

SUMMARY

Student housing and dropout in higher education

In this study, the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) examines students' housing situation and its effect on dropout rates during their first year of study. The study examines three different aspects of students' housing situation:

1. whether students relocated in connection with their study start;
2. transport time between home and place of study;
3. students' concerns regarding their housing situation.

Relevance, context and target group of the study

Every year, thousands of students experience difficulties in finding a place to live when they move to a new city to study. The question of whether there is adequate and appropriate housing for the new students is a recurring issue at every study start. Previous surveys indicate that many students state long transport times as a reason for dropping out, but the surveys also show that this is not the most common reason (Danish Ministry of Education, 2018). Nevertheless, the question remains: How do housing conditions really affect the probability of students dropping out? This study will try to find an answer.

The study aims particularly at employees at educational institutions or at policy level who work with dropout rates of higher education programmes. The analysis and conclusions in the study may be used more generally in discussions about the possible correlation between students' housing situation and student life.

Results

The analysis provides an overview of the student housing situation and shows that:

- more than one in three (37%) students move in connection with their study start;
- average transport time at study start is around 37 minutes;
- eight out of ten students are not at all or only to a small degree worried about their housing situation prior to study start.

Moreover, the analysis shows a correlation between students' housing situation and their risk of dropping out. The analysis shows that:

- students who move in connection with their study start have a lower dropout risk;

- long transport time is associated with a higher dropout risk;
- concerns about their housing situation have an impact on students' dropout risk.

Students who move in connection with study start have a lower risk of dropout

Students who move in connection with study start seem less likely to drop out than students who do not move. The analysis also indicates that moving has an effect on students' dropout risk after taking into account a number of background factors. So it seems that, on average, relocating reduces students' probability of dropping out. A possible explanation for this is that students who move adjust their housing situation to suit their new student life and, thereby, have a lower risk of dropout.

Long transport time is associated with a higher risk of dropout

The analysis shows that students with a long transport time to their place of study are more likely to drop out during their first year. When taking into account a number of background factors, the analysis also indicates that a longer transport time increases the risk of dropping out during the first year. In other words, transport time seems to have an effect on students' probability of dropping out. This could be because transport takes up more of the student's time; that it is more difficult for students to take part in all aspects of student life; or that long transport time is often associated with higher transport costs.

Concerns about their housing situation affect students' risk of dropout

Students who worry about their housing situation are more likely to drop out during their first year than other students. Also here, the analysis indicates that students' concerns about their housing situation affect the probability of dropout after controlling for a number of background factors. This may be because students' housing concerns steal focus from their studies. Alternatively, the housing situation may be related to practical issues, such as having to look for a new place to live. This takes up time or makes it more difficult for them to take part in all aspects of student life.

About the data basis

The survey is based on data from a longitudinal study carried out by EVA on students who were admitted to a higher education programme in the summer of 2016 and on register data from Statistics Denmark. The housing conditions and effects examined in this memorandum were measured in August and October 2016 and in March 2017. A total of 18,798 students were included in the analysis.

This study is based on analyses in the thesis *Do living conditions affect first year dropout? An empirical investigation of dropout from higher education in Denmark during the scholastic year 2016-2017*, written by Anna Maria Wallner and Thea Nissen in collaboration with the Danish Evaluation Institute.