

You can't go home again. Independent living in Uruguay in the context of delayed transitions to adulthood.

Ya no puedes volver a casa. Vida independiente en Uruguay en el contexto de transiciones tardías a la edad adulta

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how the transition out of the parental home has changed in the last two and a half decades in Uruguay. Using National Household Surveys from 1981 to 2005, we show that although young people in Uruguay have postponed the formation of new households, considerable gaps still exist between individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds. The most educated have avoided further delays in their emancipation by adopting non-family living arrangements as an increasingly popular alternative. Women have experienced the most significant change, reflecting the movement towards more egalitarian relationships between genders. Although the greatest proportional decline of young people living independently has been experienced in a period of relatively favorable economic conditions, our findings suggest that for a large part of the population, the postponement of the formation of a new household is a coping mechanism rather than a choice.

Key words: youth, transitions to adulthood, home leaving, Uruguay.

Resumen

El presente trabajo analiza algunos de los cambios en los procesos de emancipación de los jóvenes en los últimos 25 años en Uruguay. Usando información de Encuestas Continua de Hogares entre 1981 y 2005, se muestra que los jóvenes uruguayos han retrasado la salida del hogar de origen, aunque existen diferencias según nivel educativo y socio-económico. Los más educados han evitado retrasos mayores en la formación de un hogar propio adoptando los arreglos no familiares como una alternativa crecientemente aceptada. Las mujeres, por otro lado, han experimentado los mayores cambios en el proceso de emancipación, como resultado de su mayor participación en el mercado de trabajo y la tendencia hacia la reducción de las desigualdades de género. A pesar de que la caída más significativa en la formación de hogares se dio en un período de relativo bienestar económico, nuestros resultados muestran que para muchos jóvenes el retraso en la emancipación es una adaptación a condiciones desfavorables más que una elección.

Palabras clave: juventud, transición a la adultez, salida del hogar, Uruguay

Introduction

When family values are strong and welfare provision is weak, leaving home is not easy. Besides having little or no pressure from parents, it implies being financially able to sustain an independent household and, in most cases, be-

ing ready to commit to a long-term relationship and (eventually) start a new family. However, this is not always the case. In some countries, public support for young people is readily available and non-family living arrangements are widespread. Then, leaving home is “easier”, or at least it occurs at younger ages.

This is how the comparative literature in Europe has explained regional differences in the age of home leaving and other life course transitions (Iacovou, 2001; Aassve et al, 2002; Jones 1995; Holdsworth, 2000). In Southern Europe, a region with strong familistic values and a relatively weak welfare system, young people not only leave home later, but the majority still do it to live with a partner (Billari et al 2000). In other countries with similar levels of economic development, marriage (or cohabitation) is no longer the main reason to leave home.

According to Jones (1995), what undermined the link between home leaving and union formation in Britain was the expansion of education and the change in marriage patterns registered in the sixties and seventies. The new trend led to the emergence of single-person households and peer households, consolidating a new stage between home leaving and the formation of a new family (Jones 1995). Along the same lines, research in the US has shown how leaving home became increasingly less sensitive to the timing of marriage as a consequence of the steady growth in non-family living arrangements, a route out of the parental home that became an alternative for the generation that came of age during the seventies (Fussel and Furstenberg 2005; Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1999).

In fact, according to Danziger and Rouse (2007), the most striking trend in young people’s living arrangements in the US is not the greater percentage of people living with parents, but the increasing number of people living on their own or with persons other than a spouse. As has been the case with the emergence of other social innovations, the adoption of non-family living arrangements in the US was led by more educated groups, while it became a common practice for other groups later (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1999).

However, in spite of these changes in the types of arrangements, the age of home leaving in the majority of developed nations has been on the rise (Beaupré et al, 2006; Billari 2004; Corijn and Klijzing 2001; Newman and Aptekar, 2007), even in countries where the transition out of the parental home still occurs at relatively early ages like in the Netherlands (Billari and Liefbroer, 2007). Accordingly, the proportion of young adults living with parents in these countries has been increasing, a change that seems to have been particularly rapid between the sixties and eighties (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1999; Young, 1996), and significantly more pronounced in countries where home leaving remained closely linked to marriage (Cordón, 1997).

A number of analyses have explained the protracted period of dependency as a coping mechanism in the context of deteriorating economic opportunities. Youth unemployment has been recognized as one of the main causes of the delayed transitions out of the parental home (Cherlin et al, 1997). In fact, leaving home is the most important predictor of poverty entry among young people in Europe (Aassve et al 2005). It has also been argued that this relationship is indeed causal and that the prospect of economic hardship plays a role in young people's decision to stay at home (Aassve et al 2005b). Moreover, the contribution that employed young people make to the family household can be a key factor in reducing the poverty risk for the family (Ayllón, 2009).

However, according to a series of other studies, it seems that the opportunities and constraints generated by labour-market conditions, housing prices and welfare systems can only partially explain some of the long term trends in home leaving, and the persistent differences between countries. At the individual level, the positive effect of personal earnings on the chances of leaving the parental home has been repeatedly demonstrated, although its effect is less decisive in countries where public support to youth is available (Billari 2004). Income is also a less decisive factor for women in countries where the traditional breadwinner model is still predominant, in which case finding a partner is more important than personal earnings (Aassve et al, 2000).

The effect of parental income also varies according to the cultural setting. Support from the family of origin is negatively associated with home leaving in communities where family ties are stronger, revealing that the decision of staying at home is not only a response to economic difficulties but also the expression of preferences shaped by cultural values and social norms (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1999; Holdsworth 2000; Iacouvou, 2001). In fact, Danziger and Rouse (2007) have found that although economic variables have played a role, the delays in the transition out of the parental home in the past decades have not been primarily driven by economic factors, but by changes in social norms and expectations among young people.

Delayed Transitions to Adulthood

Although analyses focusing on micro-level factors associated with the decision to form a new household have greatly contributed to the understanding of the process, the long-term changes in home leaving have to be placed in the context of the broader transformation in the transition from adolescence to adulthood in contemporary societies.

Since the second half of the 20th century, the Transition to Adulthood (TA) has become longer, more complex, and less orderly (Osgood et al, 2004). The traditional path established during the post-war period, in which young people transitioned from school to work, and from family of origin to family

of reproduction in only a few years, is no longer the norm (Furstenberg et al 2005). Young people are taking longer to achieve the traditional markers of adulthood: finishing schooling, getting a full time job, forming a union (marriage or cohabitation), having children *and* leaving the parental home. Besides, the stages are less defined, with overlapping and reversible statuses, and increasing de-standardization (Corijn and Klijzing 2001, Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007; Shanahan 2000).

