

Leaving home in the Netherlands: when and in which housing

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Abstract

The paper addresses two aspects of leaving the parental home in the Netherlands: the timing of leaving home in the life course, and the outcome in terms of the first housing situation. We investigate to what extent the timing and the housing outcome are influenced by the child's and the parents' resources, and how they differ between spatial contexts and through time. Data are used from two retrospective surveys conducted in the beginning of the 1990s. In the analysis of the timing of leaving home, we make a distinction between the two competing risks of leaving to live alone and leaving to live with a partner. This distinction is particularly important for the Netherlands, where living without a partner has become much more common during the past few decades; it is now the most common pathway of starting a first household after leaving home. We also examine how the first housing situation depends on which of the two pathways out of the parental home is taken. We use discrete-time event history models for the analysis of timing, and multinomial logistic regression models for the analysis of the housing outcomes.

The results confirm that there are major differences between leaving home to live alone and leaving to live with a partner. The single most important factor influencing leaving home to live alone is education; those with university education (including those still in university) are more than five times as likely to leave home to live alone in a given year than those with primary education. Other important factors include degree of urbanization and the child's and the parents' socio-economic status. The likelihood of leaving home to live with a partner, in contrast, is negatively associated with level of education. It is hardly influenced by parental resources, but the child's own socio-economic status and employment are important.

The first housing situation of the nest leavers is strongly associated with the route they take out of the parental home. Compared with renting an independent dwelling, those starting without a partner are much more likely to start in shared or student accommodation and much less likely to immediately become home-owners. Shared accommodation, furthermore, is predominantly found among those still in education or otherwise not employed; and the younger nest leavers. The likelihood of starting as a home-owner increases with age and decreases with degree of urbanization. Surprisingly, no evidence is found for an influence of the child's socio-economic status on the first housing situation. Furthermore, hardly any influence of parental resources on the child's first housing situation is found.

1. Introduction

Leaving the parental home has important implications for the household situation, the housing situation, the income, and the daily life of both the parents and the child. It also has implications for housing demand, consumption patterns, and the demand for social security. Probably for reason of this multitude of implications, leaving the parental home has been attracting the attention of researchers from various disciplines—sociology, economics, geography, and demography.

The literature on leaving home focuses on a variety of topics. A major topic is the timing of leaving in the child's life course (Iedema, Becker & Sanders, 1997; Murphy & Wang, 1998; Whittington & Peters, 1996). Several authors have stressed the importance of the household situation after leaving and the different decision processes underlying home-leaving for different motives. This line of thought has led to various studies that extend the timing literature to separate investigations of leaving home to live with a partner versus leaving to live without a partner (Buck & Scott, 1993 and Mulder & Clark, 2000, for the USA; Hooimeijer & Mulder, 1998, for the Netherlands). De Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer and Beekink (1991) use an even finer distinction between motives for leaving.

Other studies are devoted to the housing outcomes of nest leaving (Clark & Mulder, 2000; Kruythoff, 1994; Linde, Dieleman & Clark, 1986; Mulder & Manting, 1994). These studies stress the great differences in first housing situation between those leaving home to live with a partner and those leaving to live without a partner.

An intriguing aspect of leaving home is that it has widely different appearances in different countries. Whereas in some countries leaving home is almost synonymous with marriage, the connection with marriage, or even partnership formation, is much less strong in others. The common age of leaving home also differs between countries. It is not so easy to understand how these differences come about. No doubt, the incomes of the children and their parents play a role. So do the social security system, the cost and availability of housing, and the spatial distribution of opportunities for employment and education. But the normative pressure from parents and peers undoubtedly also differs. A 26-year-old woman living in the parental home may in some countries feel a strong pressure to leave and live on her own, whereas in others she is expected to find a marriage partner first. Even the definition of when a child is considered as having left home differs between countries, at least among researchers. A notable difference is how students living away for college or university are considered. In the literature on home-leaving in the USA, these students tend to be treated as still being part of the parental household (Buck & Scott, 1993; Whittington & Peters, 1996) or as occupying a status between living in the parental home and living independently: 'semi-autonomy' (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1989). In the literature from other countries, notably in studies from the Netherlands, students living away from home tend to be treated as having left.

The international variation in leaving the parental home makes it interesting to study home-leaving in various countries. The Netherlands is an interesting case, because the past few decades have shown marked changes in the timing of home-leaving and the pathways taken. Leaving home for a partnership has been increasingly postponed in the past few decades, whereas leaving home to live without a partner has shown an almost continuous acceleration (Hooimeijer & Mulder, 1998).

