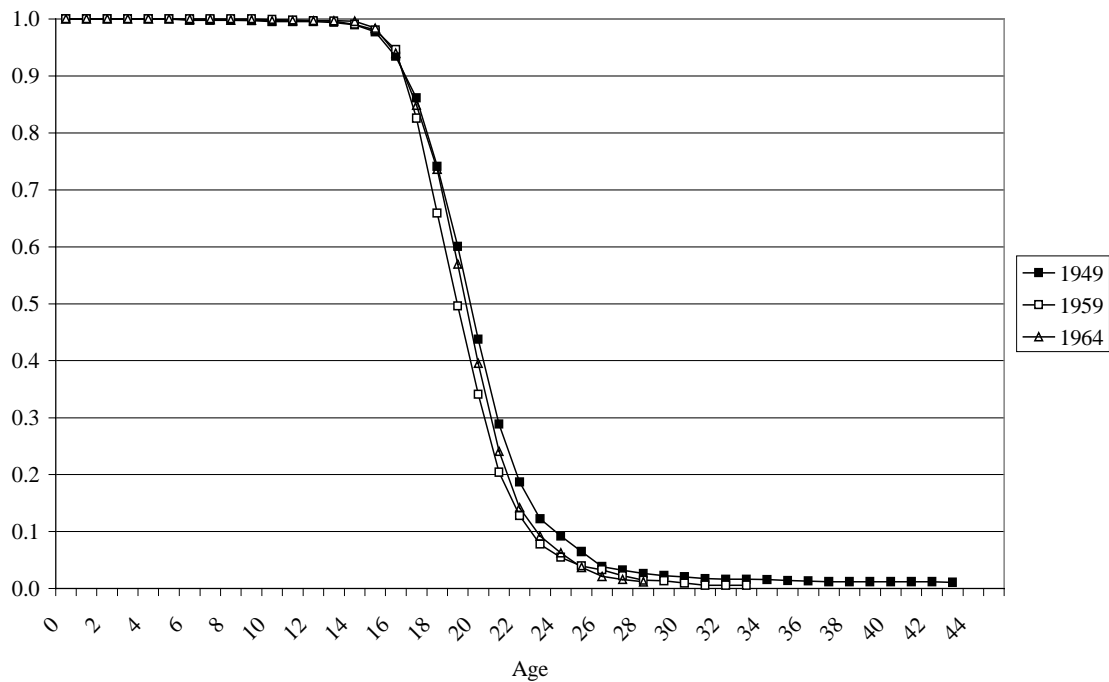


Figure 2. Kaplan-Meier estimates of the proportion remaining in the parental home by cohort.



between cohorts are not as pronounced as between the sexes, as they never amount to more than a couple of months. However, as will be made clear in the multivariate analysis below, these figures conceal some important differences between cohorts for certain subgroups in the population.

As shown in table 4 only a minority of children, regardless of sex and cohort, leave home directly to marriage or cohabitation. For males around 25 percent in all cohorts move directly to live with a spouse or partner, while the corresponding figure for females is c. 35 percent. Thus, two main conclusions can be drawn from this table. First, there appears to be little change over time in the propensity to stay at home until marriage/cohabitation. Whereas marriage rates have been declining in Sweden since the 1960s a simultaneous increase in the frequency of non-marital cohabitation has taken place, leaving the proportion of people in the early twenties living in some kind of union rather unchanged (e.g. Bracher and Santow, 1998). What table 4 shows is that this change seems not to have affected the propensity to live with a partner immediately following the move away from the parental home, which, in turn, may be seen as a further indication that the decline in

Table 4. Family context after leaving home.

Cohort	Males			Females		
	Single	Marriage/ cohabitation	N	Single	Marriage/ cohabitation	N
1949	74 %	26 %	615	66 %	34 %	653
1959	73 %	27 %	369	65 %	35 %	663
1964	76 %	24 %	611	66 %	34 %	640

Source: The Swedish Family Survey, see text.

proportions married at younger ages has not implied such a dramatic change in living arrangements. Second, females are still considerably more likely to remain at home until they set up a household together with a partner, despite the fact that they typically leave home a year or so earlier than do men, which reflects the lower ages at marriage/cohabitation for females as previously discussed.

