

# **Autonomy and Fertility Choices of Young Italians: The Results of a New CATI Survey**

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## **1. Introduction: the Italian context of latest-late transition to adulthood and lowest-low fertility**

A “*latest-late transition*” to adulthood and a “*lowest-low fertility*” (Kohler et al., 2002) defines the socio-demographic Italian context of family formation. The most important feature of Southern Europe is the very low fertility (period total fertility rate below 1.3 children per woman at beginning of new century). Italy, together with countries like Spain can be considered as the precursor of the lowest-low fertility (Livi Bacci e Delgado Perex, 1992). But also in terms of leaving the parental home, a Mediterranean or Southern European pattern can be recognized. This specific feature, which of course is embedded in the whole family formation, is therefore closely related to the timing of marriage and the onset of childbearing (Billari et al., 2001).

Even in the Mediterranean region, Italy is undoubtedly the country with the most pronounced delay of young people achieving independent living arrangements (Iacovou 1998, Billari-Ongaro 1999). Almost ninety percent of people in the age group 20–24 still live with their parents, as do fifty nine percent of the age group 25 – 29, and 22 percent of the age group 30–34 are recorded as still living in the parental home (Multi-purpose Survey, Istat, 1998). The dynamics of the phenomenon are surprising: only a decade earlier, the proportion of young people who still lived in the parental home was markedly lower – respectively 80%, 39% and 14%. Furthermore in Italy the link between timing and typology of the first union is considerably stronger than Central-Northern European countries where informal unions are more common and the age at first union lower. In the late nineties 40 percent of Italian women entered their first union – in 90% of case a formal marriage – by the age of 24, whereas at the same age 70 percent of Swedish women had already experienced an informal union (Schoenmaeckers, Lodewijckx 1999).

The causes of the peculiar and highly accentuated Italian "syndrome of delay" are not easy to understand. According to the classical definition (Modell *et al.* 1976), the transition to adulthood is marked by certain events, where both the timing and the sequence of these events are considered particularly relevant. At the individual level, family formation and fertility behavior is a consequence of a series of choices during the life-course and especially during the period defined as *transition to adulthood*.

It seems that over the last few decades a number of "steps" in the transition to adulthood process have become particularly difficult in Italy. Part of this is driven by the rigidity of sequencing of transitions to adulthood. This traditional sequence can be schematized as follows: a) completion of education b) start of first job c) exit from the family of origin at the time of marriage d) birth of first child. In the last 30 years all biographical events that characterize the transition to adulthood have been postponed (Ongaro 2001) and Italian youth – similarly to others South-Mediterranean

countries – experienced an exceptional long stay in the parental home, also because a rapid increase of education and university attendance (Aassve *et al.* 2002).

The economic, cultural, and psychological factors that underlie the transition to adulthood are naturally inter-related and complex. Several factors have been raised as being crucial in understanding its postponement in Italy: (1) the centrality of marriage for family formation and the prerequisite of a stable job position (De Sandre *et al.*, 1997; Barbagli, Castiglioni, Dalla Zuanna, 2003); (2) the strength of inter-generational ties that typifies south-western Europe family compared to north-western countries (Reher 1998, Micheli 2000; Barbagli, Castiglioni, Dalla Zuanna 2003, Dalla Zuanna 2001), with high level of psychological and material solidarity and also a high residential proximity between generations; (3) the lack of specific policies directed towards young people – typical of the “Mediterranean” welfare regime – (Mayer 2001) generating a strong dependency of young people on parents. In the resulting institutional framework the traditional expectation is that young people should not leave the parental home until they are totally ‘prepared’ to establish a family household. However, it should be noted that recently, cohabitation – as an alternative or precursor to legal marriage – is gaining pace in Italy, and as such should not be ignored as a new marker for adulthood transition.

In this paper we present results from a sub-sample of a nationally representative survey of young Italians, which was recently conducted precisely with the aim to study these crucial transitions in life course and their interconnections. The main aims of the study are threefold:

- (1) to verify whether there is an increasing delay of entry into adulthood for recent cohorts. In doing so we analyze patterns of timing and sequencing of crucial marker events;
- (2) to examine the reasons why young adults leave home, and to investigate why some young individuals make different choices in terms of their transition to adulthood;
- (3) to analyze the determinants of transition to parenthood – here defined as having the first child –, taking into account the sequence of previous “marker” events of transition to adulthood.

In the analysis of all this three aspects, we will also emphasize the well-known geographical differences on the transition to adulthood – i.e. more traditional socio-demographic behavior in the South of Italy and signs of innovation in the North-Center (see, for instance, Rosina *et al.*, 2003)

The empirical methods are based on event-history analysis, which are particularly suitable for uncovering structures of dependency between life course histories (Blossfeld and Rowher, 2002).

The paper is structured as follows: in Section 2 we present the survey, its content and its potentiality; in Section 3 we show descriptive results on timing and sequence of marker events at transition to adulthood and reasons why young adult leave home; in Section 4 we analyze the

determinants of transition from youth to adulthood and to the first child. Our main findings and some discussions are presented in the last section.

## **2. Structure, rationale and possibilities of the I.D.E.A. survey**

The I.D.E.A. ("Inizio Dell' Età Adulta" - Beginning of Adulthood) survey has been carried out on a national-representative sample of more than 3,000 young individuals aged 23-27 and 33-37 between December 2003 and January 2004. It has been organized by a consortium of Italian Universities, in the framework of a project on "Life cycle, family building and childbearing between choices and constraints". Interviews were conducted using CATI (*Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing*). The two representative samples have been chosen with the aim of considering two precise and sufficiently distant cohorts of both sexes. The sample is stratified by sex, marital status, residential macro-areas (North, Center and South of Italy) and post-stratified with weights in order to take into account education level (Billari, Dalla Zuanna, 2004).

The originality and novelty of the survey relies not only on the structure (the two distinct and distant cohorts of interviewees) but also on the research approach that combines a longitudinal perspective with a "relational" one. The longitudinal perspective (both retrospective and perspective, since the survey is planned as a first wave of a panel) allows a dynamic analysis of individual paths and sequences of key events leading to adulthood. The "relational" perspective acknowledges the importance of certain key actors, such as the youth's parents, partner (even if not cohabiting) and also siblings and peer group. As a result a sample 592 mothers of the younger cohort still living with their parents was also interviewed. The aim was to consider directly the attitudes of mothers with respect to their children's autonomy and the material and moral constraints created by the parental home that can influence tempo and choices of transition to adulthood of young people. The role of parents was also investigated for young individuals who has already left parental home. In this case information on both moral and practical issues was collected. Moreover, information on income support throughout the life-cycle and the steps toward autonomy and adulthood, were collected. The rationale behind this strategy is that in the Italian context characterized by "strong family ties" and a very weak welfare provision, parents have a strong "propulsive" or "braking" power on their children's timing of autonomy, with consequential effects on timing of all successive phases (union formation and fertility behavior).

Here we analyze data from the oldest<sup>4</sup> group interviewed, aged 33-37 (born from 1966 to 1970) and consisting of 1533 interviewees. For this older group we would like to capture retrospectively the different phases of transition to adulthood such as exit the parental home, union formation and fertility choices. The aim is to gain understanding of various social processes, such as education and work, and their interaction with parallel sentimental careers, such as union formation and fertility biographies. Particular attention is put on the job characteristics, emphasizing the role job stability. The hypothesis that we would like to investigate is that increased flexibility in the labor market has led to insecure job positions that may influence and further slow down the path toward residential autonomy and adulthood.

