



Book of the Short Papers

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The determinants of leaving the parental home in Italy: 2012-18

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Abstract

Using the longitudinal structure of the Istat Italian Labor Force Survey, we follow for 15 months the 77.700 young people aged 19-34 who, at the first interview during 2012-18, lived in their parental home, dividing them into four groups (Italian men, Italian women, foreign men, foreign women). In the fourth interview, 15 months after the first one, 16% of them are no longer resident with their parents. The main objective of this work is to model the probabilities of leaving the parental home with the characteristics of young people at the first interview, using logistic regression. The young Italians most likely to leave their parental home are those employed full-time, regardless of gender and type of contract (fixed-term or open-ended). Students remain more frequently with parents irrespective of gender and citizenship. Only for Italians, leaving home is faster if the family of origin is large and the parents are more educated.

Keywords: leaving home, young people, employment, gender, citizenship

1. Introduction

Leaving parental home is a key marker in the transition to adulthood [12, 29] and can have important consequences for young adults' life course outcomes. If on one hand a late exit from parental home may prolong the transition to adult roles [15, 17, 19], on the other one an early exit may instead be associated with earlier experiences of other events, such as exit from education, entry into work or forming a family, that could prevent young people from acquiring adequate human capital for later in life [24, 26].

A large demographic research literature has therefore addressed a broad array of individual, parental, and contextual characteristics shaping the decision of young adults to leave parental home in Western societies [1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22, 27, 30].

Among the numerous factors influencing this decision, difficulties in labour market integration and unstable working conditions may play an important role. Several studies showed the negative effects of job precariousness on the propensity of youth to leave the parental household [6, 16, 22, 32], that can vary depending on the institutional and cultural context, as well as according to gender and reason for leaving home [2, 16, 27]. Not only unemployment or inactivity may limit young people's opportunities to leave their parental home [2], but also the instability of employment [4, 5, 14], irrespective of the level of income received by young adults. An Italian study [3], confirmed by a comparative analysis between Italy and Spain [8], observed that being employed is a prerequisite to exit from the family household more important than income itself. However this results true only for men: being employed, unemployed or inactive does not influence women's propensity of leaving their parents.

From another body of literature it emerges that also the family background, that is linked to young adults' opportunity and need structure, may influence the transition out of the parental home. In particular

the parental education, that is a predictor of young adults' occupational achievement stronger than parents' occupational status and income [13], seems affect the probability of exiting from family home [10, 18, 23, 28, 31] depending on the modality of leaving home (i.e. with or without a partner) and young adults' gender [7].

This study focuses on Italy where the youth unemployment rate is one of the highest among the EU members and leaving home traditionally occurs at later ages than in Northern or Western Europe. In Southern-European countries, characterised by a familist welfare model, national policies to support individuals from job loss or in housing costs are less generous than those of Scandinavian countries and therefore the relationship between the labour market condition and the transition to residential autonomy tends to be stronger [25].

Our aim is to investigate the factors associated to the exit from the family household in recent years, considering both young adults' characteristics, their working condition and their familiar background. We intend to pay special attention to the gender dimension, and also introduce a citizenship perspective, that is still little explored.

2. Data and methods

The analysis is based on microdata from the Italian Labour Force Survey (ILFS) carried out by Istat. The ILFS is the largest survey conducted in Italy to monitor the quarterly dynamics of the labour market and it provides data on employment, wages, and workforce. This survey follows a rotating sample design, where households participate for two consecutive quarters; they exit for the following two quarters, and come back into the sample for a further two consecutive quarters. Therefore, 50% of the households interviewed in the course of a quarter are re-interviewed after 3 months, 50% after 12 months, 25% after 9 and 15 months, respectively. If an individual leaves the sampled family, he/she is not re-interviewed, but it is possible to know – in fact – that he/she no longer belongs to that family unit.

The access to this dataset with wider information than the free version was possible thanks to a data sharing agreement between Istat and the University of Padua.

The present work uses data for the period 2012-18 (first interview) and 2013-19 (fourth interview), and it focuses on the around 77 thousand individuals aged 19-34 living with their parents when the household was enrolled in the survey. We were interested to observe which subjects left the parental home during the 15-month follow-up in order to identify their main characteristics. We divided young respondents in four groups according to their gender and citizenship, and then we ran four separate logistic regressions to highlight the different factors associated to the propensity to leave the parental home in each group.