For some authors, the transformations observed in the last decades have been so fundamental that they have given rise to a new stage in the life course, between adolescence and full adulthood (Arnet, 2000; Benson and Furstenberg, 2003; Hartman and Swartz, 2006).

In the optimistic interpretation, the postponement of the TA is seen as a result of individual decisions in the context of increased opportunities for young people in post-industrial societies. From this perspective, the postponement of adulthood is associated with the expansion of education, the emancipation of women, the emergence of post-material values, the improvement of living standards in Western developed societies and the relaxation of social controls from the family and the community, a series of processes that have resulted in more opportunities for young people to construct their biographies according to individual preferences and choices (Arnet, 2000, Beaujot and Kerr, 2007, Billari, 2001). On the other hand, some scholars have presented a less positive interpretation, where the delay is understood as a coping mechanism in the context of an increasingly precarious labour market and living conditions, rising housing costs and the necessity to stay within the educational system for a longer period of time due to the inflation of educational credentials (Clark, 2007, Cote and Bynner, 2008).

What is not under debate is that the delay of independence implies an extended period of economic support, usually provided by the state or by the family, or by some combination of the two. In the context of developing countries, where public support is usually scarcely available, the transformations in the TA entail significant risks in terms of the intergenerational reproduction of poverty. While individuals in more privileged positions can take advantage of the extended dependence period to improve or maintain their conditions of living, others have no option but to take a “fast track”, which usually guarantees the reproduction of poor living conditions (Oliveira and Salas, 2008).

Uruguay

Most of the studies on home leaving available to date have focused on Europe and North America. With the exception of De Vos (1989), not many specific studies on the home leaving process have been produced in Latin America, although some have analyzed it as an aspect of the Transition to Adulthood (Camarano et al 2006; Echarri and Perez Amador 2006; Oliveira and Salas, 2008; Perez Amador 2006). They all have pointed out the coexistence of

completely different experiences of the TA among young people, shaped by persistent gender and economic inequalities in the region.

Although Uruguay shares this and other characteristics with the countries in the region, its socio-demographic dynamic presents some distinct elements. Besides being the most urbanized country of the region, and one of the only four Latin American nations that have reached below replacement fertility levels (along with Cuba, Costa Rica and Chile), its population is also the most aged among Latin-American countries. High emigration rates became a structural component of the country's demographic dynamic (Macadar and Pellegrino, 2007) after the significant (positive) migration flow, that had compensated for slow population growth, reversed its direction in the second half of the 20th century.

Culturally, Uruguay shares some of the characteristics of Southern European countries due to the strong influence of Spanish immigration in a region that was relatively uninhabited by native population: strong family ties, centrality of marriage, co-residence with parents during the schooling period (with the exception of those living outside the capital) and weak welfare provision.

Analyses of fertility and nuptiality patterns in the last decades (Cabella, 2007) have suggested that the Uruguayan population is experiencing the so called Second Demographic Transition (SDT) (Lestahaeghe and Van de Kaa 1986, Sobotka 2008), although some of these changes have been observed in a context still characterized by a patriarchal model of family relations and significant differences between social classes (Paredes 2003). In fact, the analyses of different socio-demographic dimensions in Uruguay have shown a combination of both first and second demographic transition-related behaviors, depending on the sector of the population studied (Pardo and Peri, 2008; Varela et al, 2008).

Regarding the situation of youth, we know that higher incentives to invest in human capital for the newer generations (due to increasing payoffs of education) have implied a longer period of schooling and subsequent delays in family formation (Bucheli et al, 1999). However, different results have been presented by Videgain (2006), who analyzed three cohorts of women, born from 1946 to 1976, finding no significant changes in the timing of their first union, their first job, or their first birth.

Filgueira (1998) also analyzed the trajectories of young people from different social sectors in their transitions to adulthood. This study shows significant differences between men and women, but also between individuals with different levels of education. Recent data has confirmed these findings, showing that the less privileged groups not only present a "faster" transition, but also one in which the different events are experienced simultaneously. In contrast, more educated individuals tend to experience the events in a sequence that starts with parental home leaving, is followed by union formation and, only then, childbearing (Ciganda, 2008).

Although the age at the entry into first partnership rose appreciably in the last quarter of the 20th century (Cabella 2007), there are still significant differences between social strata, with less educated women experiencing this transition four years earlier than those with post-secondary education (Buchelli et al 2002).

International emigration has become a central component of the demographic dynamic of Uruguay, particularly affecting young people. Thus, the stock of migrants outside Uruguay has been estimated to be 15% of its population. Analyzing the profile of recent migrants with 2006 data, Macadar and Pellegrino (2007) have found that almost 60% were living with their parents before leaving the country. If we also consider that “unemployment” and “low income” were the two main reasons for migration declared by the families of the migrants, it is not difficult to see how emigration has become a strategy to achieve independence for a growing number of young people.

In fact, the labor market has been a particularly inhospitable place for young people. Not only is the unemployment rate for youth four times higher than for the rest of the population, but the quality of available jobs is also lower, with a significant proportion of young people not covered by social security (Filardo et al, 2009). The timing of the transition to employment has also been affected by increasingly fewer people starting to work at younger ages in the newer generations (Filardo et al, 2009).

Thus, the experience of Uruguayan youth seems to be characterized by the delay of key life course transitions (first union, the transition from school to work and the transition to parenthood) but also by remarkable differences between social sectors.

Since no specific studies on home leaving have been produced in the country (and very few in the region) a large number of questions have yet to be answered. In this paper, we will try to establish whether or not young people in Uruguay are delaying home leaving, as is the case in more affluent countries, paying particular attention to the gaps between men and women and between different social sectors. Given the cultural proximity of Uruguay to Southern European countries, we are also interested in knowing to what extent young Uruguayans also experience home leaving in the “Mediterranean fashion” (Bilari et al, 2000) as its counterparts in Southern Europe. In this sense, we will try to determine if home leaving is still closely associated with union formation, what role the effect of social inequalities plays, and how these factors affect the possibilities of independence and the living arrangements of young people in the country.