There is a substantial body of previous work on leaving the parental home in the Netherlands. One study uses a fairly small sample from one birth cohort. This study gives a detailed account of the influence of parental resources, but does not consider other factors (De Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer & Beekink, 1991). Another study focuses specifically on the young adults' perceptions of the consequences of leaving home (Baanders, 1996, 1998). Other

studies use the Housing Demand Surveys conducted by Statistics Netherlands. These surveys are excellent sources for studying the housing consequences of leaving home (Kruythoff, 1994; Linde, Dieleman & Clark, 1986; Hooimeijer & Mulder, 1998; Mulder & Manting, 1994), but offer only limited opportunities for investigating the determinants of the timing (Crommentuijn & Hooimeijer, 1991; Hooimeijer & Mulder, 1998). For example, no information on parental resources is available. Thus far, only two studies have used the detailed retrospective data from two life-course surveys that have been conducted in the Netherlands in the 1990s (Iedema, Becker & Sanders, 1997; Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000). In both these studies, however, leaving the parental home is just one of a series of transitions under study, so both studies exploit only a limited part of these data sets.

In this paper, we are the first to investigate for the Netherlands how the two competing risks of leaving home to live with and without a partner are influenced simultaneously by the parents' resources, the child's own resources, and differences between regions and periods. Furthermore, we also examine the influence of these background factors and the first household situation after leaving home on the first housing choice: owning a home, renting independently, or sharing rented accommodation. We use retrospective data gathered in the beginning of the 1990s on people living in the Netherlands and being born between 1911 and 1974. We employ discrete-time event history models to analyze the timing of leaving home, and multinomial logistic regression models to analyze the housing outcomes.

2. Theoretical background

The timing of leaving home

Leaving the parental home is a specific case of a residential move. Any type of move can be said to follow from a motive, but the move is only effectuated after its cost is overcome by means of resources, the context provides an opportunity, and there are no insurmountable constraints from outside (Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999). From these categories of factors determining whether someone moves from the parental home at a particular moment, resources are best represented in our data. But even though our data do not contain information about motives and only rough indicators of opportunities and constraints, it is still important to identify which motives, opportunities and constraints are relevant to leaving the parental home.

Three categories of motives for moving from the parental home can be identified (De Jong Gierveld et al., 1991): living with a partner; education or employment elsewhere; and a desire for autonomy, privacy and independence. The first motive leads to leaving home to live with a partner by definition. The second and third motives will generally lead to leaving to live alone or with housemates.

Because, in two-sex partnerships, the woman is on average between two and three years younger than the man (Smeenk, 1998), the motive of leaving with a partner will arise earlier in women's life courses. It is no surprise, therefore, that women are found to leave home for partnerships at a faster rate than men, particularly at young ages. To a lesser extent, they are also faster in leaving home to live alone (Hooimeijer & Mulder, 1998).

Motives for leaving also vary with age. The motive of leaving home for education will be largely confined to the ages at which people start higher education – between 18 and 21. Employment elsewhere is probably also usually found at young ages (Simpson, 1992), but less concentration at particular ages should be expected. The age pattern of the wish to form a partnership will differ for men and women, with a concentration at younger ages for women – but not as strong as for leaving to live without a partner –, with men catching up later in the life course.

Finally, motives for leaving change through time. As De Jong Gierveld et al. (1991) suggest, the wish to live with a partner may have lost some importance in the course of the past few decades, whereas the wish to be independent may have become more prominent. Both changes, they argue, have to do with a tendency toward a greater emphasis on freedom and self-fulfillment (compare Lesthaeghe, 1983). Educational expansion, furthermore, has enhanced the importance of the motive of education elsewhere.

Resources of the child – having an income, the amount of income, and earning potential – can be expected to have a positive effect on the likelihood of leaving the parental home. A difference in the influence of resources between leaving to live with and without a partner can be expected. According to social norm, people – and especially males – should have left school and have sufficient income before they form a partnership (Oppenheimer, 1988; Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991). For singles, this norm is less strict. Particularly during university education, it is often necessary – and considered normal – to live away from the parents. This often happens even though the child has only a small labour income or none at all; additional income is obtained from state grants (which are standard for students in the Netherlands) and help from the parents. We therefore expect the child's socio-economic status to be more influential to leaving for a partnership than to leaving for independence. Furthermore, we expect enrolment in education to negatively influence leaving for a partnership.

The relationship between the parents' resources and the child's likelihood of leaving home is not so obvious. On the one hand, the parents might use their resources to help their children gain independence. But they might do this strategically, withholding their support until they think the child is sufficiently mature to live alone or to marry (Mulder & Clark, 2000; compare Avery, Goldscheider & Speare, 1992, and Whittington & Peters, 1996). Furthermore, the children might be less eager to leave a spacious home where they have enough privacy.

The most important contextual factors are the availability of affordable housing and, for those wanting to engage in higher education or to find a job, the availability of educational institutions and job opportunities. Housing opportunities are not spread evenly over the Netherlands, but we have, at this moment, no adequate measure of the spatial variation in housing opportunities. There is, for example, no systematic variation with degree of urbanization: as Hooimeijer and Mulder (1998) point out, the likelihood of finding a suitable dwelling differs more between the country's four largest cities than between these cities and the rest of the Netherlands. Job opportunities do vary with degree of urbanization (Van Ham, Hooimeijer & Mulder, 2000) and so do educational opportunities. One might expect, therefore, that there is less reason to leave without a partner from highly urbanized areas.