Another question relates to the type of activity connected to leaving the parental home. Table 5 displays the type of activities those who left home were engaged in within a period of three months after having left home.³ Depending on sex and cohort, between 12 and 25 percent left home to pursue some kind of education, mostly at secondary or higher levels. More than half of the children leaving home had entered full-time employment within three months, which clearly indicates that for a majority of children having an income is a prerequisite for being able to leave the parental home. Although the importance of employment declines somewhat over time, even in the most recent cohort (1964) more than 50 percent of all children enter the labor force immediately upon leaving home. For males slightly more than one in ten leave home to do military service. We should keep in mind that for the cohorts under consideration here military service was compulsory for all (reasonably healthy) males, which implies that some remained at home while serving in the military, while others might have left before doing their service. Among females in the oldest cohort (1949) eight percent left to become housewives, but this proportion declines to only two percent in the two younger cohorts (1959 and 1964), indicating the increase in female labor force participation during this period. A large part of the increase in women's work, however, took place before the

³ We chose a period of three months since the respondents were asked about activities lasting at least three months. Furthermore, since only activities after the age of 17 is included in the survey, only individuals at or above this age are included.

Table 5. Type of activity after leaving home. Males and females leaving home at or above age 17. Percent.

	Males			Females		
	1949	1959	1964	1949	1959	1964
Primary education	2	1	1	6	2	2
Secondary education	2	3	6	4	9	11
Higher education	9	4	6	7	5	5
Other education	3	4	3	6	3	7
Part-time employment (1-24 h.)	0	0	1	1	1	2
Full-time employment (25+ h.)	59	63	57	55	58	51
Domestic/parental leave	0	0	0	8	2	2
Unemployed	1	2	1	1	2	3
Military service	13	11	11	0	0	0
Other activities	6	8	7	7	10	8
N.A.	5	4	7	5	8	8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	99
N	538	335	546	562	530	532

Source: The Swedish Family Survey, see text.

period under consideration here (Statistics Sweden, Labor Force Surveys for various years). The 1949 cohort was one of the first cohorts of women to have a natural labor market attachment as they were among the first to benefit from educational reform and expansion of the female-dominated public sector. During the 1960s and 1970s, more women came to participate in longer education and to a higher extent than before participate in the labor market. However, the activities of women were still highly colored by their own family situation.

The determinants of leaving home

We now turn to a multivariate analysis of the determinants of leaving home in post-war Sweden. Three separate sets of models will be estimated; first a model on the determinants of leaving home overall, second a competing risk model with living as single or married/cohabiting as the outcomes, and, third, a competing risk model with type of activity following the move (education, full-time employment or other activity) as the outcomes. The event of interest is the first move out of the parental household that lasted for at least six months. In the competing risk models the event of interest is leaving home for the outcome under consideration, while those moving for other reasons are censored when leaving home. The outcomes in the

competing risk models were constructed by comparing the responses to questions on the date of leaving home with the responses on when the individual started to cohabit, got married, began different kinds of education, employment, etc. If a certain activity or living arrangement happened within the first three months after leaving home, they were considered as connected to each other and the outcome defined accordingly.

All models contain the same set of explanatory variables (covariates). *Cohort* (1949, 1959, 1964) is included to control for potential changes over time in the leaving home pattern. *Place of upbringing* is divided into four categories: rural (population 0-500), small town (population 500-10 000), medium town (population 10 000-150 000), and large town (population 150 000 and more). *Family context before age 16* indicates whether or not the child had experienced a divorce or the loss of a parent before this age. It also indicates if the divorce happened between ages 13 and 16 or before 16. Covariates are also included indicating father's employment, mother's employment, number of siblings and if the family of origin was actively religious or not. Models including interactions between cohort and the other covariates were also estimated, but yielded no consistent results.

The results are presented as relative risks (hazards), which are measures of the differences between groups with different values on the covariates. The relative risk expresses the difference in the hazard of leaving home for the group under consideration relative to the reference category. A value of 1.50 implies that the hazard, or risk, of leaving the parental household in the group is 50 percent higher than in the reference category, while a figure of 0.50 implies that the hazard is 50 percent (or half) of the hazard in the reference category.

Table 6 displays the model estimates for the likelihood of leaving home for the first time, and tables 7 and 8 report the results of estimating the competing risk models. The first thing to note is that the effect of cohort differs between men and women. While there were no differences between males of different cohorts in the timing of leaving home, women in younger cohorts seem to have left home earlier than women in older cohorts. In particular, women born in 1959 left home considerably earlier than women born in 1949. From table 7 it is clear that the effect is stronger for moving to some kind of partnership (marriage or cohabitation) than moving to live as single. Table 8 shows that the effects are strongest for those moving to full-time employment or other activity (e.g. parental leave/domestic work). Thus, it appears as

Table 6. Cox regression estimates of leaving home.