Methodology

The use of longitudinal or retrospective data is probably the ideal way to approach our research questions. Unfortunately, the availability of this kind of information on life course transitions is very limited in Uruguay. Instead,

we use National Households Surveys, the only continuous series available covering a relatively long time-period, from 1981 to 2005.

These surveys are collected every year from a representative sample of the country (excluding communities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants). They include information on household characteristics (materials, energy sources, accessibility, resources) as well as information on individuals (socio-demographic characteristics, health, education, occupation, employment, income).

In the first section, we assess the proportion of young people (18 to 32 years old) living independently for the entire period. We then compare the change over time by age groups, sex, and different levels of education (elementary, secondary, post-secondary). Every time different educational levels are compared, the analysis includes only individuals ages 21 to 32, in order to avoid censoring of 18 to 20 year-olds who have not started university.

Living independently is defined as being the head of a household, a spouse, or another family- or non-family member living with a same-generation head of the household.

In the first section, we also analyze the evolution in the proportion of young people in different living arrangements. Following the classification proposed by Yelowitz (2006), we distinguish between 4 categories of living arrangements:

- ♦ *Parents*: Living as a “child” in any type of household.
- ♦ *Nuclear family*: a couple, a couple with children, or a single-parent household.
- ♦ *One-person households*.
- ♦ *Shared (roommates)*: one person or a couple (with or without children) living with others (relatives or non-relatives) of the same generation. The household head is 32 years of age or younger.

In the second section, we use logistic regression analysis to estimate the probabilities of living independently. Three models are fitted for both men and women, the first considering all men or women between 21 and 32 years of age, the second only those who are in a partnership and lastly only those who are single¹. Four different time periods are considered in order to allow the comparison over time. The four selected periods were: 1981 to 1986, 1987 to 1991, 1992 to 1997 and 1998 to 2005.

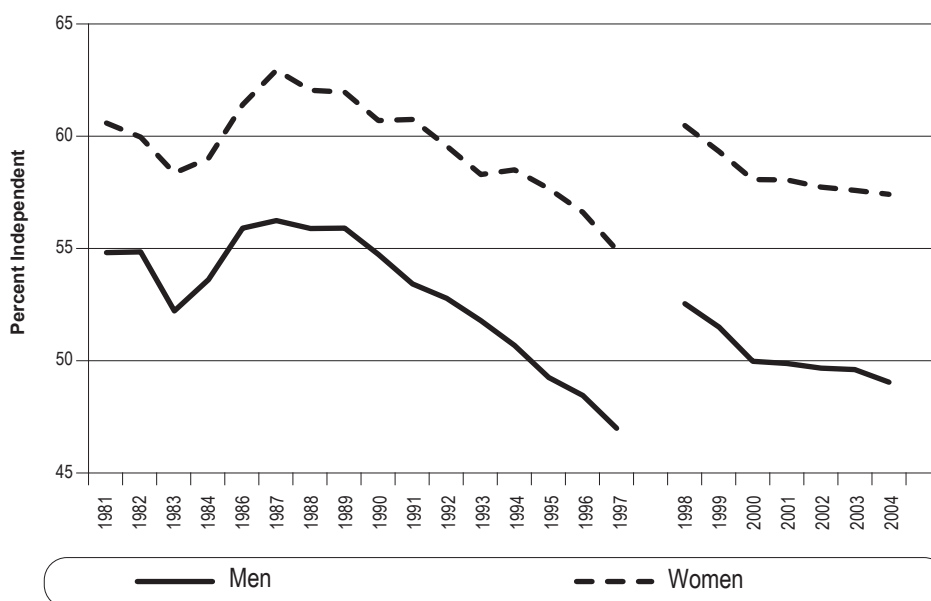
The predictors used in the logistic regression model were: education (elementary, secondary, post-secondary), income from main activity (less than 200 dollars, between 200 and 600, and more than 600 dollars) and age.

1 Married, cohabiting, divorced individuals as well as widows were considered in a partnership. Those classified as single were considered not to have a partner.

Results

Graph 1 shows how the percentage of young people living independently has been falling steadily since 1987 for both men and women ². As it has been observed repeatedly in other countries, women leave home earlier than men, a characteristic that has not changed over time as shown by the persistent gap (of approximately ten percentage points).

Figure 1
Uruguay, 1981-2005. Percentage of people living independently by sex (age: 18-32)



Sources: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys, 1981 to 2005

The severe economic crisis of 1982 seemed to have affected the possibilities of emancipation for young people, a year in which the marriage rate also reached one of its lower values in the second half of the 20th century (Filgueira 1996). The greatest margin of the decline in the proportion of young people living independently was experienced between the mid eighties and late nineties, showing a more stable pattern in the last years, even a slight recovery in the case of women.

² The discontinuity registered in 1998 is explained by a change in the sampling frame used in the NHSs, updated after the 1996 national census.

Table 1
Uruguay, 1981-1983 and 2003-2005.
People living with parents by age group and sex (%)

| Age Group | Men | | Women | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1981-1983 | 2003-2005 | 1981-1983 | 2003-2005 |
| 18-21 | 81.2 | 81.6 | 69.6 | 72.7 |
| 22-25 | 57.0 | 65.7 | 46.8 | 54.2 |
| 26-29 | 32.7 | 43.0 | 29.5 | 36.3 |
| 30-32 | 21.0 | 29.8 | 21.9 | 23.3 |
| 40-42 | 7.8 | 10.6 | 10.0 | 10.9 |

Sources: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys, 1981 to 1983 and 2003 to 2005

Table 1 shows the reverse of this trend. The proportion of young people living with parents has increased in all age groups, although the change in the case of men has been relatively more pronounced and extended over the age range. The difference in the proportion of women living at home by age 30 is clearly smaller than in the case of men. Although the number of 40-year-olds living with parents in 2005 is larger in both cases, the relatively smaller difference in this age group shows that the decline in the proportion of young people living independently is in fact a delay in the age at which men and women leave home.