The first housing destination of home-leavers

The basic principle underlying the choice of housing among those who leave home is different from that underlying the decision to leave itself. We make the simplifying assumption that young people first decide to leave the parental home (either with or without a partner), to decide only then which available housing option they will take. As we argued elsewhere (Clark & Mulder, 2000), this assumption is not necessarily always justified, but we think it is justified in the majority of cases and using the assumption helps simplifying both our modelling procedures and interpretation. The pathway of leaving (with versus without a partner), then, turns into a background factor, influencing both the preference for a certain type of housing and the resources available for obtaining the housing.

On average, owner-occupied housing has a higher quality than rented housing, and independent rented housing has a higher quality than shared accommodation. At first glance, one might think any nest leaver would prefer the tenure with the highest level of quality. This

needs, however, not be the case. Home-ownership requires a long-term financial commitment (Mulder & Wagner, 1998). Renting, therefore, might be a better choice for those nest-leavers who want to remain flexible; particularly those who do not form a partnership (compare Mulder & Manting, 1994) or prefer to save before becoming owners. Sharing with housemates might be a positive choice for those leaving to live without a partner and seeking companionship or preferring to share housekeeping responsibilities in the first period after leaving (Clark & Mulder, 2000). We therefore expect that, even after controlling for resources, those having left to live without a partner are less likely to become home-owners, and more likely to start in shared accommodation, than those having left for a partnership.

The more resources the child has, the higher the expected likelihood of owning a home and the lower the likelihood of sharing. We expect the likelihood of owning to be enhanced not only by participating in the labour force and socio-economic status, but also by age (an indicator of the length of the period the nest-leaver has been able to save). The likelihood of sharing is expected to be greater for those still in education, the younger nest-leavers, and those with lower socio-economic status. We furthermore expect the resources of the parents to have an additional positive influence on owning, and a negative influence on sharing.

The cost and availability of housing, and particularly the distribution of the types of housing in the local housing stock, are of crucial importance to housing choice. Degree of urbanization is a major factor differentiating between rental markets and markets dominated by owner-occupancy. Whereas in small villages supply consists primarily of owner-occupied dwellings, the majority of dwellings in large cities are rented (Clark & Dieleman, 1996). Furthermore, the more urbanized the area, the higher the likelihood that nest-leavers resort to shared accommodation (Kruythoff, 1994). Housing market circumstances have also changed through time. Apart from a downturn in the owner-occupied market around 1980, the share of owner-occupied housing, and the opportunities for becoming a home-owner, have increased in the Netherlands in the past few decades (Mulder & Wagner, 1998).

3. Data, methods and variables

Data

The data were taken from two retrospective life history studies: the ESR/Telepanel survey (ESR/STP, 1992) and the Netherlands Family Survey 1993 (NFS; Ultee and Ganzeboom, 1993). Both samples are (more or less) representative of the Netherlands population aged 18 and over (ESR) or 21 to 64 (NFS) in the beginning of the 1990s. The data from these two samples were pooled.

The ESR survey was conducted in 1993 among a sample of some 3,000 members in about 1,600 households. It was a single-round retrospective survey among the respondents of a longer-lasting panel answering questions weekly about a wide variety of topics. Response varied between the distinct topics, because the data were collected in several rounds and several tens of respondents left or entered the sample in between. The Netherlands Family Survey was conducted in the period 1992-1993 among a sample of 1000 primary respondents (information was also gathered from the respondents' current partners; this information was not used for this paper). Both sets contain data about the respondents' residential, educational, household and labour market histories as well as some data on their families of origin.

Methods

For the analysis of the timing of leaving the parental home we use logistic regression of person-years as a method for discrete-time event history analysis (Yamaguchi, 1991). We separately model two competing risks: the risk of leaving home to live with a partner, and the risk of leaving home to live without a partner. The dependent variable is the log-odds of

home-leaving with or without in a given year, given that the respondent has not left home before. In each of the models, the occurrence of the other event is treated as a censoring mechanism.

For the analysis of the first housing destination of nest-leavers we use a multinomial logit model. The dependent variable has three categories: owning, renting independently, and sharing. Sharing includes all rented accommodation in which the facilities are shared with anyone other than a partner, as well as housing in anything else but a dwelling (for example, houseboats).

Independent variables

The independent variables are indicators of the child's preferences, the child's and the parents' resources, and housing market circumstances. Summary measures of the dependent and independent variables are given in Table 1.