	Males		Females	
	Rel.risk	p-value	Rel.risk	p-value
Cohort:				
1949	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
1959	1.028	0.683	1.356	0.000
1964	1.062	0.325	1.118	0.055
Place of upbringing:				
Rural	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
Small town	1.131	0.125	0.869	0.048
Medium town	1.062	0.424	0.863	0.035
Large town	0.965	0.683	0.576	0.000
Family context before age 16:				
With both parents	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
Divorce before 13	1.434	0.000	1.542	0.000
Divorce 13-16	1.544	0.016	1.564	0.003
One parent dead	1.391	0.039	0.989	0.940
Other	1.288	0.146	1.443	0.014
Father's employment:				
Blue collar	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
White collar	1.053	0.514	0.978	0.770
Self-employed (<10 empl.)	0.999	0.988	0.983	0.833
Self-employed (>10 empl.)	0.921	0.749	0.741	0.145
Farmer	0.699	0.003	0.957	0.695
Other	1.324	0.122	1.361	0.033
Mother's employment:				
Domestic	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
Employed	1.057	0.371	1.072	0.234
Siblings:				
None	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
One	1.164	0.136	1.090	0.344
Two	1.293	0.014	1.268	0.010
Three	1.493	0.000	1.347	0.003
Four or more	1.499	0.000	1.412	0.000
Family religiousness:				
Non-religious	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
Religious	0.926	0.274	0.985	0.821
Observations	1622		1960	
Events	1595		1956	
Time at risk	33332.7		37189.6	
Max log likelihood	-10280.2		-12853.4	
Chisq.	85.4		169.7	
Parameters	20		20	
Overall p-value	0.000		0.000	

if females in later cohorts, and in particular the 1959 cohort, left home earlier if they left for reasons other than education. This might be interpreted as indicating that it became less common for females to remain at home after getting into the regular labor force waiting to get married. In the later cohorts these women left home earlier, but in many cases still moved to some form of partnership, although typically to cohabitation instead of marriage (cf. Bracher and Santow, 1998).

Also when it comes to the effect of place of upbringing there are clear differences between males and females. For males we find no statistically significant effect, while women in urban areas seem to remain longer at home than women from a rural background. Women raised in larger urban centers (population over 150 000) remain longest at home. The effect is limited to women moving to live on their own, as is shown in table 7, and in order to pursue an education or enter the labor market, as indicated in table 8. To a large extent, this finding is probably due to difficulties for women in rural areas finding a job, or going to school, at a sufficiently close distance in order to be able to remain at home, but it may also have to do with an urge for independence, and a wish to break free from traditional gender roles within the household. In other words, young women in rural areas may be expected to be more domestically oriented and help out in the household, whereas their male counterparts are more oriented towards work local farm or factory work, which lead young females to leave home earlier to live on their own.

Turning to the effects of the family situation before age 16, boys and girls seem to be similarly, if not identically, affected. Experiencing a divorce increases the likelihood of leaving home for both males and females, and it does not seem to matter a great deal if the divorce happened rather recently (between 13 and 16) or in a more distant past. The competing risk model in table 7 also show that the effect of parental divorce is strongest for moving to live as single, although there is also an effect for moving to partnership, at least for females. Table 8 shows that the effect of parental divorce depends a great deal on the type of activity and on gender. For males it seems as if it is mainly leaving home to enter the labor market or other activity that is influenced by parental divorce, while moving to education is not. For females, on the other hand, it seems as if only the pathways education and full-time employment are affected. Moreover, it is interesting to note that for moving to education the effect is mainly of having experienced a divorce before 13, while for moving to full-time employment the effect

Table 8. Cox regression estimates of leaving home. Competing risk model by type of activity.