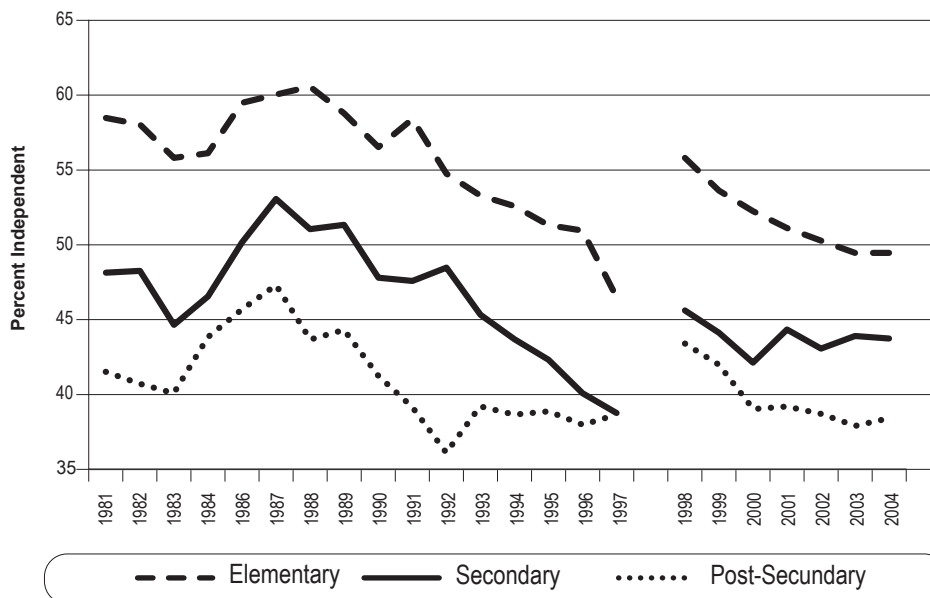
Table 2
Uruguay, 1981-1983 and 2003-2005.
Young People (21-32) by Education Level (%)

| Education | Men | | Women | |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1981-1983 | 2003-2005 | 1981-1983 | 2003-2005 |
| Elementary | 33.8 | 18.9 | 32.2 | 14.3 |
| Secondary | 56.6 | 61.5 | 59.0 | 60.4 |
| Post-secondary | 9.6 | 19.7 | 8.8 | 25.4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981 to 1983 and 2003 to 2005

Although there has been a significant improvement in young people's educational attainment (Table 2), only a minority reaches third level education, and a significant proportion of men and women still receive only elementary education.

Figure 2
Uruguay, 1981-2005. Percentage of People Living Independently
by Education (age: 18-32)



Sources: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys, 1981 to 2005

Figure 2 shows that the process of establishing an independent household is significantly informed by education level. If educational attainment was the only factor affecting home leaving, we could say that the relationship is negative and those that prolong their education leave home later. However, in terms of the rate of change over time, the more educated seemed to have experienced less dramatic transformations in their ability to establish new households, reaching a stable pattern after a small recovery at the beginning of the nineties.

As a result of the delay in the formation of independent households, the proportion of young people living with parents has been growing regardless of education level, for both men (Table 3) and women (Table 4). Although all three education groups have experienced this increase, in the case of men, those with university-level education have shown a recovery by the late nineties. In the case of women, the situation is similar, with a recovery among those with more education by the end of the period.

It could be argued that the postponement of the formation of new households among less educated sectors is explained by the deterioration of their economic situation. However, there seems to be more than economic hardship behind these trends.

Table 3
Uruguay, 1984-2005. Percentage of people in selected living arrangements by education, Men (21-32)

| Arrangement | 1984 1986 | 1987 1989 | 1990 1993 | 1994 1997 | 1998 2000 | 2001 2003 | 2004 2005 |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Parents | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 36.0 | 35.0 | 39.7 | 43.1 | 40.5 | 44.0 | 45.1 |
| Secondary | 46.3 | 43.8 | 48.7 | 53.4 | 51.1 | 50.7 | 50.7 |
| Post-Secondary | 48.8 | 51.2 | 57.1 | 59.0 | 56.8 | 58.6 | 57.4 |
| Shared | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 4.3 | 4.1 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 2.7 |
| Secondary | 2.8 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.7 |
| Post-Secondary | 6.0 | 6.5 | 5.5 | 6.9 | 7.5 | 9.0 | 11.1 |
| Unipersonal | | | | | | | |
| Primary | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 2.3 |
| Secondary | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.8 |
| Post-Secondary | 1.5 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.7 | 5.4 | 4.5 | 5.7 |
| Others | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 13.3 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 14.3 | 13.8 | 14.1 | 13.4 |
| Secondary | 9.3 | 9.0 | 9.1 | 11.1 | 10.4 | 11.1 | 10.6 |
| Post-Secondary | 6.6 | 5.1 | 5.9 | 5.0 | 5.6 | 6.6 | 5.0 |
| Nuclear | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 44.5 | 46.4 | 42.9 | 37.9 | 40.5 | 36.9 | 36.5 |
| Secondary | 40.3 | 43.4 | 38.6 | 31.3 | 33.1 | 32.7 | 32.2 |
| Post-Secondary | 37.1 | 34.4 | 28.4 | 25.5 | 24.7 | 21.4 | 20.9 |

Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1984-2005

While shared (living with roommates) living arrangements and one-person households have maintained their level, or even decreased among less educated youth, they have increased significantly among university students and graduates.

The increase in non-family living arrangements and co-residence with parents has resulted in a reduction in the proportion of young people living in nuclear-family type of households, especially among those with more education. Although this type of living arrangement is still the preferred among those living independently in the three education groups, the difference between the proportion living in nuclear-family households and non-family arrangements (one-person and economic households) among university students and graduates has reduced widely throughout the period.

Table 4
Uruguay, 1984-2005. Percentage of people in selected living arrangements by education, women (21-32)

| Arrangement | 1984 1986 | 1987 1989 | 1990 1993 | 1994 1997 | 1998 2000 | 2001 2003 | 2004 2005 |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Parents | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 25.7 | 25.1 | 26.1 | 29.7 | 26.3 | 28.7 | 29.1 |
| Secondary | 39.2 | 36.4 | 39.7 | 43.5 | 41.4 | 41.4 | 39.7 |
| Post-Secondary | 48.1 | 48.3 | 54.1 | 54.6 | 50 | 53.3 | 53.1 |
| Shared | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 2.9 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2 | 3.1 |
| Secondary | 2.4 | 2.1 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 3 | 2.9 |
| Post-Secondary | 4.1 | 5.4 | 5 | 6.5 | 8.7 | 8.9 | 8.2 |
| Unipersonal | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Secondary | 0.7 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.4 |
| Post-Secondary | 1.8 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 3.6 | 3.9 | 5.2 |
| Others | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 10.3 | 8.3 | 10.1 | 11.3 | 10.6 | 10.9 | 9.8 |
| Secondary | 8.9 | 7.6 | 8.3 | 9.8 | 9.2 | 9.6 | 9.3 |
| Post-Secondary | 6.8 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 5.1 | 6.1 | 5.6 | 4.3 |
| Nuclear | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | 60.7 | 64 | 61 | 56.5 | 60.7 | 57.9 | 57.3 |
| Secondary | 48.8 | 53.1 | 49.4 | 43.6 | 45.6 | 45 | 46.8 |
| Post-Secondary | 39.2 | 38.1 | 32.7 | 31.1 | 31.6 | 28.4 | 29.2 |