<Table 1 here>

Level of education was measured in five categories: primary school, lower secondary education or lower vocational training (lbo/mavo), higher secondary school or middle vocational training (havo/vwo/mbo), higher vocational training, and university level. This variable changes through time. As long as the respondent is in school, the variable measures the level of education in which the respondent is enrolled. As soon as the respondent has left school, the highest level of completed education is taken. This operationalization has one peculiar feature: after getting a diploma the level of education remains the same, but after dropping out of school the level of education goes down to the level completed before the last school was attended. Strange as this may seem, we think this operationalization represents the respondent's situation in the best possible way. As long as the respondent is attending university, for example, he or she will act as a university student and might decide to leave home for reasons of education. After dropout, the university level is, for most, no longer relevant and we expect the respondent to act in accordance with the completed level of education.

'Daily activity' indicates whether the respondent is doing paid work (reference), in education, or otherwise not working. Socio-economic status was measured according to the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI) of Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman (1992). Where possible, the socio-economic status of the job held in the year of observation was used. If the person did not work then, the status of the previous job was used or, if there was no previous job, that of the next job. Those persons for whom no socio-economic status measurement was available were allocated to the average status. A separate dummy ('status unknown') indicates whether missing substitution took place.

Age was measured with a four-category variable: 17-20, 21-24, 25-29, and 30-35. In the analysis of the first housing situation, an extra dummy indicates whether the respondent has left home to live with a partner; the reference category is formed by those who left home to live without a partner.

Just two levels of the father's education were used: primary school, lower vocational or lower secondary (0) versus higher secondary, middle or higher vocational training, or university (1). The share of highly educated parents was too low to distinguish more than two categories. A third category indicates the father's education is unknown. The father's socio-economic status (ISEI) was measured for age 15 of the respondent. If information about the father's job was unavailable for that age, his last or first job was taken. Missing substitution was done in the same way as for the respondent; a dummy indicates whether the father's status was unknown.

The circumstances surrounding the housing market as they vary through space and time were operationalized by means of a variable indicating degree of urbanization and a period variable. Degree of urbanization is measured with four categories: hardly urbanized, weakly urbanized, moderately urbanized and strongly urbanized. In the analysis of timing, we use the degree of urbanization in either the year of observation (when the respondent did not leave home) or the year before (when the respondent left home). This was done to ensure we used a measurement for the place of residence where the decision whether to leave or not was made – the place from which the respondent left or had a chance to leave. In the analysis of the first housing situation, we used a different time of measurement: in the year in which the children reported they had left the parental home. This choice ensures that the children are observed at the time and place where they are actually confronted with housing market circumstances – more so than if we had chosen to measure the degree of urbanization before the respondent left home. The period variable has six categories: 1946-1954, 1955-1964, 1965-1974, 1975-1979, 1980-1984, 1985-93. The period variable also stands for possible changes through time in the motives for leaving.

4. Results

The timing of leaving the parental home

Before proceeding to the multivariate analyses, we first give the results of some descriptive analyses. The results of survival analyses of leaving home to live with and without a partner are given in Figure 1, in the form of cumulative distribution functions. These can be interpreted as the estimated hypothetical share of children who would have left home with a partner or without a partner, respectively, if the other pathway of leaving did not exist.

<Figure 1 here>

As can be seen from Figure 1, the age profiles of leaving the parental home with and without a partner are different. The process of leaving to live with a partner starts off at a slower rate than leaving to live without a partner. Through the ages, leaving to live with a partner shows an acceleration in the young adults' early twenties (for females about two years earlier than for males) to slow down again in the late twenties. The rate of leaving to live without a partner remains at a more or less constant pace over the ages. There are also marked differences between men and women. Women are faster in leaving home along both routes, but particularly in leaving home to live with a partner; men catch up in their late twenties, however.

In Tables 2 and 3, two key background factors are cross-tabulated with the pathway of nest-leaving: the child's education and daily activity. Among those with a level of education in the lowest two categories, only a small minority (20% or less) leave home to live without a partner. This percentage increases with increasing education, to reach 86 percent among males, and 79 percent among females, for those with university education. The child's daily activity also makes a crucial difference as to which pathway is taken. Among those doing paid work, around 80 percent leave for a partnership. Among those in full-time education, almost three quarters leave to live without a partner. Among those otherwise not working, there is a marked difference between men and women: whereas almost two thirds of non-working men move for a partnership, 80 percent of non-working women do so. This finding might be an indication of a difference in importance attached to the man's and the woman's economic situation at the moment of partnership formation.

<Tables 2 and 3 here>

The results of four multivariate analyses (for leaving to live with and without a partner, and for males and females separately) are reported in Table 4. The child's level of education has a great impact on the likelihood of leaving the parental home in a given year. It has opposite effects on both pathways of home-leaving: the higher the level of education, the lower the likelihood of leaving to live with a partner, but the higher the likelihood of leaving to live without a partner. University education is a particularly crucial factor leading to leaving home to live without a partner.

