

# Teen school drop-outs three times as likely to be on benefits in later life

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Teen school drop-outs are almost three times as likely to be on benefits in later life as their peers who complete their schooling, indicates research published online in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*.

The authors analysed the self rated health of almost 9000 Norwegian 13 to 19 year olds, who were already taking part in the Young-HUNT 1 study between 1995 and 1997.

This information was linked to national databases, providing information on schooling and any subsequent need for sickness/disability/unemployment benefit between 1998 and 2007.

By the age of 24, the data showed that 17% of all the [study participants](#) had not completed their secondary/high school education.

By the age of 26, almost one in 10 (9%) of the 6451 participants for whom data were available, were in receipt of benefits, more than half of which were for ill health or disability.

Among those who had dropped out of school, almost one in four (23%) were in receipt of long term benefits. More than half were in receipt of benefits for ill health/disability.

This compares with just 7% of those who completed their secondary/high school education. Ill health/disability accounted for just

4% of benefits in this group.

After taking account of influential factors, such as age and [educational attainment](#) of the mother, the likelihood of receiving any type of benefit over the next five years was nearly three times greater for school drop-outs (44%) than for those completing their secondary/[high school education](#) (16%).

Dropping out of school and rating [personal health](#) as poor were strongly linked, the findings showed. Those who said they were in [poor health](#) during their [teenage years](#) had a higher drop-out rate (26.5%) than those in good health (16%).

One in three teens who described their health as poor was on benefit between the ages of 24 and 28, compared with one in five of those in good health.

The authors caution against drawing definitive conclusions about cause and effect, but suggest that their findings "may be an indication that ill health increases vulnerability to social exclusion in the transition from adolescence to adulthood."

"Research related to the association between health, high school drop-out and work integration of young adults is scarce, while publicity on the topic is often dramatic and moralistic and could be a contributor to further stigmatisation," they write.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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