### **3. Timing and sequence of the events of the transition to adulthood**

#### **3.1. A further increasing delay**

The analysis of timing and sequence of the events of transition to adulthood is conducted on the older cohort interviewed (age 33-37, born 1966-1970). Most of these young people have almost completed the process of residential autonomy: 86% of men and 90,3% of women have left home at least once at the time of the interview. Table 1 shows median ages at marker events of transition to adulthood.

The proportion of ever left home at the age of 30 is directly comparable with other Italian data: in particular 1996 Fertility and Family Survey data (De Sandre et al. 1999) and 1998 Multi-purpose survey (Istat 2003). According to FFS data, in the cohort 1961-65, 84,9% of men and 89,6% women have left home at the age of 30: thus, from the comparison it can be revealed for our cohort (1966-1970) a further general slight delay of leaving home, that is even stronger in the North of Italy for men and in the Center for women (data not shown here). By comparing the age at leaving the parental home for the two cohorts, we see quite clear gender differences. For both

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<sup>4</sup> The youngest group interviewed is aged 23-27 (cohorts born from 1976 to 1980) and is made up of 1550 interviewees. The information gathered on this younger group permits to study the beginning of the individual paths and decision-making process that leads to the eventual exit from the parental home, entering a union, and forming own fertility intentions. The majority of young people in this age group still live with their parents (around 70% according to a recent survey, Buzzi et al., 2002). This means that for this group is possible to study ex-ante interactions between different actors in the family, which may lead to housing autonomy or – for those who have already experienced it – the first phases of life outside the family. In addition to individual information on life-course (such as leaving and returning the parental home, union formation and fertility), the survey also collected detailed information on education, work, as well as sentimental biographies. Moreover, detailed questions concerning intentions, largely based on the socio-psychological theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988), were also included. These data are not analyzed here.

cohorts the median age for men is 27, whereas for women there has been a postponement from 24 to 25 years.

For all the other markers there is a further postponement – a trend in Italy never interrupted since cohorts born during the ‘50s (De Sandre *et al.*, 1997; Castiglioni *et al.*, 2003): in fact, a slight increase of median age has occurred to these younger generations, compared to the previous cohorts, also for age at first job, first marriage and first child. For first sexual intercourse, males median age is consistent with that found from other source of data (Ongaro, 2004) and slightly lower for females. Both table 1 and figure 1 show a very high median age at cohabitation, a symptom of the scarce prevalence of cohabitation as a form of first union<sup>5</sup>

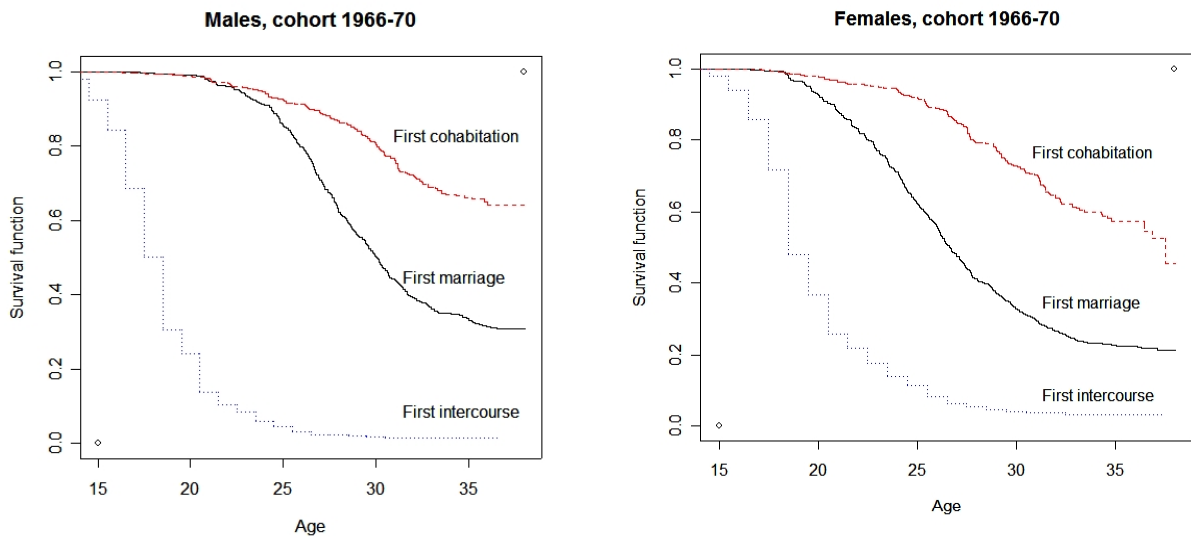
**Table 1: Median and quartile ages at “marker” events of transition to adulthood, by gender (Kaplan – Meier estimates)**

Events	<i>Men</i>			<i>Women</i>		
	First quartile	Median	Third quartile	First quartile	Median	Third quartile
1 <sup>st</sup> sexual intercourse	16.5	18.5	19.5	17.5	19.5	21.5
1 <sup>st</sup> job	17.6	21.4	27.5	19.5	24.0	35.8
1 <sup>st</sup> exit parental home	23.0	27.2	30.6	21.7	25.1	28.6
1 <sup>st</sup> cohabitation	31.2	—	—	29.3	37.5	—
1 <sup>st</sup> marriage	26.6	30.1	—	23.4	26.6	32.7
1 <sup>st</sup> child	29.2	33.4	—	25.3	29.3	35.4

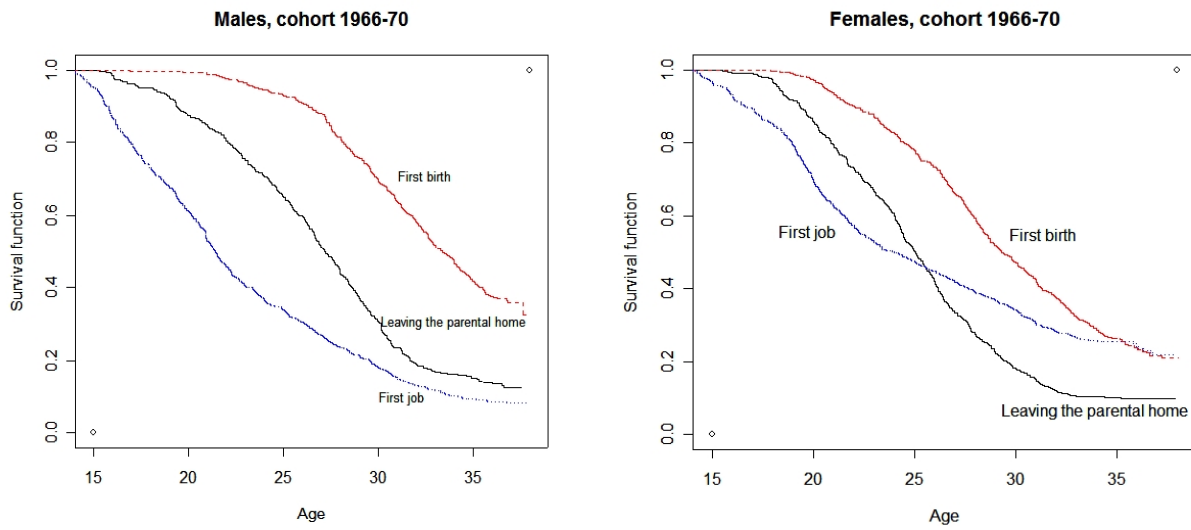
<sup>5</sup> Actually the phenomenon of cohabitation has a strong regional gradient in Italy and it is spread only in the areas of centre-northern Italy (Rosina, 2001, 2002).

