

# Latvian secondary school graduates' transition to adulthood

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Abstract 250 words

Latvia has exhibited the fastest depopulation rate in the world - since 2000 the population shrunk by 18% due to a combination of low birth rates and emigration. Despite the scarcity of human resources, Latvia is struggling to account and understand population dynamics. Major demographic indicators are reliable and accurate, but, when it comes to more specific indicators like progression in education or migration, information is lacking. Latvia is at an early stage of establishing a register of higher education graduates following their career paths. However, there is no such information collected on high-school graduates. Consequently, knowledge about their choices with respect to studies, work and migration is dim.

This study aims to fill the gap and shed light on trajectories of graduates after they exit the high-school door. During the last month at school we ask soon-to-be graduates about their plans and expectations in career and mobility; and follow them in the year after graduation. The first two rounds of the survey have taken place in 2019; a follow-up expected planned in May 2020.

This paper presents evidence on mobility decisions and provides a quantitative estimation of after-school emigration towards Western European countries. We study socioeconomic characteristics, as well as value orientations and attitudes of the different graduate profiles – the ones that expect to leave Latvia vs. those who intend to stay; future students vs. those that directly enter labour market; entrepreneurial vs. non-entrepreneurial; etc. The survey data will be complemented by in-depth interviews of secondary school representatives.