	Education				Full-time employment				Other activity					
	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females			
	Rel.risk.	p-value	Rel.risk.	p-value	Rel.risk.	p-value	Rel.risk.	p-value	Rel.risk.	p-value	Rel.risk.	p-value		
Cohort:														
1949	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
1959	0.722	0.095	0.951	0.713	1.157	0.109	1.406	0.000	1.066	0.652	1.475	0.003	1.315	0.040
1964	0.932	0.663	1.027	0.835	1.072	0.419	1.040	0.650	1.202	0.146	1.315	0.040		
Place of upbringing:														
Rural	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
Small town	1.241	0.357	1.000	1.000	1.001	0.993	0.839	0.101	1.634	0.007	0.908	0.586		
Medium town	1.398	0.118	0.949	0.757	1.032	0.756	0.835	0.085	1.511	0.017	1.160	0.376		
Large town	0.918	0.741	0.479	0.000	0.919	0.482	0.543	0.000	1.643	0.008	0.962	0.831		
Family context before age 16:														
With both parents	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
Divorce before 13	0.944	0.847	2.057	0.000	1.539	0.001	1.165	0.254	1.096	0.671	1.212	0.331		
Divorce 13-16	1.277	0.631	1.080	0.866	1.748	0.025	2.074	0.000	1.855	0.070	1.149	0.739		
One parent dead	2.028	0.046	1.215	0.579	0.990	0.969	0.870	0.558	1.256	0.530	1.126	0.698		
Other	0.722	0.581	1.135	0.762	1.553	0.050	1.295	0.279	0.740	0.554	1.126	0.747		
Father's employment:														
Blue collar	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.	1.000	ref.cat.
White collar	1.349	0.207	1.710	0.005	0.915	0.416	0.898	0.331	1.300	0.113	0.818	0.225		
Self-employed (<10 empl.)	1.656	0.038	1.913	0.002	0.704	0.004	0.857	0.214	1.490	0.021	0.991	0.959		
Self-employed (>10 empl.)	1.144	0.855	2.351	0.022	0.969	0.923	0.689	0.257	1.061	0.909	0.429	0.074		
Farmer	1.141	0.707	1.574	0.100	0.606	0.002	0.871	0.415	0.676	0.177	0.726	0.270		
Other	2.009	0.172	1.271	0.551	0.986	0.957	1.200	0.463	0.452	0.277	1.624	0.125		

Table 8. Continued.

	Education		Full-time employment		Other activity	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
	Rel.risk. p-value	Rel.risk. p-value	Rel.risk. p-value	Rel.risk. p-value	Rel.risk. p-value	Rel.risk. p-value
Mother's employment:						
Domestic	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.
Employed	1.116 0.517	0.892 0.386	1.169 0.078	1.188 0.052	0.877 0.295	1.026 0.843
Siblings:						
None	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.
One	1.029 0.912	0.838 0.349	1.314 0.054	1.266 0.074	0.946 0.792	1.092 0.684
Two	1.154 0.581	0.880 0.509	1.407 0.019	1.443 0.006	1.148 0.513	1.490 0.065
Three	0.919 0.785	0.955 0.828	1.773 0.000	1.270 0.115	1.328 0.221	1.461 0.112
Four or more	1.096 0.758	0.707 0.125	1.515 0.009	1.276 0.102	1.500 0.069	1.992 0.002
Family religiousness:						
Non-religious	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.	1.000 ref.cat.
Religious	1.145 0.468	1.313 0.050	0.555 0.000	0.650 0.000	1.611 0.000	1.255 0.095
Observations	1446	1628	1446	1628	1446	1628
Events	212	364	840	887	367	373
Time at risk	30596.6	31935.2	30596.6	31935.2	30596.6	31935.2
Max log likelihood	-1401.6	-2382.2	-5157.1	5589.7	-2373.6	-2369.6
Chisq.	24.0	56.8	106.6	106.4	66.1	50.9
Parameters	20	20	20	20	20	20
Overall p-value	0.243	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

is strongest of a more recent divorce experience. Thus, it appears as if a recent divorce experience contributes to an earlier entry into the labor market and exit from the parental home for both sexes. Males, but not females, are also affected by the death of either parent, in such a way that they leave earlier to live as single, pursuing an education. Hence, the death of a parent apparently increases the opportunities for early independence for males, while no similar effect can be detected for females.