**Figure 1: Survival functions at marker events by gender (cohort 1966-1970)**

a) 1<sup>st</sup> sexual intercourse, 1<sup>st</sup> marriage, 1<sup>st</sup> cohabitation



b) 1<sup>st</sup> job, leaving parental home, 1<sup>st</sup> birth



### 3.2 The reasons for leaving home

Here we investigate the reasons why young people leave home. From descriptive result shown in figure 2 we can affirm that are some piece of novelty. Marriage is still the prevalent reason to exit the parental house, but among men having left parental house before the age of 30 the second most important reason is driven by their job career. Cohabitation as motivation for leaving family of origin is increasing: 9% of women and 8% of men has left home before the age of 30 to cohabit with a partner. Figure 2 shows the different pattern of home-leaving timing according the reason for which young individuals leave. Home-leaving curves for marriage and cohabitation are quite similar, confirming that cohabitators leave home as late as those who leave home for marriage. However, we can notice that those who leave home for other reasons than union formation show a different pattern and a relevant anticipation of the event. Students who leave home for educational reasons and those who leave home for working reasons bring about this anticipation. Anyway, as already said, the prevalence of this type of exit from the parental home is rather low.

Regional patterns (shown in the second graph, b), of figure 3) are strong also on reasons and the main features to be underlined are: (1) The proportion of North-Center Italian men exit because of a marriage is particularly low compared to previous cohorts (Ongaro, 2001); (2) Leaving parental home in order to form a cohabitation is a spreading behavior in the North-Center of Italy, whereas in the South is still a marginal category<sup>6</sup>; (3) The proportion of young men leaving parental home for job reasons is higher in the South, where the unemployment rate is higher, confirming the existence of interregional migration movements with a South-North gradient.

**Figure 2: Survival function at leaving the parental home by gender and reason for leaving.**

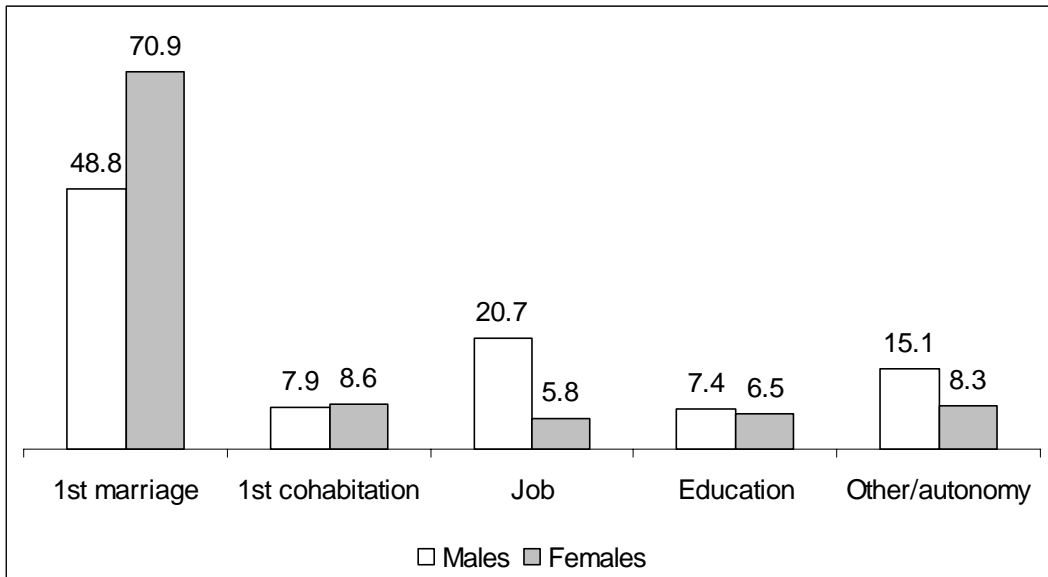


<sup>6</sup> From IDEA survey the proportion of cohabiting people among cohorts 1966-1970 is 19.2% for Italy, hiding a 25.5% for Center-North part and only 7.4% for South (Billari and Rosina, 2005).

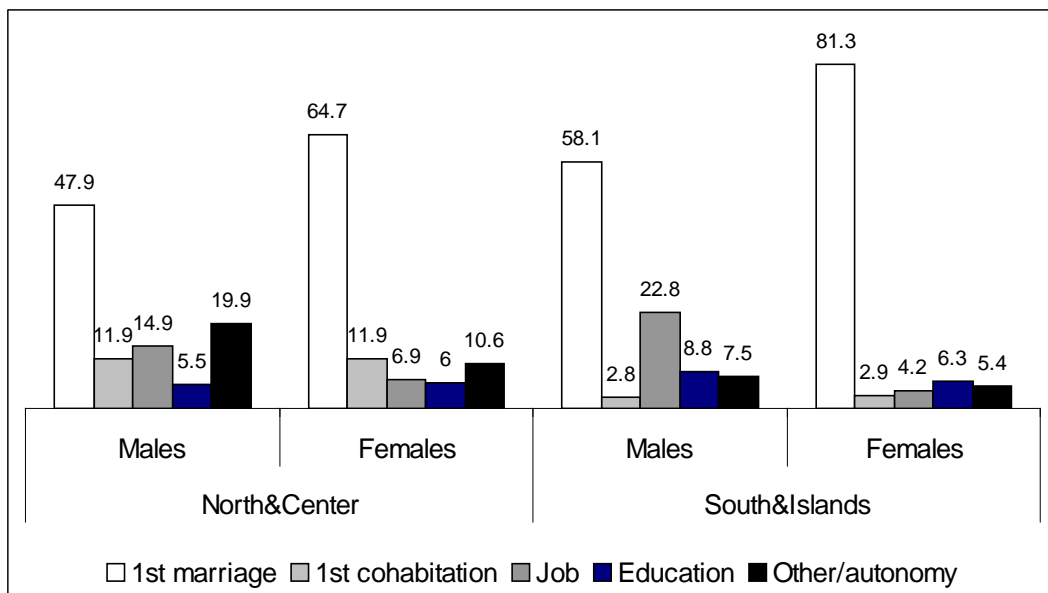


**Figure 3: Proportion of young people ever left parental home by age of 30 by reasons for leaving, by gender (all sample)**

a) Italy (all national representative sample)