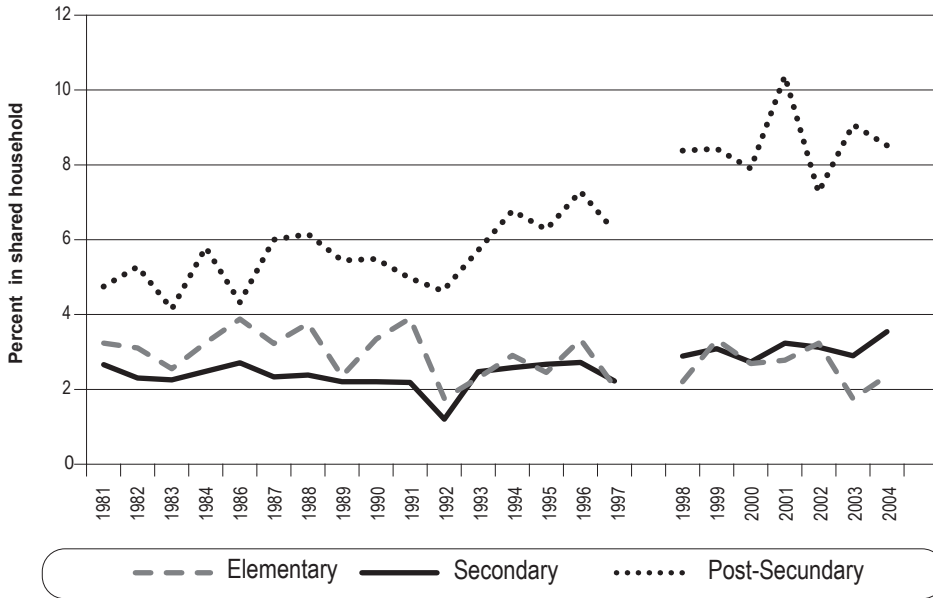
Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1984-2005

Figure 3 shows the evolution in the proportion of young people living in shared living arrangements. This kind of household seems to be an increasingly popular alternative only for those with higher levels of education. The increase has been marked since 1995, most likely as a response to the postponement of union formation and the need to pool resources with others in order to achieve independence.

One-person households have followed a similar trajectory (Figure 4). Even though there is a small increase among those with less education, the differences between education levels here are also notable.

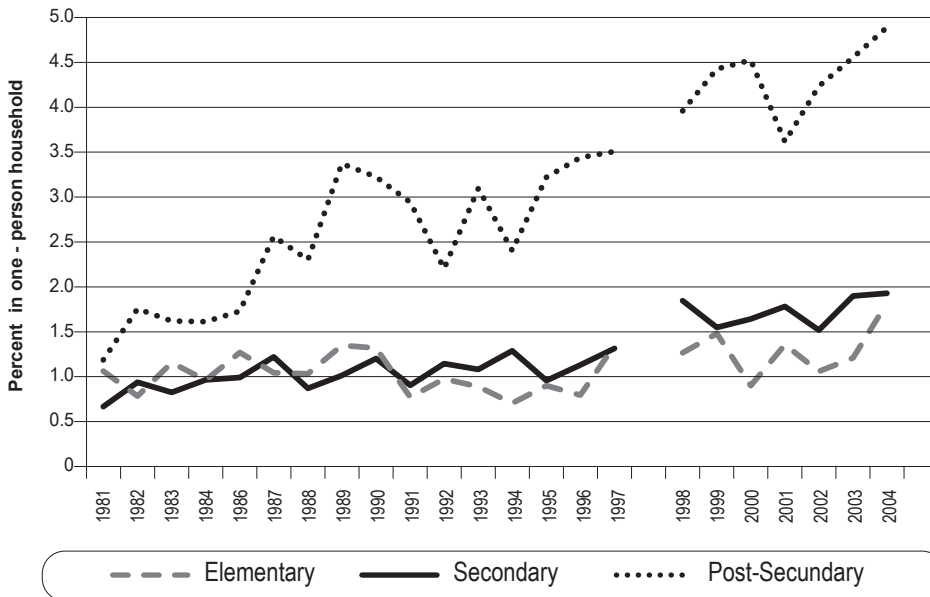
It seems that the formation of non-family living arrangements has made it possible for university students and graduates to avoid further delays in the transition out of the parental home. In fact, when we look at the change over time by age groups, it is clear that the rate of change has been higher for less educated groups (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 3
Uruguay, 1981-2005. Percentage of young people in shared households by education (age: 21-32)



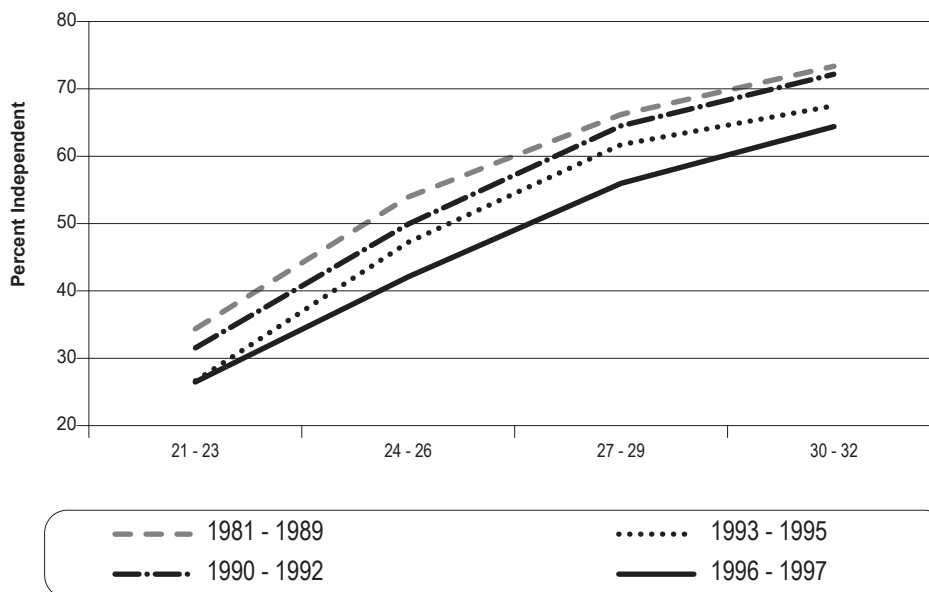
Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981-2005.

