

Families' long-distance moves within countries can increase the risk of school drop out

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It is often assumed that families move to improve their economic and social prospects, and that these additional resources can benefit the

whole family. However, existing research suggests that many children who have experienced long-distance moves within a country fair worse in general compared to non-moving peers.

The relationship between children moving and dropping out of school (i.e. not receiving a secondary-level degree) was studied in both Finland and Germany. The research focused on whether there are other disruptions in their lives—such as parents separating or becoming unemployed—that led to a long-distance move and do these types of disruptive events add up to make school drop-out more likely (known as cumulative disadvantage) for those who moved. And if parents do move for economic reasons, can they use these gains to limit the risk of their children dropping out of school?

The findings indicate that moving during childhood is associated with the risk of not attaining a secondary degree in both countries. For Finland this is mostly explained by other disruptions (e.g. parental separation or unemployment) but for Germany these do not explain the risk. Also, any gains from moving (in terms of parental income or occupational gains) do not seem to reduce the risk of [school](#) dropout.

Overall, [children](#), whose families have made a long-distance move, may be a vulnerable subgroup in the inter-generational transmission of inequality, therefore schools have an important role to play in integrating internal migrants—as well as international migrants—into the social networks of the schools they arrive in.

More information: Patricia McMullin et al, Geographical mobility and children's non-completion of upper secondary education in Finland and Germany: Do parental resources matter?, *British Educational Research Journal* (2021). [DOI: 10.1002/berj.3745](https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3745)

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