b) by geographical residence

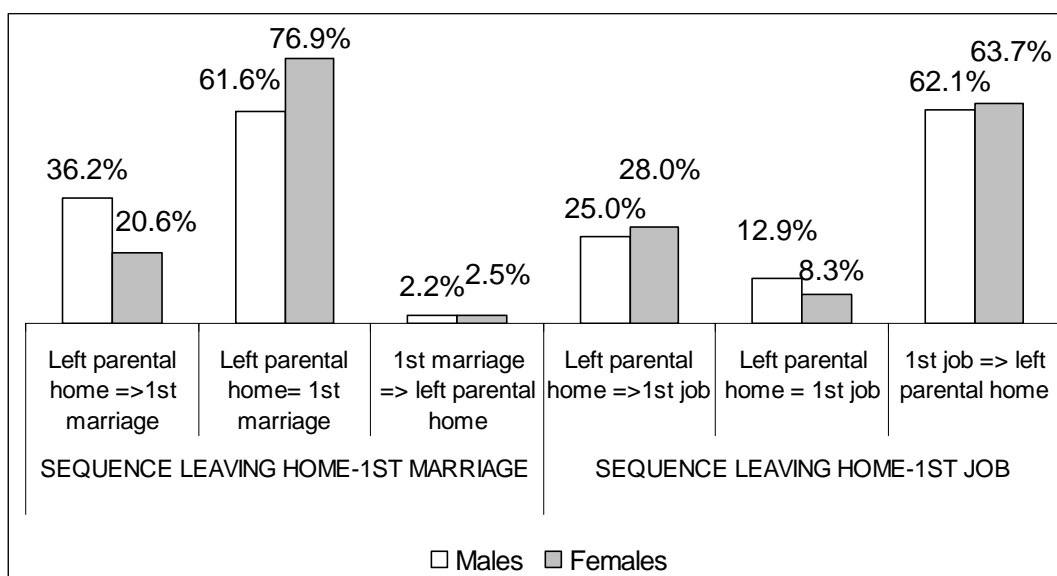


### 3.3 A rigid sequence of events

A general observation on transition from youth to adulthood among post-war cohorts across Europe is the de-standardization and de-chronologization of the life course. The segments and events included in the process of transition to adulthood themselves became less strictly defined and their sequence more diverse. In the passage from a “standard” transition to a “choice” transition from youth to adulthood, there is not anymore a strict normative model with appropriate ages for certain steps of the life course (Giddens 1990; Schizzerotto and Beck 1999; Corijn and Klijzing, 2001).

Nevertheless, the Italian context has been described far more normative and rigid. In Italy two distinctive aspects of sequence of events have been evidenced, at least for cohorts born until the beginning of 60s: (1) a high degree of synchronization between exit the family of origin and the first marriage; (2) the beginning of working life within a non-autonomy residential situation, that is still living at parental home. Our data – on 1966-1970 cohorts – confirms this peculiarity, though with some signs of change. Figure 3 shows the prevalence of simultaneousness between the exit parental home and marriage, but more than one third of men and one fifth of women have left parental home before marring (and this high percentage cannot be explained only with the spread of cohabitation – see next paragraphs for details on reasons for exit home). About the link between the first job and exit the parental home, it is evident from figure 5 that most of young people leave parental home only after having experimented the first job. Also for this sequence, the exceptions are more frequent among males than females.

**Figure 4: Prevalence of certain sequences between exit parental home and 1<sup>st</sup> marriage and 1<sup>st</sup> job by gender**



### 3.4. Late transition to adulthood and late parenthood

The link between delayed union formation and parenthood is a central issue of analysis of Italian fertility patterns. (Salvini 2004; Billari and Rosina 2004). Obviously it is important to distinguish gender patterns at parenthood. In fact, for motherhood *tempo* and *quantum* are more rigidly interrelated, and the influence of the delay of previous steps to adulthood is reinforced by the “biological clock” that limits the female fecundity – already decreasing from 30s – beyond certain ages. Our new data allow us to investigate changes on timing on fertility for recent cohorts.

Figure 1 (b) shows survival curves for first child, by gender, together with those of leaving home and first job. The median age at first child is 29.3 for women and 33.4 for men. There is a noticeable difference by residential regions: for both men and women median age is one year higher in Center-North compared to South-Islands.

The delay at first childbearing event is therefore confirmed and it is clearly evident when we compare it with previous cohorts. Figure 5 shows proportion of women married and mother by the age of 25 and proportion of men married or father by the age of 30, by cohorts. The proportion of married individuals is decreasing for younger cohorts everywhere and both for men and women. On the contrary, fertility patterns still seem to have a strong geographical gradient. The data suggest a rather stationary situation for Southern young people – 37,7% being mothers by 25 years old and 47,7% being fathers by 30 – and a further decreasing proportion of men and women who experience parenthood by the defined ages. On center-north part of Italy only 20% of women have a child by the age of 25 and only 30% of men by 30.

How can we link this fertility behavior to previous steps of transition to adulthood, such as residential autonomy and union formation? The evidence from this descriptive data is that, in a general context of late and low fertility, transition to parenthood (measured as the timing of first childbearing event) is relatively quicker and higher where the onset of family formation is less delayed and it consists of a marriage. The diffusion of out of wedlock births – prevalent in Central-Northern European countries, – remains low in Italy, though again we can see regional differences.. From our data 12 percent of women and 10% of men in the North-Center areas of Italy have experienced an out-of-wedlock birth, whereas these percentages halve for Southern region<sup>7</sup>. Of course among these young cohorts the spread of illegitimate births is linked to the diffusion of cohabitation as union before or in place of marriage (for the role and the spread of cohabitation in Italy, see Billari and Rosina, 2005). It is evident that for the time being we cannot see a pronounced diffusion of wedlock fertility, even in the North-Center of Italy. As such there is not much evidence

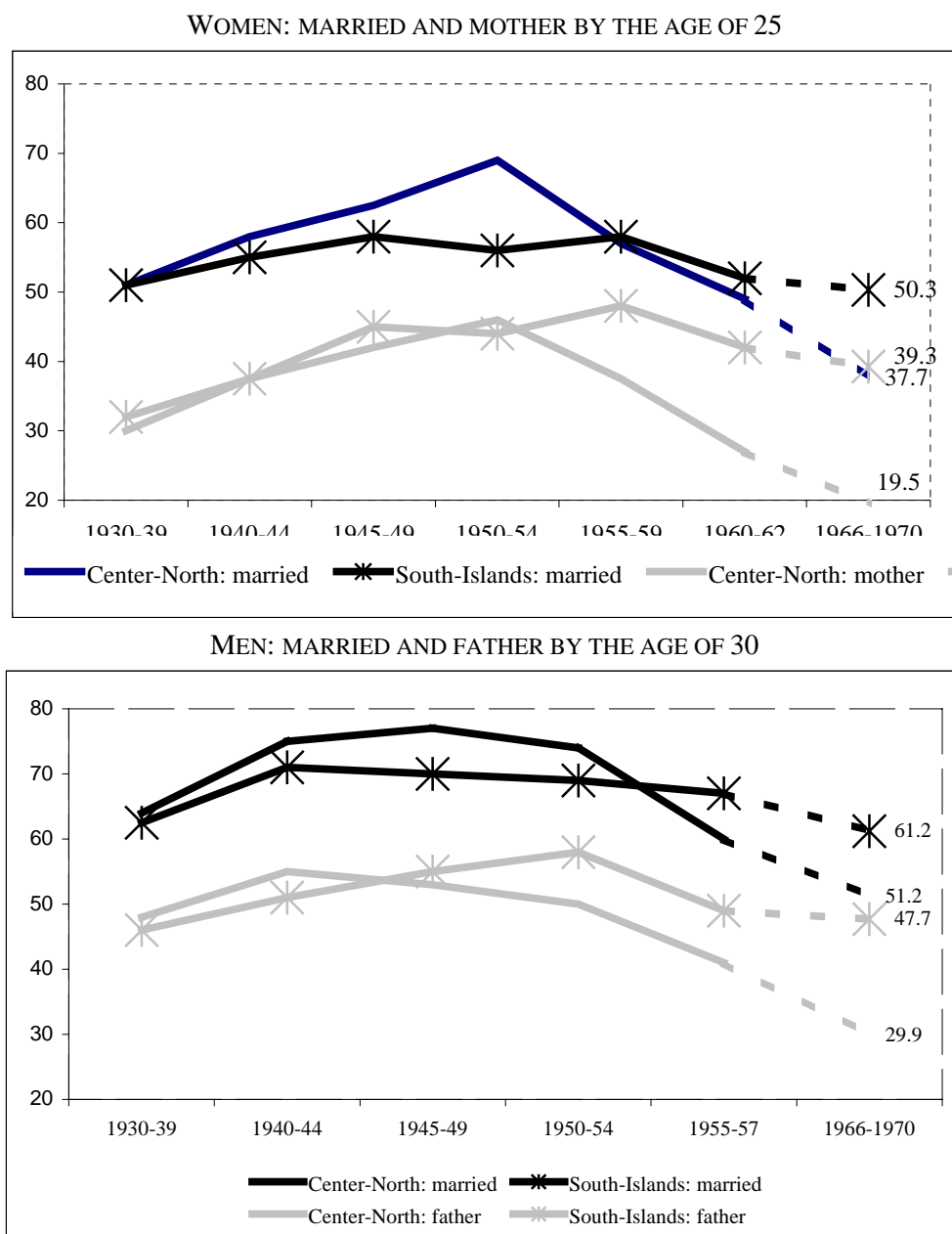
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<sup>7</sup> This is consistent with a 11.1% of prevalence for all cohorts at national level (Istat, 2001).