<Table 4 here>

Being enrolled in education is negatively associated with leaving home for a partnership. This indicates the role incompatibility of being a student and forming a family (Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991). On the basis of the bi-variate findings in Table 2 one might have expected a positive effect of being enrolled in education on the likelihood of leaving to live without a partner, but such an effect is not found. Apparently, it is the combination of university level and enrolment in education that counts. For males, but not for females, other types of non-employment also lead to a lower likelihood of partnership formation. Furthermore, males are more likely to start living with a partner when they have a higher socio-economic status. Such an effect is not found for females; on the contrary, a (marginally significant) negative effect of socio-economic status is found for females. For males, but not for females, socio-economic status also positively influences leaving to live without a partner. The effect of age group reflects the age profiles shown in the survival analysis.

Compared with the children's own characteristics, those of the father only have a moderate influence on the likelihood of leaving the parental home. No effect of the father's education or socio-economic status is found for leaving to live with a partner. There is, however, a negative effect of an unknown status. When the father's status is unknown, this might mean different things: the father never had a job, the child doesn't know about the father's job, or the father had died, was absent or unknown when the child was young. Parental resources do matter to the likelihood of leaving to live without a partner. For males, the father's socio-economic status has a strong positive impact; for females, the estimated impact of the father's socio-economic status is smaller but his education is important. Apparently, resourceful parents support their child's leaving for independence but children are supposed to take care of themselves when forming a partnership.

There is no clear pattern of association between the degree of urbanization of the place of residence of the parental family and the likelihood of leaving home. Through time, there was a growth in the likelihood of leaving along either pathway. For leaving to live with a partner, this growth was concentrated in the period from just after the Second World War (when severe housing shortages prevented many young couples from moving out of the parents' home) up to the 1970s; it slowed down afterwards. For leaving to live without a partner, the parameters of the period effect seem to indicate a longer-lasting growth – but the standard errors are too large to draw a firm conclusion.

The first housing situation after leaving the parental home

The first housing situation after leaving the parental home is strongly differentiated by education (Table 5). Sharing is not very popular among those with low education, but for those with university education it is the most prominent way of starting the independent housing career. Renting is the most common first housing situation among those with up to higher secondary education or middle vocational training. Owning is the least frequency

chosen option (some 20%), but only among university educated is it exceptional (4.5% of males and 2.9% of females).

<Table 5 here>

There is also a marked difference between those working, those in education, and those otherwise not working (Table 6). As expected, those who are employed are the most likely to own and the least likely to share; for those in education this is the other way around. Even among those enrolled in education, more than five percent start in owner-occupied housing. These young adults probably either live in a home bought for them by their parents, or have a working partner.

<Table 6 here>

The pathway of leaving home – with a partner, or without – is strongly associated with the first housing situation. As expected, the long-term commitment of home-ownership is only made in significant numbers (around one quarter) by those who leave home to live with a partner. Sharing, in contrast, is not very popular among those leaving to live with a partner, but is the first housing choice of the majority of those leaving to live without a partner.

<Table 7 here>

The proportion of home-owners among those leaving to live with a partner is remarkably large compared with findings for the USA. Mulder and Clark (2000) found that just over 25 percent of couple nest-leavers started in owner-occupied housing (homes or trailers) in 1984-93. For the same period, we find a percentage of 31.1. This difference is all the more remarkable because the overall share of owner-occupied housing was over 60 percent in the USA in that period, and grew from about 43 percent to about 48 percent in the Netherlands (Clark & Dieleman, 1996; Ministerie VROM, 1999). Apparently, the process of housing market entry and home-ownership attainment is different in the two countries, with home-ownership being attained later in the life course, but by more people, in the USA than in the Netherlands.

In the multivariate analysis (Table 8) many of the above findings show up in significant model parameters. Positive effects of university education and enrolment in education on the likelihood of sharing are found. The expected negative effects of these factors on home-ownership are either not found or not significant. Partly, these effects are taken over by a substantial age effect. One should bear in mind that, although technically there is no multicollinearity, there is a strong association between age, level of education, and enrolment in education. The age effect also expresses the number of years the child has been able to save before leaving home. Furthermore, the age effect also indicates postponement of nest-leaving in order to obtain better housing.

<Table 8 here>

In previous research we found a strong and significant positive effect of socio-economic status on the likelihood of making a transition to first-time home-ownership (Mulder & Wagner, 1998). Remarkably, no evidence for such effect is found for the housing choice of nest-leavers. Possibly, the socio-economic status of the job held at a particular moment is not the best indicator of the resources of nest-leavers. At the start of the labour market career, income differences might not be that great and other factors might be more

important; for example, the number of years the child has been able to save, as is partly expressed in the age effect. Also in contrast with previous research (Mulder & Smits, 1999), no indications in the expected direction are found of an influence of parental resources.

Although no systematic effect of degree of urbanization on the timing of nest leaving is found, there is a strong effect on the likelihood of owning versus renting one's first home: the more strongly urbanized the place of residence where the nest leaver starts his or her housing career, the lower the likelihood of ownership. This is clearly an effect of the opportunity structures in local housing markets. Furthermore, we see a significant period effect, indicating a decrease through time in the likelihood of sharing and an increase in the likelihood of owning. These changes probably reflect a long-term growth in real incomes as well as housing market evolution.