As was discussed above, much previous research have stressed the role of parental income, or social status, for the timing of leaving home. In our case, however, the effects seem to be less consistent. For males the only effect of father's occupation (as a proxy for familial social status) is that the likelihood of moving to marriage/cohabitation is lower for sons to farmers, which, most likely, is a result of their higher likelihood of remaining "at home" also after marriage, taking over the farm. When it comes to moving to single life, however, farmer sons do not show any deviant pattern. For females, parental social status mostly affects the likelihood of moving to marriage/cohabitation. Females whose fathers were employed as blue collar workers experienced the highest likelihood of moving to marriage, while those whose fathers were self-employed with less than 10 employees were least likely to move to marriage/cohabitation. As is shown by the results in table 8, this is explained by the higher likelihood to move to pursue an education for daughters to non-blue collar workers. Thus, since daughters to blue collar workers are considerably less likely to leave home to go to school, they are more likely to remain at home until they set up an independent household together with a partner.

Overall, there is no statistically significant effect on leaving home of mother's employment, but table 8 shows a somewhat earlier leaving home to full-time employment for sons and daughters whose mothers were employed.

Just as expected, children with more siblings leave home earlier, and the effect seems to be more or less linear, with each additional sibling increasing the likelihood of leaving home. As we saw before, the same finding has been made in several other studies and is generally explained by a more crowded parental home, giving less opportunities for independence and privacy while remaining in the parental home. This conclusion is also reinforced by the result of the competing risk model in table 7, which shows that leaving home to single living is more affected by the number of siblings than moving directly to marriage/cohabitation.

Finally, we turn to the effect of being raised in an actively religious family. There is no effect overall, but this is explained by opposite effects for leaving to single life and marriage/cohabitation respectively. Females from religious homes have a higher likelihood of leaving home to single life, but a lower likelihood of moving to marriage/cohabitation, which might be explained by a lower propensity to cohabit as unmarried among people from religious homes, who, instead, leave home to single living and wait until marriage before setting up a household together with a partner. Although males do not show any statistically significant effect for moving to single living, they show the same negative effect for moving to marriage/cohabitation. Moreover, some quite interesting differences emerge between people with different religious background in the reasons for leaving home. Both males and females from a religious background are considerably less likely to leave home to enter the labor market than are people with a non-religious background. Instead, they are more likely to pursue other activities, and females from a religious background are also more likely to move to education. These other activities may include such things as charity or voluntary work.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has indicated the great complexity of the leaving home process, but has also pointed out some important characteristics of this process in post-war Sweden. First, there appears to be clear gender differences in leaving home, some of which have been shown in previous studies as well. In general, females seem to leave home about a year earlier than males, on average, and they also appear to be more likely to leave home to marriage/cohabitation, while males are more likely to leave home for single life. Furthermore, females are more likely than males to leave home for education, while males are more likely to leave home for full-time employment. Swedish women have also experienced more changes in their leaving home pattern than have men, which, for example, is indicated by a declining mean age at leaving home for females over time.

The results presented here have also highlighted the importance of full-time employment for being able to leave home. Even in the youngest cohort (1964) more than half of all males and females were full-time employed within three months after having left home. Thus, for many young adults having a job and an income is an important prerequisite for residential independence, and a crucial step towards

establishing a separate household outside the parental home. This has also become more important over time for the leaving home pattern of females, as is indicated by their earlier nest-leaving to enter into the labor market. While they previously were more likely to remain at home even after getting a job, waiting to get married, they are now more likely to leave home when getting employment and income. This change of pattern is also intimately connected with the changing living arrangements of young people, where marriage increasingly has been replaced by cohabitation as the preferred way of living with a partner. What our results seem to indicate is that this change has also encouraged, or facilitated, an earlier nest-leaving for employed females.

Family context also shows a powerful impact on both the timing of leaving home and on the pathways out of the parental home. Parental divorce, family religiosity and the number of siblings all affect the decision to leave home in one way or the other, although the effects differ considerably between males and females as well as between different reasons for leaving home. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the social status of the family (as measured by father's occupation) did not play a large role in explaining leaving home, and the same seems to be true when it comes to mother's employment. Although it cannot be completely ruled out that a different and more precise measure of parental resources (such as family income) would change this results, it seems more likely that it reflects that parental resources are not as important for leaving home as other aspects of the family context and the child's own income (labor force participation). In other words, it appears as if the social situation in the family (parental divorce, family composition, place of upbringing) plays a more important role for leaving home than the economic situation, as measured by father's employment.

Taken together, the results presented in this paper show the great complexity of the leaving home process, which involves not only considerations about residential independence, but also school attendance, labor force participation, marriage/cohabitation and household formation. According to our results, family context plays a decisive role in these decisions; decisions that, in turn, are of great importance for the future life course of young men and women.

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