Figure 4
Uruguay, 1981-2005. Percentage of young people in one-person households by education (age: 21-32)



Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981-2005

Figure 5
Uruguay, 1981-1997. Percentage of people (age: 21-32)
Living Independently by age (Elementary Education)



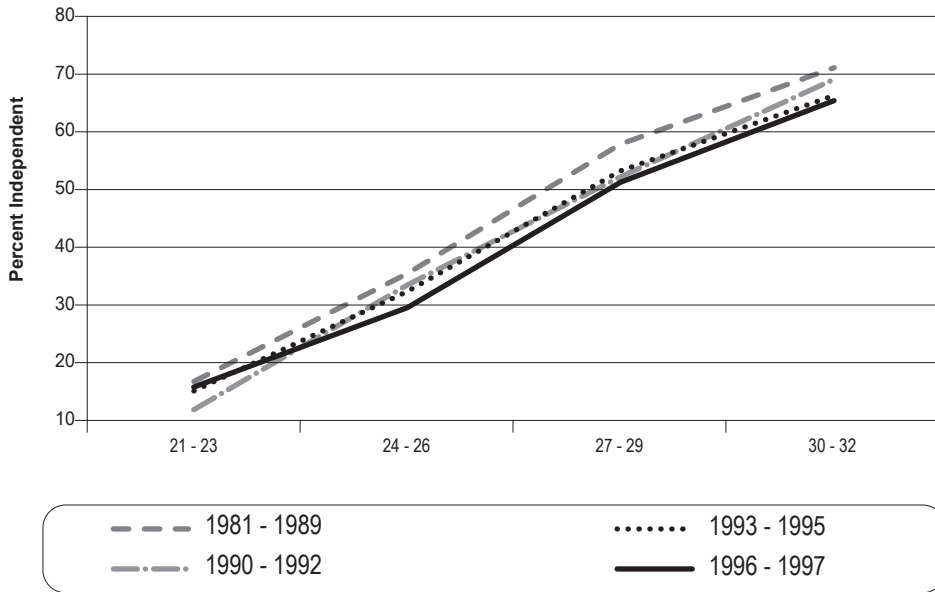
Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981-1997

As we mentioned before, the difference between these two groups could be attributed to the deterioration of economic conditions. Although we do not intend here to weigh the effects of different factors in the postponement of home leaving, it is possible to obtain some indication of the effect of economic factors by looking at the evolution of young people's (18-32) income throughout the period (Figure 7).

Until 1988, the curve describes a similar trajectory to the one we observe in Figure 1 (proportion of young people 18-32 living independently), with a strong decline associated with the 1982 crisis and a recovery to pre-crisis levels by 1988 (higher in the case of living independently and women's income). After 1988, however, the evolution of the two indicators is no longer associated, and we observe a steady decline in the number of independent young people (Figure 1) while their income remains stable, or slightly grows, in the case of women.

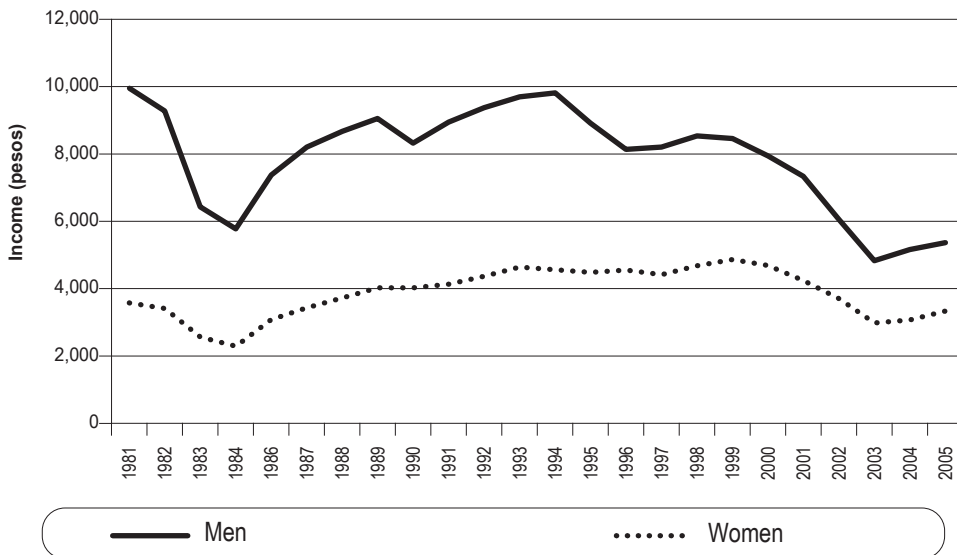
The 2002 economic crisis seems to have little or no impact on the decision of young people to form new households, although it does have a strong effect on income, especially in the case of men, which slowly recovers after this year, but still presents significantly lower levels than in the pre-crisis period.

Figure 6
Uruguay, 1981-1997. Percentage of people (age: 21-32)
Living Independently by age (Post-secondary Education)



Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981-1997

Figure 7
Uruguay Average Income in pesos, 1982-2005



Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981-1997

A similar trend has been found in the case of the evolution of marriage rates throughout the 20th Century. Historically, marriage rates presented cyclical fluctuations in response to crisis and periods of economic prosperity; however, the evolution of the indicator becomes insensitive to economic fluctuations at the beginning of the nineties, when marriage rates showed a steady decline in spite of a relatively favorable economic situation (Cabella, 2007). Although we do not disregard information prior to 1981, as in the case of legal unions, the independent evolution of the two trends might well be an indication that the decision of forming a new household is no longer intimately related with the economic situation of young people.

The results of the logistic regression allowed us to shed some light on the dynamics behind the observed decline looking at four different periods: 1981-1986, 1987-1991, 1992-1997, and 1998-2005.