We estimated three models for each group by including explanatory variables according to three thematic blocks: socio-demographic characteristics (i.e. age, geographic repartition and year of enrolment); employment status (i.e. temporary/permanently fully/partially employed, students, jobseeker, inactive); household characteristics (i.e. educational level of parents and number of household members). Therefore, the first model (that will be called *m1* in Table 2 of the results section) includes only the socio-demographic characteristics of the individual; in the second one (*m2*) we added the variable on the employment status; finally in the last model (*m3*) we included all the three blocks of variables.

3. Results and preliminary conclusion

Among the 77.711 individuals aged 19-34 living with parents when their household was enrolled in the survey 6% have foreign citizenship (Table 1). The percentage of men is greater than that of women (55% among Italians and 58% among foreigners). Although the foreign subjects are younger than Italians, they are less involved in the educational process and more employed (also with open-ended contracts).

The foreign presence is concentrated in central-northern regions. Focusing on family characteristics, about one third of foreigners live with at least 4 people and nearly half of them have poorly educated parents.

During 15-month follow-up 16% of the total sample left the parental home: this percentage is higher among Italians and among women of both citizenships.

The logistic regression shows that age has a positive and significant effect on leaving the parental home among Italian males and females, but not for foreigners. Moreover, in comparison with Italians living in the Centre, those living in the South and the Islands are more likely to exit from the household during the

follow-up; among Italian females also living in the North-east has a positive effect on the propensity to leave the parental home. For the foreigners, there is no significant effect of the geographic repartition of residence.

Table 1: Sample description (weighted frequencies)

	Italians			Foreigners		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Sample size	39.536	33.509	73.045	2.684	1.982	4.666
Age, mean (std. dev.)	25,3 (4,3)	24,5 (4,1)	24,9 (4,2)	24,1 (4,1)	23,7 (3,8)	23,9 (4,0)
Job condition						
Open-ended, FT ^a	20%	10%	15%	24%	11%	18%
Open-ended, PT ^b	3%	5%	4%	5%	11%	7%
Fixed-term, FT	11%	8%	9%	13%	7%	10%
Fixed-term, PT	3%	5%	4%	3%	6%	4%
Self-employed	9%	6%	8%	6%	3%	5%
Student	26%	37%	31%	18%	30%	23%
Jobseeker	16%	15%	15%	19%	17%	18%
Inactive	13%	14%	14%	12%	16%	14%
Geographic repartition						
Centre	19%	19%	19%	30%	27%	28%
Islands	13%	13%	13%	4%	3%	4%
North-east	17%	17%	17%	26%	26%	26%
North-west	23%	22%	23%	32%	35%	33%
South	29%	29%	29%	9%	10%	9%
Household members						
2	9%	7%	8%	12%	12%	12%
3	34%	32%	33%	24%	25%	24%
4	42%	44%	43%	32%	31%	31%
5+	16%	17%	16%	33%	33%	33%
Parental education						
Up to middle school	42%	40%	41%	48%	42%	45%
Secondary school	43%	44%	43%	43%	47%	44%
University	15%	16%	16%	9%	12%	10%
Left during the follow-up						
No	84%	82%	83%	85%	84%	84%
Yes	16%	18%	17%	15%	16%	16%

^a Full time; ^b Part time

Focusing on the job condition, it emerges that students remain in the parental home more frequently than other occupational groups, regardless of their gender and citizenship. The same results are observed also for self-employed people, but only among Italians. Moreover, among Italian men and women what matters is not so much the duration of the contract but the working time: people with a part-time job have indeed a lower probability to leave than full-time workers while the duration of the contract has a not significant effect. The duration of the contract and the working time seem not to affect the propensity of foreign males of leaving their family; foreign females that work part-time with an open-ended contract are less likely to exit from the parental home than those with the same contract but a full-time position.