5. Conclusions

In this paper we study two aspects of leaving the parental home: its timing, and the first housing situation of the nest-leavers. We study these phenomena for the Netherlands, a country in which leaving home is no longer closely associated with marriage, or even partnership formation. We model two pathways of home-leaving – leaving to live with a partner, and leaving to live without a partner – as competing risks. And with good reason: we find that the two events are influenced by the various background factors in quite different ways. Next, we model the first housing choice of the nest-leavers: renting independently, sharing accommodation, or owning.

The most crucial factor in the process of leaving home and finding housing appears to be level of education. It is hardly exaggerated to say that, with regard to this process, those with low education and those with university education live in worlds apart. The higher the level of education, the lower the likelihood of leaving to live with a partner in a given year, but the higher the likelihood of leaving to live without a partner. With regard to housing, those with university level of education stand out as particularly likely to start in shared accommodation.

Another finding that stands out is the close association between the pathway of nest-leaving and the first housing situation. Sharing is predominantly found among those living without a partner, whereas owning is almost exclusively found among couple nest-leavers. Undoubtedly, this is not only caused by differences in resources – couples can pool resources, are generally older, and are more often employed than those without a partner – but also a difference in social norms. Couples are supposed to manage on their own, but it is considered normal for those without a partner to receive help from their parents – particularly when they are students.

The results provide further evidence for the role incompatibility of enrolment in education and living with a partner, particularly among females. Also in accordance with previous research, socio-economic status and having a job appear to be more important to partnership formation of males than of females. Another marked difference between males and females is the age differentiation in the nest-leaving process. Like in previous research, the difference in age profiles is greater for partnership formation than for leaving for independence. Age is also closely associated with the first housing situation.

The role of parental resources is only moderate. The only indicator of parental resources significantly influencing both leaving to live with a partner and the first housing situation is whether the father's socio-economic status is unknown. This factor might stand for different things: for example, absence of the father, or the child not knowing about his jobs. The father's socio-economic status does influence leaving to live without a partner. This

finding is in line with the above observation that norms might be more permissive to parental help of singles than of couples; singles will also be more in need of help.

In contrast with findings for the USA (Mulder & Clark, 2000), degree of urbanization is not found to substantially influence the timing of leaving home. This might indicate that housing and job opportunities are geographically less dispersed in the Netherlands – a small and densely populated country – than in the USA. Finally, the results show considerable changes through time in the process of leaving the parental home and finding housing. As in previous research, there are indications of stagnation in the growth in the likelihood of leaving home to live with a partner, but a continuous growth in the likelihood of leaving to live without a partner. With regard to the first housing situation, the most conspicuous change is the decrease in the likelihood of starting in shared accommodation. This change probably has to do with increases in real incomes and improved housing opportunities. In light of the overall increase in home-ownership, one might have expected an increase in home-ownership among nest-leavers as well. No indication of such an increase is found, however. We might speculate that the absence of an increase in home-ownership could be caused by a lack of willingness of young adults to make long-term commitments early in the life course.

Leaving the parental home in the Netherlands is not strongly associated with family formation. Neither is it strongly associated with transitions to home-ownership. Rather, it is an event (or process) that marks the young adults' independence from the parents. If a partner has been found before independence is acquired, leaving home may coincide with partnership formation. In this respect, the Netherlands is a typical example of the 'northern European' pattern of leaving the parental home (Holdsworth, 2000). Only among the less well educated do we find home-leaving patterns that still point to a strong association with family formation.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables used

	Percentage	Means	Standard deviation
Female ^a	49.2		
First housing situation: sharing ^b	37.8		
Renting	43.8		
Owning	18.4		
Education: primary ^c	14.0		
Lower secondary/lower vocational	39.5		
Higher secondary/middle vocational	23.2		
Higher vocational	15.8		
University	7.6		
Daily activity: working ^c	52.1		
In education	36.4		
Other not working	11.5		
Socio-economic status (ISEI) ^c		4.46	1.48
Status unknown ^c	5.1		
Age group: 17-20 ^c	50.2		
21-24	30.6		
25-29	13.6		
30-35	5.6		
Left with partner ^b	63.2		
Father's education: up to lower secondary ^a	35.7		
Middle or higher	18.0		
Unknown	46.3		
Father's socio-economic status ^a		4.44	1.64
Father's status unknown ^a	14.2		
Degree of urbanization: hardly urbanized ^c	19.8		
Weakly urbanized	34.2		
Moderately urbanized	20.6		
Strongly urbanized	25.3		
Period: 1946-54 ^c	12.6		
1955-64	21.5		
1965-74	27.2		
1975-79	14.1		
1980-84	12.9		
1985-93	11.8		

