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Young Adults Leaving & Returning to the Parental Home

Despite a pronounced increase over recent decades in the percentage of young adults still residing in the parental home, we know little about the factors that currently impede or facilitate young adults’ home-leaving and even less about the factors that encourage young adults to return to the parental home after having achieved residential independence. This study will use data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics’ Transition into Adulthood (PSID-TA) project to examine patterns and determinants of the timing of leaving and returning to the parental home among a nationally-representative sample of young adults who turned age 18 between 2005 and 2011. Special attention is given to the impact of sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., sex and race/ethnicity); early childhood circumstances (e.g., family structure); recent life-course transitions (e.g., college attendance, parenthood, employment); unexpected shocks (e.g., job loss, union dissolution); parental characteristics (e.g., parents’ marital status, parents’ socioeconomic status, household crowding); and relationships with parents (e.g., emotional closeness) on the timing of leaving and returning to the parental home. Additional attention is given to how these factors influence particular routes to leaving home (e.g., to attend college or for residential independence); whether the effects of life-course transitions, unexpected events, parental characteristics, and parental relationships on the timing of both home-leaving and home-returning vary by gender and race/ethnicity; and the degree to which sociodemographic and family structure differences in the timing of leaving and returning to the parental home can be attributed to subgroup differences in the quality of youths’ relationships with their parents.