to support any convergence to Central-Northern European patterns. From this simple descriptive analysis, with respect to the research questions posed, we can therefore affirm that:

- (1) the delay of childbearing endures for recent cohorts, with the well known gender and South-North of Italy differentials;
- (2) the proportion of out of wedlock birth has increased in Center-North of Italy and this is consistent to the spread of cohabiting union in those regions, but at aggregate level these regions and still those with relatively lower and belated fertility.

**Figure 5: Comparison between Istat data (cohorts until 1962) and I.D.E.A. survey data (cohorts 1966-70) on proportion of men and women married and parents by certain ages**



## **4. Determinants of transition from youth to adulthood**

### **4.1 The determinants of path out of parental home**

We now go on to consider statistical models that allow us to analyze the transition of leaving home together with the entry into a union, on one hand, and leaving home together with the entry into a first job, on the other hand. As stated previously, the two main features of the Italian way to make a transition to adulthood are 1) the high synchronization between exiting the parental home and entering a union and 2) the entry into the labour market while remaining with parents. Nevertheless we find that there is an increasing heterogeneity in the main motivation as indicated by the respondents for the departure from family of origin. Some motives for why young people leave home are becoming more socially relevant. Therefore we would like to analyze the process of leaving home taking into account the different destinations of young individuals.

Certain characteristics affects the likelihood of leaving home in different ways – depending on different destinations taken by the young adult. Religiosity of respondent and of his/her parents is, for instance, likely to have a positive effect on the hazard of leaving home due to a higher rate of marriage, but a negative one on the hazard of leaving home for cohabitation. This makes it necessary to consider the leaving home not merely as an unique event, but as a set possible choices faced by the individuals.

In this study leaving home is first considered with respect to union formation, and subsequently in terms of entry into the labor market. These two events are considered as parallel careers in the individual life course and of course define different states.

In order to consider the multidimensionality of the leaving home process, we use competing risk hazard regression model with a piecewise constant exponential risk (see, Blossfeld & Rowher, 2002), where the transition to different states (union and labour market entry) are considered as the competing events<sup>8</sup>.

By taking into account the leaving home event together with the entry into a union, we classify individuals into five groups (1) those who never left the parental home nor had a first union – that in the model is the original state –; (2) those who have entered into a union while remaining in the parental home; (3) those who have left parental home and, at the same, experienced first marriage; (4) those who left parental home to enter into a first cohabitation; and (5), those who have left the parental home for some other reasons than a union (e.g. education, job career, search of personal independence, etc.).

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<sup>8</sup> A similar approach was used by Billari et al. (2001) in a comparison between Italy and Spain.

In contrast when we analyze the leaving home event together with the first entry into the labor market, we define four possible states: (1) those who neither left the parental home nor entered the labor market; (2) those who experienced their first job before leaving the parental home; (3) those who have left the parental home without experiencing a first job; (4) and those who have left parental home and, at the same time, entered the labor market.

Some of the covariates used in the models are defined as time dependent. They are defined so that their value can change within one episode. In this way, the effect of a time-varying variable starts only from the moment in which the individual enters the state. For instance, the effect of being a student on the risk of leaving home influences the dependent variable only in the period the individual is a student and not for the entire episode.

### *Leaving home and entering a union*

Numerous empirical studies have emphasized the presence of strong ties between social features and family formation. In this section we focus on how the characteristics of the parental household and the educational and work careers of the young adults influence the propensity to the onset of an independent life. From the model with covariates shown in table 2 we find evidence consistent with existing literature, and only rarely do we find evidence of clear gender differences. The main results are the following:

- the birth cohort shows a positive coefficient only for females in the exits for union formation, with a strong significance for cohabitation;
- at a geographical level, males and females living in the South are more likely to leave home for a marriage than for a cohabitation, and especially for men do we find that the coefficient is particularly high. Moreover, young people residing in main towns show a higher risk of leaving the parental home, especially for other reasons than entering a union.

Among the characteristics likely to influence one's choices of autonomy, we consider some characteristics of the family of origin, which can be considered as a proxy of personal values structure.

- Number of siblings has generally a positive effect on the risk of leaving home and entering into a union for women, with a preference for traditional models of family formation, and a negative one when we consider the exit from parental home for reasons not connected with a union. For men, it seems that a higher number of sisters and brothers foster less traditional choices, such as cohabitation or residential autonomy without a union.

- Religious attendance of the father of the young men and women has a negative effect on leaving home for cohabitation. Moreover, men and women who had a high religious attendance when they were aged 16, are less likely to leave home for other reasons than union. The strong effect of this variable testifies the persistence of cultural elements that may slow down the diffusion of new forms of family formation and new ways of independent living.

Education level and employment status of parents are also considered in the analysis. Mother's education and employment have a positive effect, but not significant for women, on the likelihood to exit for reasons different from a union.

- To better understand the role of educational career, the effect of school enrolment is separated from the influence of the educational level attained (Blossfeld and Huinik, 1991). The first dimension controls the status of still being within the educational system or not, meanwhile the second is a proxy of individual cultural and economic resources. Following the same approach, to evaluate the effects of work career on various destinations we distinguish the first entry into the labor market according to the type of contract (permanent job against and fixed-term contract job). The hypothesis that we want to verify here relies on the fact that in a situation in which the transition to adulthood is defined by a rigid sequence of events – such as in the Italian case – the economic autonomy can accelerate or slow the entry into the different destinations.
- Being a male or a female student has a negative effect on the risk of leaving home for union (marriage or cohabitation) and the negative relation is particularly strong for marriage.
- The exit for reason other than a union, shows a clear gender difference: it seems positively and significantly associated with the educational level for women but not for men. This result tends to confirm the hypothesis that higher qualifications should also allow greater residential autonomy and risk for employment mobility.
- Regarding the role played by the first job on the propensity to residential autonomy, the models estimated underline that for females the presence of a permanent job has positive influence on all the destinations, with a strong statistical significance for the exit for marriage, whereas fixed-term contracts encourage males to leave home for cohabitation.
- Having a partner evidences a very interesting difference between men and women: pushing out of the parental home for the first group, holding back for the latter.
- Finally, the sexual and sentimental history of respondents is considered. We find that for young women a relative early beginning of sexual activity has a positive effect on all

types of home-leaving, whereas an early beginning of sentimental history facilitates only marriage. For young men the beginning of sexual history is less important, but having had the first sentimental relationship before the age of 16 has a still positive effect, especially on marriage.