^aMeasured over 2967 children at risk of leaving the parental home

^bMeasured over 2763 children in the year they left the parental home

^cMeasured over 21494 person-year observations of children at risk of leaving the parental home

Table 2. Route of leaving the parental home by sex and education, row percentages

		With partner	Without partner	N
Males	Primary school	82.6%	17.4%	149
	Lower secondary/lower vocational	81.9%	18.1%	448
	Higher secondary/middle vocational	63.8%	36.2%	329
	Higher vocational	49.2%	50.8%	246
	University	14.5%	85.5%	200
	Total	62.0%	38.0%	1372
Females	Primary school	87.6%	12.4%	226
	Lower secondary/lower vocational	77.1%	22.9%	554
	Higher secondary/middle vocational	57.8%	42.2%	294
	Higher vocational	36.7%	63.3%	207
	University	21.4%	78.6%	103
	Total	64.5%	35.5%	1384

Table 3. Route of leaving the parental home by sex and daily activity, row percentages

		With partner	Without partner	N
Males	Working	79.7%	20.3%	852
	In education	27.0%	73.0%	437
	Other not working	63.4%	36.6%	82
	Total	61.9%	38.1%	1371
Females	Working	77.2%	22.8%	799
	In education	28.9%	71.1%	381
	Other not working	80.8%	19.2%	203
	Total	64.4%	35.6%	1383

Table 4. Logistic regression of leaving the parental home in a year

	With partner				Without partner			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
Education (primary = 0)								
Lower secondary/lower vocational	-0.11	0.12	-0.24	0.10**	-0.02	0.24	0.45	0.22**
Higher secondary/middle vocational	-0.08	0.13	-0.20	0.13	0.47	0.24*	1.04	0.24***
Higher vocational	-0.12	0.16	-0.32	0.17*	0.84	0.25***	1.46	0.25***
University	-0.51	0.26**	-0.40	0.27	1.70	0.27***	1.92	0.27***
Daily activity (working = 0)								
In education	-0.45	0.13***	-0.93	0.13***	-0.08	0.14	0.01	0.14
Other not working	-0.55	0.17***	-0.03	0.11	-0.16	0.22	-0.37	0.20*
Socio-economic status (ISEI)	0.08	0.03**	-0.05	0.03*	0.14	0.04***	-0.03	0.04
Status unknown	0.00	0.24	0.19	0.18	0.27	0.20	0.28	0.22
Age group (17-20 = 0)								
21-24	2.78	0.19***	1.33	0.09***	0.23	0.11**	0.27	0.12**
25-29	3.50	0.20***	1.22	0.12***	0.29	0.16*	0.12	0.20
30-35	2.85	0.22***	0.20	0.20	-0.59	0.33*	-0.30	0.32
Father's education (up to lower secondary = 0)								
Middle or higher	0.01	0.14	-0.05	0.13	0.02	0.12	0.41	0.13***
Unknown	0.13	0.09	0.00	0.08	-0.09	0.11	0.13	0.12
Father's socio-economic status	0.01	0.03	-0.00	0.03	0.12	0.03***	0.06	0.04*
Father's status unknown	-0.35	0.11***	-0.36	0.11***	-0.06	0.15	0.16	0.14
Degree of urbanization (hardly urbanized = 0)								
Weakly urbanized	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.11	0.17	0.14	0.07	0.14
Moderately urbanized	0.22	0.12*	0.11	0.12	0.17	0.16	-0.29	0.17*
Strongly urbanized	0.01	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.00	0.16	-0.04	0.15
Period (1946-54 = 0)								
1955-64	0.62	0.18***	0.69	0.16***	-0.30	0.20	0.80	0.24***
1965-74	1.07	0.17***	1.29	0.16***	0.18	0.18	0.97	0.24***
1975-79	1.12	0.18***	1.48	0.17***	0.33	0.20*	0.86	0.25***
1980-84	1.12	0.19***	1.34	0.18***	0.67	0.19***	0.98	0.25***
1985-93	1.18	0.18***	1.50	0.18***	0.58	0.19***	1.18	0.25***
Constant	-6.14	0.33***	-3.34	0.24***	-5.24	0.36***	-4.84	0.38***
N person years, N events	11502, 838		8510, 881		11175, 511		8110, 481	
Model -2 Log Likelihood	4981		5040		3735		3370	
Improvement ^a , df, <i>p</i>	1022, 23, 0.00		623, 23, 0.00		416, 23, 0.00		281, 23, 0.00	

^aCompared with null model* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5. First housing situation after leaving the parental home by sex and education, row percentages