As shown in Table 5, the effects of the predictors are fairly consistent over time in the case of men. As expected, age is a relevant predictor, with the odds of living independently increasing around 25% for each additional year.

The effect of education is also significant and negative in the first model — the odds of living independently are reduced by around 30% for those that have completed secondary education, in comparison to those with elementary school education only, and around 40% in the case of university students and graduates.

The direction of the effect of income, as well as its magnitude, is relatively stable throughout the period. Having an income of between 200 and 600 dollars makes the odds of living independently approximately 2.5 – 2.6 times higher than those with an income of less than 200 dollars. Likewise, the odds significantly increase (between 5 and 6 times) for those with an income higher than 600 dollars.

The effect of income is positive regardless of marital status, although its effect is smaller when this variable is taken into account. This might be explained by the overrepresentation of couples from poorer sectors in the first group and by the effect of parental support among those that are single. The economic support from their families of origin is key, for example, for many young men and women who have to move to the capital to complete their university studies. The observed emergence of shared living arrangements where resources are pooled and costs reduced might be another reason behind the reduced effect of income for single men.

In the case of women (Table 6), the effect of income changes over time. At the beginning of the period, the odds of living independently were reduced across economic levels, which are explained by the predominance of a male breadwinner model in which a large number of young women moved out to their parents' home but continued being financially dependent on their partners. By the end of the observed period, higher incomes positively affect the odds of living independently.

Table 5
Uruguay, 1981-2005. Odds Ratios, Living Independently
– Men (age: 21-32)

| Variable | 1981 -1986 | | 1987 -1991 | | 1992 -1997 | | 1998 -2005 | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|
| | Odds Ratio | | Odds Ratio | | Odds Ratio | | Odds Ratio | |
| All | | | | | | | | |
| Income | | | | | | | | |
| <200 (Ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| 200-600 CAD | 2.65 | ** | 2.6 | ** | 2.54 | ** | 2.49 | ** |
| >600 CAD | 4.61 | ** | 5.89 | ** | 4.99 | ** | 4.91 | ** |
| Age | 1.26 | ** | 1.29 | ** | 1.26 | ** | 1.24 | ** |
| Education | | | | | | | | |
| Elementary (Ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary Edu. | 0.72 | ** | 0.67 | ** | 0.71 | ** | 0.69 | ** |
| Post-Secondary Edu. | 0.62 | ** | 0.58 | ** | 0.58 | ** | 0.6 | ** |
| In a union (marriage or cohabitation) | | | | | | | | |
| Income | | | | | | | | |
| <200 (Ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| 200-600 CAD | 1.86 | ** | 1.83 | ** | 1.64 | ** | 1.81 | ** |
| >600 CAD | 2.77 | ** | 3.63 | ** | 3.46 | ** | 3.89 | ** |
| Age | 1.13 | ** | 1.17 | ** | 1.14 | ** | 1.13 | ** |
| Education | | | | | | | | |
| Elementary (Ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary Edu. | 0.86 | ** | 0.8 | ** | 0.79 | ** | 0.83 | ** |
| Post-Secondary Edu. | 1.41 | ** | 1.52 | ** | 1.45 | ** | 1.41 | ** |
| Single Men | | | | | | | | |
| Income | | | | | | | | |
| <200 (ref) | | | | | | | | |
| 200-600 CAD | 1.76 | ** | 1.47 | ** | 1.98 | ** | 1.83 | ** |
| >600 CAD | 2.08 | ** | 1.84 | ** | 3.32 | ** | 2.58 | ** |
| Age | 1.11 | ** | 1.13 | ** | 1.09 | ** | 1.11 | ** |
| Education | | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary Edu. | 0.61 | ** | 0.63 | ** | 0.65 | ** | 0.91 | ** |
| Post-Secondary Edu. | 0.97 | ** | 1.35 | ** | 1.36 | ** | 2.03 | ** |

** significant at 1%

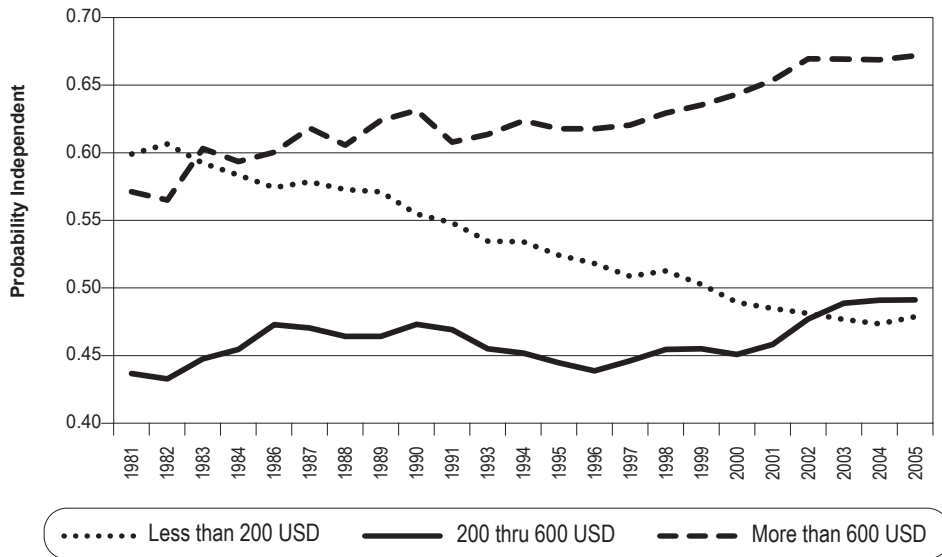
Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981-2005