### *Leaving home and first job*

In this second model we focus on the process of leaving home together with the first entry into the labor market. In order to try a different specification of possible episodes, we define three destinations: (1) starting the first job before leaving home; (2) leaving home before starting the first job (3) and leaving home and starting the first job simultaneously<sup>9</sup>.

As underlined by the literature, the entry into the labor market – especially for women – has been considered more and more important and a sign of innovation against traditionalism.

In the Italian context, the traditional pattern, of obtaining a stable job position is an important pre-condition to form his own family, prevails. In contrast women may very well experience a direct passage from the parental to the marital home without any having first obtained any economic independence. Since the personal realisation through the working activity is more and more important, also among females, here we would like to verify whether there are new forms of autonomy without forming a union or the traditional pattern is still fully predominant.

In table 3 we can see the principal results of the piecewise model for the three different destinations:

- Firstly we notice a strong geographical gradient in terms of exiting the parental home for job purposes: in the South, men are more likely to leave the family of origin for the first job, whereas women are more likely to leave before the first job. The latter transition is probably linked to the high propensity of women, especially in the South, who exit the parental home due to union formation, without experiencing any job spells before (Rosina et al., 2003). Moreover, men and women in the Southern parts are less likely to start the first job before leaving the parental home, confirming a lower proportion of individuals – compared the North-Center – living with their parents despite having financial autonomy. Furthermore, we still notice an effect of place of residence for women, because living in a main city increases the opportunity to experiment the first job before leaving the parental home.

Regarding the family of origin characteristics, once again we find that the higher number of siblings the more likely is for young adults to leave home for a job. In particular, the

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<sup>9</sup> We define leaving home and first job simultaneous if the time distance between their occurrence is less than six months.



number of siblings has a positive effect on the propensity to leave home for a job for females and on the propensity to leave home before starting the job career for males. Interestingly, all the other factors being equal, this effect is counterbalanced among young females by the increasing risk of leaving home if the respondent's mother worked during their adolescence (when the respondent was 16). For men the "protective" effect – against leaving home – of a housewife mother is evident. In fact we found a negative and significant link between a working mother and the risk of experimenting a first job before leaving the parental home and consistently, a mother with a higher level of education increases the risk of leaving home before having a first job.

- Religious attendance makes it less likely for men to leave home before starting the first job and more probable for women to start the first job before leaving home, while the father's religious attendance does not seem to have any significant effect.
- Being still enrolled in educational system at the time of the interview has a positive effect on having the first job before leaving home and negative on leaving before finding a job. On the contrary, the higher is the educational level attained the lower the propensity to find the first job before leaving home. Besides for women having a first job can become a reason of independency.
- Finally, having a partner increases the hazard of both starting the first job and leaving the parental home.

**Table 2 Leaving home hazard regression with multiple destinations; cohorts 1966-1970**

Variable	FEMALES						MALES					
	LEFT FOR MARRIAGE		LEFT FOR COHABITATION		LEFT, NO UNION		LEFT FOR MARRIAGE		LEFT FOR COHABITATION		LEFT, NO UNION	
	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif
Cohort of birth	<b>0.102</b>	0.993	<b>0.575</b>	1.000	-0.043	0.522	-0.057	0.755	0.102	0.679	0.035	0.521
Resident South of Italy	<b>0.421</b>	1.000	<b>-0.821</b>	0.962	0.130	0.513	<b>0.304</b>	0.956	<b>-1.795</b>	0.999	0.216	0.863
Resident in a main city	<b>0.232</b>	0.972	0.252	0.600	<b>0.364</b>	0.966	0.015	0.089	<b>0.796</b>	0.988	<b>0.484</b>	1.000
Number of siblings	<b>0.100</b>	0.998	0.055	0.383	<b>-0.144</b>	0.954	0.044	0.602	<b>0.223</b>	0.943	<b>0.154</b>	0.999
Religious attendance when he/she was 16	<b>0.114</b>	0.684	0.043	0.113	<b>-0.594</b>	0.999	0.143	0.700	<b>-0.798</b>	0.979	<b>-0.318</b>	0.969
Father religious attendance when respondent was 16	0.013	0.089	-0.552	0.886	0.018	0.073	0.018	0.104	<b>-0.726</b>	0.959	0.005	0.027
Father employed when respondent was 16	-0.001	0.005	<b>-0.984</b>	0.985	0.005	0.014	0.154	0.547	<b>1.203</b>	0.951	0.196	0.600
Mother employed when respondent was 16	-0.063	0.433	0.089	0.228	0.062	0.279	-0.118	0.550	-0.043	0.106	0.126	0.607
Mother >=secondary school diploma	0.048	0.218	0.231	0.421	0.009	0.033	-0.300	0.722	-0.636	0.695	<b>0.537</b>	0.995
Student (time varying)	<b>-0.977</b>	1.000	-0.425	0.779	0.285	0.825	<b>-1.921</b>	1.000	-0.345	0.675	0.170	0.686
Graduated	-0.219	0.794	0.261	0.509	<b>0.425</b>	0.969	0.186	0.597	0.098	0.180	-0.122	0.462
Permanent job (time varying)	<b>0.293</b>	0.972	0.491	0.830	0.137	0.433	-0.015	0.075	0.339	0.671	-0.280	0.856
Fixed-term job (time varying)	0.190	0.790	0.513	0.758	0.414	0.874	-0.211	0.736	<b>0.748</b>	0.932	0.079	0.291
Partner (time varying)					-0.222	0.750					<b>0.344</b>	0.961
First sexual intercourse before 18	<b>0.286</b>	0.970	<b>1.668</b>	1.000	<b>0.379</b>	0.943	0.203	0.861	0.274	0.650	0.142	0.680
First sent. Relationship before 16	<b>1.180</b>	1.000	0.201	0.325	0.017	0.043	<b>0.578</b>	0.938	<b>1.093</b>	0.891	0.343	0.784