Table 2: Propensity to leave the parental household during 15-month follow-up. Estimated odds ratios from logit models

	Italian Females			Italian Males			Foreign Females			Foreign Males		
	m1	m2	m3	m1	m2	m3	m1	m2	m3	m1	m2	m3
Intercept	0,017	0,026	0,019	0,015	0,016	0,013	0,229	0,377	0,289	0,163	0,223	0,223
Age	1,101*	1,096*	1,097*	1,096*	1,100*	1,101*	1,008	0,993	0,993	1,019	1,008	1,007
Geographic repartition												
Centre	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
Islands	1,224*	1,321*	1,377*	1,377*	1,566*	1,659*	1,651	1,631	1,742	1,711*	1,570	1,586
North-east	1,211*	1,158*	1,159*	1,062	1,015	1,030	1,370	1,317	1,327	0,893	0,911	0,905
North-west	1,095	1,051	1,068	1,054	1,025	1,049	1,086	1,099	1,122	1,011	1,006	1,005
South	1,120*	1,193*	1,223*	1,240*	1,355*	1,407*	1,307	1,314	1,344	1,404	1,333	1,342
Year of enrolment												
2012	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
2013	1,020	1,026	1,014	1,033	1,051	1,045	0,667	0,672	0,673	0,808	0,842	0,839
2014	1,083	1,102	1,086	1,138*	1,172*	1,160*	0,890	0,919	0,896	0,809	0,823	0,823
2015	1,071	1,088	1,075	1,063	1,093	1,078	0,376*	0,366*	0,361*	0,499*	0,513*	0,511*
2016	1,022	1,033	1,013	1,003	1,023	1,001	0,512*	0,528*	0,524*	0,480*	0,496*	0,496*
2017	1,073	1,080	1,060	1,011	1,024	0,997	0,603*	0,579*	0,575*	0,609*	0,621*	0,624*
2018	1,013	1,011	0,999	0,975	0,979	0,961	0,557*	0,558*	0,556*	0,447*	0,480*	0,483*
Job condition												
Open-ended, FT ^a	ref.	ref.		ref.	ref.		ref.	ref.		ref.	ref.	
Open-ended, PT ^b	0,629*	0,630*		0,639*	0,630*		0,517*	0,508*		1,241	1,230	
Fixed-term, FT ^a	1,022	0,973		1,021	0,993		1,765*	1,678		0,704	0,704	
Fixed-term, PT ^b	0,725*	0,704*		0,677*	0,651*		0,695	0,665		1,561	1,554	
Self-employed	0,742*	0,684*		0,790*	0,752*		0,609	0,580		0,604	0,605	
Student	0,729*	0,630*		0,938	0,785*		0,619*	0,583*		0,559*	0,553*	
Jobseeker	0,604*	0,597*		0,633*	0,623*		1,153	1,144		1,010	1,010	
Inactive	0,590*	0,586*		0,495*	0,488*		1,114	1,114		1,418	1,408	
Household members												
2			ref.			ref.			ref.			ref.
3			1,083			1,015			1,146			1,056
4			1,175*			1,026			1,055			0,905
5+			1,203*			1,185*			1,158			1,020
Parental education												
Up to middle school			ref.			ref.			ref.			ref.
Secondary school			1,242*			1,240*			1,342*			1,070
University			1,804*			1,886*			1,411			1,059

^a Full time; ^b Part time; * p<0.05

Finally, the inclusion of variables on family size and parental education does not modify the effects previously described. We observe a significant effect of the number of household members and the parental education exclusively among Italian men and women: individuals living in large families and with parents having a middle/high education show a greater likelihood of leaving the parental home during the 15 months following the first interview. Since in Italy income is strongly and positively connected with the education, and since income is not a variable available for all the families interviewed, this result could also indicate that leaving the parental home is easier for the children of wealthier parents.

The present work contributes to the study of transition out of the parental home by differentiating according to young adults' gender and citizenship. Unfortunately, the information collected by ILFS is less

rich than that available for other dedicated surveys (such as Family and Social Subjects), and we do not have the characteristics of young people after they leave home (for example, we do not know their working conditions and their living arrangement). However – unlike what happens for dedicated surveys – ILFS has the advantage of being available every quarter of year, a few months after the survey, with large, statistically controlled samples, because they are used to measure employment and unemployment rates. It is therefore our intention to also analyse the data for subsequent years, for example by observing the effect on leaving home of the Covid-19 epidemic of 2020-21, and the subsequent recovery in employment.

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