		Sharing	Renting	Owning	N
Males	Primary school	22.4%	51.0%	26.5%	147
	Lower secondary/lower vocational	24.9%	50.8%	24.3%	445
	Higher secondary/middle vocational	32.1%	44.4%	23.5%	324
	Higher vocational	43.9%	40.6%	15.6%	244
	University	73.9%	21.6%	4.5%	199
	Total	36.9%	43.2%	19.9%	1359
Females	Primary school	26.3%	53.1%	20.5%	224
	Lower secondary/lower vocational	30.7%	47.1%	22.3%	548
	Higher secondary/middle vocational	38.8%	45.4%	15.8%	291
	Higher vocational	52.5%	39.7%	7.8%	204
	University	79.6%	17.5%	2.9%	103
	Total	38.6%	44.4%	17.0%	1370

Table 6. First housing situation after leaving the parental home by sex and daily activity, row percentages

		Sharing	Renting	Owning	N
Males	Working	21.8%	51.1%	27.1%	840
	In education	65.1%	28.2%	6.7%	436
	Other not working	41.5%	42.7%	15.9%	82
	Total	36.9%	43.2%	19.9%	1358
Females	Working	27.7%	50.8%	21.5%	786
	In education	64.8%	28.1%	7.1%	381
	Other not working	32.2%	50.0%	17.8%	202
	Total	38.7%	44.3%	16.9%	1369

Table 7. First housing situation after leaving the parental home by sex and pathway of leaving, row percentages

		Sharing	Renting	Owning	N
Males	With partner	18.3%	52.9%	28.8%	841
	Without partner	67.0%	27.6%	5.4%	521
	Total	36.9%	43.2%	19.8%	1362
Females	With partner	19.8%	55.3%	24.9%	886
	Without partner	73.2%	24.4%	2.5%	488
	Total	38.7%	44.3%	17.0%	1374

Table 8. Multinomial logit model of first housing situation of nest leavers (reference: renting)

	Males				Females			
	Sharing		Owning		Sharing		Owning	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
Education (primary = 0)								
Lower secondary/lower vocational	0.16	0.28	-0.04	0.25	0.21	0.22	-0.05	0.23
Higher secondary/middle vocational	0.19	0.30	0.29	0.27	0.44	0.27	-0.32	0.30
Higher vocational	0.18	0.33	0.11	0.32	0.25	0.32	-0.77	0.40*
University	0.89	0.39**	0.24	0.51	1.50	0.42***	-0.40	0.72
Daily activity (working = 0)								
In education	0.62	0.21***	-0.26	0.28	0.56	0.22**	0.12	0.29
Other not working	0.97	0.32***	-0.68	0.40*	-0.05	0.22	-0.23	0.26
Socio-economic status (ISEI)	-0.06	0.06	-0.08	0.07	-0.11	0.06*	0.08	0.07
Status unknown	-0.48	0.38	0.95	0.44**	0.80	0.35**	1.11	0.40***
Age group (17-20 = 0)								
21-24	-0.51	0.22**	0.71	0.45	-0.67	0.18***	0.31	0.22
25-29	-1.21	0.26***	1.15	0.45**	-0.71	0.25***	0.70	0.27**
30-35	-1.64	0.45***	1.63	0.50***	-1.10	0.43**	0.81	0.44*
Left to live with partner	-1.44	0.19***	0.62	0.26**	-1.98	0.18***	1.23	0.33***
Father's education (up to lower secondary = 0)								
Middle or higher	0.17	0.22	-0.15	0.28	-0.04	0.23	-0.61	0.32*
Unknown	-0.23	0.18	-0.04	0.18	-0.23	0.17	-0.30	0.18
Father's socio-economic status	-0.02	0.06	-0.03	0.07	-0.04	0.06	-0.03	0.07
Father's status unknown	-0.21	0.22	-0.42	0.24*	0.21	0.21	-0.23	0.26
Degree of urbanization (hardly urbanized = 0)								
Weakly urbanized	0.18	0.25	-0.35	0.20*	0.21	0.24	-0.22	0.21
Moderately urbanized	0.22	0.26	-1.12	0.26***	0.28	0.25	-0.95	0.27***
Strongly urbanized	0.27	0.25	-1.26	0.27***	0.31	0.25	-1.38	0.29***
Period (1946-54 = 0)								
1955-64	-0.06	0.34	1.25	0.59**	-0.08	0.32	1.88	0.77**
1965-74	-1.36	0.32***	1.24	0.57**	-1.23	0.32***	1.68	0.76**
1975-79	-1.73	0.35***	1.41	0.59**	-1.92	0.36***	2.17	0.78***
1980-84	-1.87	0.35***	1.22	0.59**	-1.62	0.36***	1.92	0.78**
1985-93	-2.31	0.35***	0.95	0.58	-2.46	0.37***	2.09	0.78***
Constant	2.33	0.59***	-2.32	0.86***	2.67	0.54***	-3.57	0.93***
N renting, sharing, owning	574, 496, 267				596, 521, 232			
Model -2 Log Likelihood	2812				2775			
Improvement ^a , df, <i>p</i>	676, 48, 0.00				686, 48, 0.00			

^a Compared with null model

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Fig. 1 Cumulative distribution of leaving home by age