**Table 3 Leaving home hazard regression with multiple destinations; cohorts 1966-1970**

Variable	FEMALES						MALES					
	1 <sup>st</sup> JOB BEFORE LEAVING		LEFT BEFORE 1 <sup>st</sup> JOB		1 <sup>st</sup> JOB AND LEFT		1 <sup>st</sup> JOB BEFORE LEAVING		LEFT BEFORE FIRST JOB		1 <sup>st</sup> JOB AND LEFT	
	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif
Year of birth	-0,003	0,054	0,015	0,247	-0,028	0,175	-0,011	0,238	0,073	0,772	0,011	0,086
Resident in the South of Italy	<b>-0,943</b>	1,000	<b>0,309</b>	0,984	<b>-0,876</b>	0,971	<b>-0,221</b>	0,944	0,076	0,350	<b>0,554</b>	0,956
Resident in main city	<b>0,230</b>	0,961	0,106	0,597	0,070	0,162	-0,046	0,348	0,232	0,850	0,382	0,844
Number of siblings	-0,017	0,335	-0,054	0,791	<b>0,192</b>	0,922	-0,058	0,852	<b>0,191</b>	1,000	0,129	0,841
Father employed when respondent was 16	0,188	0,645	0,027	0,114	0,307	0,338	0,236	0,838	0,249	0,650	-0,386	0,702
Mother employed when respondent was 16	0,033	0,223	-0,034	0,202	<b>0,558</b>	0,902	<b>-0,276</b>	0,982	-0,170	0,642	0,416	0,857
Mother >=secondary school diploma	-0,200	0,748	0,140	0,535	-0,084	0,150	-0,218	0,754	<b>0,535</b>	0,972	-0,655	0,822
Religious attendance when he/she was 16	<b>0,310</b>	0,991	-0,169	0,800	-0,292	0,590	0,033	0,234	<b>-0,393</b>	0,973	-0,346	0,771
Father religious attendance when respondent was 16	-0,008	0,048	0,094	0,485	-0,053	0,107	-0,039	0,268	0,080	0,348	0,429	0,866
Student (time varying)	<b>0,294</b>	0,954	<b>-0,488</b>	0,998	0,155	0,279	<b>0,303</b>	0,968	-0,224	0,703	-0,547	0,864
Graduated	<b>-1,016</b>	1,000	-0,297	0,834	0,739	0,811	<b>-1,057</b>	1,000	-0,370	0,821	0,407	0,633
Secondary school	<b>-0,267</b>	0,949	-0,125	0,530	<b>0,893</b>	0,943	<b>-0,402</b>	0,999	-0,129	0,455	0,523	0,874
Partner (time varying)	<b>0,326</b>	0,994	<b>1,293</b>	1,000	<b>1,773</b>	1,000	<b>0,247</b>	0,907	<b>0,877</b>	1,000	<b>0,644</b>	0,945

#### ***4.2 Late parenthood: determinants to the transition to first child bearing and links to the other markers of “syndrome of delay”***

In this second part of empirical analysis, we would like to assess the relationship between leaving home, union formation and the timing at the first birth. We therefore model the hazard of having the first child for young adults who are in a union, and we use the different paths out of the parental home as covariates. Here we use a single destination hazard risk regression, but in this case we allow for period-specific effects in order to relax the proportionality assumption that is implicit in the piecewise constant exponential model. For that reason, in table 4 we find three estimates for each covariate: first one is the effect of the covariate relatively to the first period (below age of 26 for females and 29 for males), the second is related to the second period (26-30 and 29-32) and the last one is the effect in the third period (over 30 and over 32)<sup>10</sup>. In some cases, for identification purposes, the parameters are constrained to have the same effect in the whole period, after having tested that the proportionality assumption holds for these variables. Since many variables change their effect according the different periods, the choice of relaxing the proportionality assumption is confirmed as appropriate. The results are shown in table 4. We divided covariates into groups, corresponding to respondent’s individual and family characteristics, his or her education and first job and the steps towards adulthood with particular attention to union formation.

Our attention is focused on the effects of transition to adulthood events:

- We notice some interesting findings, i.e. an early beginning of an active sexual life delays the transition to motherhood.
- Furthermore we find a positive effect of marriage and cohabitation but a negative effect of their interaction. This means that the combination of premarital cohabitation and marriage makes the transition to parenthood less likely compared to marriage without cohabitation or cohabitation without marriage. This link can be explained by the fact that in Italy most of children born within a marriage and cohabitation is confined to a premarital phase.
- Having controlled for union formation, we still find a positive effect for females of leaving the parental home, both for union formation and for other reasons, limited to the second period (26-30). For males we have a negative effect of leaving home for union formation still limited to the second period (29-32). This could mean that the most important fact – affecting the sub-sequence fertility – is to go out the family of origin, regardless the reasons indicated for leaving parental home.

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<sup>10</sup> We use different periods for males and females given that the timing of entry into parenthood changes according the gender: the median age at first birth is 29.3 for females and 33.4 for males.

The second important group of characteristics for transition for adulthood is the educational and job career of young people:

- Being a student delays, in all periods, the first birth, with a higher significance for women.
- Generally, a higher education level has a negative effect on the risk of having the first child, both for females and males – even controlling for educational level of the partner.
- Having a first job as permanent has a negative effect for females – therefore it delays the first birth. The effect is high and significant especially when they are less than 26 (decreasing for successive periods). The beginning of the first job has not a significant effect for males, instead. This can be explained with the fact that below 26 the proportion of women having a child is very low and the more likely to have a child are non-working women.
- Regarding respondent's individual characteristics, as it was expected, young people living in the Southern Italy are more likely to have the first child compared to those from the North. Among men, this effect goes against the delay of parenthood, because it is significant only in the first period (below 29). Only for females, living in chief towns affect a delay of the first child. Religiosity both of respondent and of his/her father (when the respondent was 16) has mixed effects, not easy to explain.

The fourth group of variables regards characteristics of family of origin:

- The number of siblings has generally a positive effect, except for women above 30 (a difficult effect to explain).
- The occupational history of parents is also considered: mother's employment has a positive effect on females, leading to an early childhood, whereas it has a negative effect for males, but only for the first period. A father with a medium or high job position (possibly a proxy for socio-economic status) seems to influence negatively female fertility and positively male level. A possible explanation can be a sort of higher opportunity cost for women from higher socio-economic level and a "pure" income effect for males.