Table 6
Uruguay, 1981-2005. Odds Ratios,
Living Independently – Women (age: 21-32)

| Variable | 1981 -1986 | | 1987 -1991 | | 1997 -1996 | | 1998 -2005 | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|
| | Odds Ratio | | Odds Ratio | | Odds Ratio | | Odds Ratio | |
| All | | | | | | | | |
| Income | | | | | | | | |
| <200 (Ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| 200-600 CAD | 0.6 | ** | 0.58 | ** | 0.67 | ** | 0.85 | ** |
| >600 CAD | 0.82 | ** | 1 | | 1.22 | ** | 1.53 | ** |
| Age | 1.22 | ** | 1.26 | ** | 1.25 | ** | 1.23 | ** |
| Education | | | | | | | | |
| Elementary (Ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary Edu. | 0.74 | ** | 0.72 | ** | 0.74 | ** | 0.68 | ** |
| Post-Secondary Edu. | 0.55 | ** | 0.5 | ** | 0.52 | ** | 0.5 | ** |
| In a union (marriage or cohabitation) | | | | | | | | |
| Income | | | | | | | | |
| <200 (Ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| 200-600 CAD | 0.76 | ** | | ** | 0.74 | ** | 0.92 | * |
| >600 CAD | 0.93 | | | | 1.2 | * | 1.77 | ** |
| Age | 1.12 | ** | | ** | 1.14 | ** | 1.13 | ** |
| Education | | | | | | | | |
| Elementary (Ref.) | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary Edu. | 0.79 | ** | | ** | 0.82 | ** | 0.8 | ** |
| Post-Secondary Edu. | 1.22 | * | | ** | 1.47 | ** | 1.35 | ** |
| Single Women | | | | | | | | |
| Income | | | | | | | | |
| <200 (ref) | | | | | | | | |
| 200-600 CAD | 1.34 | ** | | | 1.43 | ** | 1.66 | ** |
| >600 CAD | 1.74 | * | | ** | 2.17 | ** | 2.4 | ** |
| Age | 1.11 | ** | | ** | 1.1 | ** | 1.1 | ** |
| Education | | | | | | | | |
| Elementary | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary Edu. | 0.74 | ** | | ** | 0.76 | * | 0.64 | ** |
| Post-Secondary Edu. | 1.29 | ** | | ** | 1.64 | ** | 1.32 | ** |

Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981-2005
 ** significant at 1% * significant at 5%

Figure 8
Uruguay 1981-2005. Probability of Living Independently
by Income (Women 18-32)



Source: Own calculations based on National Household Surveys data, 1981-2005

Figure 8 shows how the probability of living independently falls steeply for women with little or no income, reflecting the significant transformations in gender roles and family models experienced in the twenty-five-year period considered.

In fact, the change in the experience of women has been remarkable; only by the end of the period does it become similar to that of men, with both levels of income positively affecting the chances of living independently.

An interesting result of the addition of marital status for both men and women is the change on the effect of post-secondary education: the odds ratio of living independently for those with post-secondary education are higher than those with elementary education in both groups. This specification of the relationship between education and the probability of living independently significantly changes the picture obtained in the first section. In fact, those that prolong their schooling period are not less, but more, likely to live independently than those with less education, regardless of being or not being in a partnership.

While it has been established that educational attainment has a positive effect on the age of home leaving (Corijn and Klijzing 2001; Buck and Scott, 1993), what was less expected is the higher probability of more educated individuals in partnerships.

Single young people with post-secondary education have more chances of live independently, because they seemed to be the only group that have

significantly incorporated non-family living arrangements as an alternative. However, it is probable that this is not exclusively the expression of cultural differences, as this group is more likely to receive extended parental support than their less educated counterparts.

In the case of those who are married or those in common law unions, there seems to be a more direct influence of economic inequalities given the large number of couples from middle and lower strata that have no resources to establish an independent household having to remain with one of their families of origin. The coexistence of parents and married or cohabiting couples from more privileged sectors is exceptional, which explains the higher chance of living independently among married young people with more education. This suggests that the support from the family of origin might be playing a significant role in the transition to independence in this case as well.

Conclusions

The formation of independent households by young people has been delayed over the last two decades in Uruguay. Today, a larger proportion of young people are living with their parents than 20 years ago. However, even though both men and women of different social backgrounds have been affected by these changes, our findings showed some significant differences between sub groups in terms of the magnitude of the changes and the effect and direction of the factors associated with them.

Women have experienced significant changes over the twenty-five-year period observed, from a situation in which many of them leave their parental home but continued to be economically dependent on their partners, to a situation in which personal earnings are a decisive factor in the probabilities of forming an independent household.

Young people with lower levels of education have experienced the most noticeable declines in the formation of new households, suggesting that the delay is not exclusively a product of a decision to invest in human capital. In fact, we found that those who prolong their schooling are not less, but more, likely to leave home among both married and single young people, which is in part explained by the large number of couples from poorer sectors that cannot afford the formation of an independent household, remaining at the parental home after marriage.

However, we also know that the association between young people's economic situation and the delay in home leaving is not straightforward. Similar to what has happened in the case of marriage rates, the steepest decline of the proportion of young people living independently has been experienced in a period of relatively favorable economic conditions. Nevertheless, this does not mean that economic factors are not playing any role in the decisions of young people at the individual level. One of the mechanisms that might be at play here is the limited opportunities to share the cost of the household at an

earlier stage of the life course, as a consequence of the postponement on the formation of unions. In fact, the adoption of shared living arrangements is part of what has prevented more educated young people from experiencing further delays in the age at home leaving.

The profound changes in marriage and divorce patterns and the postponement of union formation registered in the last decades (Cabella, 2007) seem to have left room for greater tolerance of “non-family” living arrangements among individuals of the same generation. Thus, the relatively smaller reduction in the number of people living independently among those with postsecondary education could be explained by the growing popularity of less traditional alternatives (living with roommates, one-person households), which allow many young people to achieve independence by shifting the focus of this transition from union formation and childbearing, and by pooling resources to cope with the increasingly difficult financial aspects of living independently. Those who still maintain a more traditional path “from the family of origin to the family of reproduction” have experienced a prolongation of the dependence period as a consequence of the delay in the formation of unions.

Given the novelty of some of these trends, it might be the case that most educated individuals are leading the change in living arrangements, and the emerging patterns will become predominant through imitation and diffusion, although no signs of such trends have been observed so far.

While the adoption of non-family living arrangements indicates the emergence of different cultural preferences, the role of parental support in the process remains to be elucidated. What would be interesting to know, for example, is how the postponement of the formation of new households is affecting the flow of intergenerational transfers. In fact, for some families, the prolonged stay of some of its members might represent a viable economic alternative, more than a burden, if different generations pool their resources in the maintenance of a common household.

Lastly, there are reasons not to be too optimistic about the observed trends. The increasing difficulties in the formation of a new household, coupled with the limited capacity of families to absorb the costs of a protracted transition to adulthood, are most likely some of the causes behind the increased emigration rates of young people in the last 10 years. For a growing number of Uruguayans, the decision to complete the transition elsewhere has become an alternative strategy in the context of denied independence.

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