**Table 4 First birth hazard regression with period specific effects, cohort 1966-70, only respondents in union.**

Variable	Period	FEMALES		MALES	
		Coeff	Signif	Coeff	Signif
<b><u>Respondent individual characteristics</u></b>					
Females: <26; Males < 29	(period 1)	33.959	0.252	<b>-340.268</b>	<b>0.991</b>
Females: 26-30; Males 29-32	(period 2)	159.297	0.866	-57.323	0.290
Females: >30; Males >32	(period 3)	<b>-298.060</b>	<b>0.972</b>	-3.026	0.015
Year of birth	(period 1)	-0.021	0.299	<b>0.170</b>	<b>0.989</b>
	(period 2)	-0.083	0.877	0.027	0.266
	(period 3)	<b>0.149</b>	<b>0.968</b>	-0.002	0.016
Resident in the Center of Italy	(period 1)	0.038	0.122	<b>0.535</b>	<b>0.950</b>
	(period 2)	-0.238	0.702	-0.354	0.772
	(period 3)	0.130	0.461	0.236	0.635
Resident in the South of Italy	(period 1)	<b>0.495</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>0.884</b>	<b>1.000</b>
	(period 2)	“	“	0.116	0.393
	(period 3)	“	“	0.372	0.883
Resident in main city	(period 1)	<b>-0.263</b>	<b>0.994</b>	0.145	0.725
	(period 2)	<b>-0.263</b>	<b>0.994</b>	0.145	0.725
	(period 3)	<b>-0.263</b>	<b>0.994</b>	0.056	0.214
Religious attendance at 16	(period 1)	0.057	0.270	<b>-0.496</b>	<b>0.992</b>
	(period 2)	0.105	0.468	0.022	0.086
	(period 3)	-0.273	0.850	0.091	0.323
<b><u>Steps towards adulthood&amp;union</u></b>					
First sexual intercourse before 18	(period 1)	-0.211	0.765	-0.058	0.260
	(period 2)	<b>-0.455</b>	<b>0.983</b>	0.186	0.811
	(period 3)	0.056	0.206	“	“
Left home for union (time varying)	(period 1)	0.292	0.386	0.307	0.618
	(period 2)	<b>1.486</b>	<b>0.968</b>	<b>-0.987</b>	<b>0.943</b>
	(period 3)	-0.883	0.877	0.248	0.220
Left home not for union (time varying)	(period 1)	0.896	0.864	-0.021	0.047
	(period 2)	<b>1.187</b>	<b>0.922</b>	-0.456	0.618
	(period 3)	-0.823	0.835	0.135	0.119
Married (time varying)	(period 1)	<b>5.167</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>4.378</b>	<b>1.000</b>
	(period 2)	<b>2.853</b>	<b>1.000</b>		
	(period 3)	<b>5.506</b>	<b>1.000</b>		
First cohabitation (time varying)	(period 1)	<b>2.633</b>	<b>0.999</b>	<b>2.626</b>	<b>1.000</b>
	(period 2)	<b>1.945</b>	<b>0.998</b>		
	(period 3)	<b>4.445</b>	<b>1.000</b>		
Married*Cohabitation	(period 1)	<b>-2.110</b>	<b>0.984</b>	<b>-2.425</b>	<b>1.000</b>
	(period 2)	<b>-1.740</b>	<b>0.985</b>		
	(period 3)	<b>-4.500</b>	<b>1.000</b>		

Age difference with partner	(period 1)	-0.028	0.759	0.013	0.574
	(period 2)	0.001	0.030		
	(period 3)	0.034	0.845		
<b><u>Education and job</u></b>					
Student (time varying)	(period 1)	<b>-0.474</b>	<b>0.979</b>	<b>-0.677</b>	<b>0.960</b>
	(period 2)	“	“	-0.118	0.270
	(period 3)	<b>-0.657</b>	<b>0.963</b>	-0.046	0.107
Graduated	(period 1)	<b>-1.188</b>	<b>0.975</b>	-0.202	0.322
	(period 2)	<b>-0.532</b>	<b>0.961</b>	-0.178	0.385
	(period 3)	0.234	0.665	0.355	0.791
Secondary school	(period 1)	<b>-0.489</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>-0.532</b>	<b>0.987</b>
	(period 2)	“	“	-0.191	0.633
	(period 3)	0.274	0.771	0.007	0.026
Partner graduated	(period 1)	0.382	0.731	-0.603	0.834
	(period 2)	-0.095	0.276	-0.224	0.555
	(period 3)	-0.162	0.554	-0.374	0.878
Permanent contract job (time varying)	(period 1)	<b>-0.439</b>	<b>0.968</b>	0.120	0.476
	(period 2)	-0.217	0.772	-0.317	0.810
	(period 3)	-0.086	0.302	-0.182	0.536
Fixed-term contr. Job (time varying)	(period 1)	-0.127	0.401	-0.129	0.364
	(period 2)	-0.287	0.815	-0.291	0.682
	(period 3)	0.178	0.531	-0.031	0.086
<b><u>Family of origin</u></b>					
Number of siblings	(period 1)	<b>0.118</b>	<b>0.989</b>	<b>0.097</b>	<b>0.968</b>
	(period 2)	<b>0.097</b>	<b>0.960</b>	-0.072	0.666
	(period 3)	<b>-0.128</b>	<b>0.911</b>	0.007	0.070
Father religious attendance when respondent was 16	(period 1)	<b>-0.255</b>	<b>0.956</b>	<b>0.275</b>	<b>0.951</b>
	(period 2)	“	“	“	“
	(period 3)	<b>0.299</b>	<b>0.900</b>	-0.065	0.232
Father white collar when respondent was 16	(period 1)	0.005	0.017	0.405	0.837
	(period 2)	<b>-0.792</b>	<b>0.999</b>	0.000	0.000
	(period 3)	-0.042	0.094	0.322	0.663
Father professional or manager when respondent was 16	(period 1)	0.004	0.013	<b>0.526</b>	<b>0.908</b>
	(period 2)	<b>-0.933</b>	<b>1.000</b>	-0.464	0.798
	(period 3)	-0.230	0.470	-0.081	0.167
Mother employed when respondent was 16	(period 1)	<b>0.350</b>	<b>0.960</b>	<b>-0.459</b>	<b>0.962</b>
	(period 2)	<b>0.265</b>	<b>0.910</b>	0.234	0.876
	(period 3)	0.018	0.075	0.234	0.876

## 5. Conclusions

The availability of the new and recent data gathered with IDEA survey has offered us a unique possibility to analyze the timing and paths of transition from youth to adulthood of young Italians. In particular, we have observed behavior of cohorts born between 1966 and 1970. This recent data allow us to affirm that there has been a progressive diffusion of non-traditional post-modern behaviors among late 60' cohorts: for instance it has increased the proportion of young people cohabiting – before or at place of a marriage – and who left parental home for this reason. Nevertheless, it is still difficult to foresee to what extent these young people, experiencing cohabitation, have to be considered as forerunners or whether there will be a successive further diffusion of such behavior. In fact, if these signs can be interpreted as converging factors of Italian characteristics toward the rest of Europe, in the framework of Second Demographic Transition, most of young Italians continue to leave parental home because of a formal marriage.

Concerning the *tempo* of transition to adulthood, survey results confirm a further delay of stay in the family of origin, which the cohabitation diffusion itself doesn't seem to contrast. In particular, the postponing of childbearing has continued: the median age at first birth is 29 years for women and 33 for men. In demographic literature, this late timing is linked to lowest-low fertility levels of Italy. Marriage is still the prevalent reason why young adults leave parental house before the age of 30, but among men the second most important reason is job and also exits for cohabitation are increasing, though with a strong Center-North of Italy specification.

The empirical analysis gives some interesting insights on the relationship between transition to parenthood and transition to adulthood events: first of all, we find that an anticipation of any event of transition to adulthood is not always positively associated with an anticipation of parenthood. Having the first sexual intercourse before 18, for instance, has for young women a negative effect on the risk of having the first child. Another example of the complex relationship between transition to adulthood events and onset of childbearing is the effect of union formation. There is obviously a positive effect of union formation on the risk of having the first child, but we find that marriage effect is much stronger than cohabitation effect. Moreover, we notice that the sequence pre-marital cohabitation and successive marriage makes this effect of union formation on the likelihood to have a first child, weaker. Furthermore, after having controlled for union formation effects, the effect of leaving the parental home is quite limited. Even the effect of the first job is small, but if we break down the effect according to the type of contract we find that young women with a permanent job until the age of 26 are less likely to have the first child (because they are very young, and below that age non-working women are selected and more likely to have a child). On



the other hand, a permanent job has a positive effect on the risk of getting married, therefore indirectly increase the risk of having the first child.

Summarizing, it is clear that all the possible determinants of fertility are dominated by the effect of union formation and marriage particularly. This is in accordance with the Mediterranean family pattern where fertility occurs prevalently within the marriage and cohabitation is still limited, though increasing in prevalence.

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