Emancipation and Household Formation in Uruguay. Recent Changes

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Abstract

Our research focuses on recent timing changes in the transitions out of the parental home in Uruguay, in the context of larger transformations of the Transitions to Adulthood. The results presented build on a previous work of harmonization of the two National Youth Surveys carried out in Uruguay in 1990 and 2008 and the two main questions we try to answer are: *a)* are young Uruguayans delaying their transitions out of the parental home? and *b)* has there been polarization or convergence among sub-populations (defined in terms of sex, region, social stratification)?

Besides the questions regarding the calendar, another dimension probed to be relevant to understand the changes observed: the *type* of household young people establish after leaving the parental home.

Timing changes were analized using Survival Analysis techniques. Although we did not find a general trend towards older ages at home leaving, some sub-groups showed significant changes in the timing of emancipation: Youth from higher socioeconomic levels seem to be delaying their transitions while those at the other end of the SES scale show a modest movement towards younger ages. Men and women's behavior converged over the period, although maybe less than we would have expected.

In any case, the most relevant differences observed between the two surveys do not correspond to timing changes but to changes in the type of households: the proportion of nuclear households has markedly decreased, giving way to an increase in non-family households. Moreover, nuclear households are now associated with later ages at home-leaving, which might help understand some of the dynamics behind timing changes.

Finally, our evidence suggest a progressive disconnection between home-leaving and the rest of events in the transitions to adulthood.

I. Introduction

The transition out of the parental home is one of the key events in the transition to adulthood (TA) in Uruguay. Not only because it brings a new set of responsibilities, but also because it is a step that can only be achieved after obtaining financial independence and it is frequently associated with the formation of a new family.

In some countries, however, home leaving is not at the centre of the TA. First, because setting up a new household does not necessarily imply the formation of a new family, given that the period of non-familial cohabitation (single and shared households) is more extended and socially accepted. Moreover, where public support is strong, having a job or a stable source of income is less relevant in the decision of leaving one's parents home(Aassve et al., 2002). Thus, two different home leaving models could be identified: one in which the formation of a new household coincides with the beginning of family life and it is more closely determined by personal resources, and a second one in which State support facilitates the transition and there is a wider range of destinations.

In the context of a generalized delay of most events on the TA, the change in home leaving will be dependent upon the type of model that prevails in each country. In the first case, a delayed entry into the labor market and older ages at marriage will result in a longer period of cohabitation with parents. In the second, the relative independence of home leaving from other events will prevent any major changes. In fact, recent trends in Europe show how in comparison with notable increases in average ages at union formation, marriage and childbearing, home leaving is the event on the TA that has experienced less change in the last decades(Billari and Liefbroer, 2010).

Only Southern European countries have shown an increase in home leaving ages, which is not surprising considering that the model of joint union and household formation is still predominant. Billari and Liefbroer (2010) had even suggested that the absence of change, or even a change towards earlier home leaving in some European countries could be expected as a result of the same process of individuation and seek for autonomy behind the Second Demographic Transition.

According to(Danziger and Rouse, 2007) the most notable change in the US is not an increase in the length of cohabitation of parents and children (due to delayed home leaving), but the increase in the number of young people living alone or with people other than a partner.

Although we know less about the Uruguayan model, what we can certainly expect is high degree of heterogeneity within the population. Previous studies have shown how the characteristics of the TA differ markedly by SES and educational level, specially the transition to the first child (Ciganda, 2008; Varela et al., 2008). We also know that differences exist as well in young people's self-perception and that these differences emerge from the unequal structure of opportunities and restrictions that young Uruguayans face in their TA: "(..) labour market conditions, family support and the basic public policies like housing programs are failing to provide opportunities for young people in their emancipation process"(Filardo and Chouy, 2009). In this context we can expect those from more advantaged families to enjoy their familial resources for a longer period of time, while those in more vulnerable situation would assume adult responsibilities earlier.

Regardless of these differences, leaving home is one of the events that Uruguayans associate more closely to adulthood (Furstenberg et al., 2011). In part because it is associated with financial independence, in part because it is still assumed to go together with the formation of a new family. However, home leaving experiences are quickly changing and becoming more heterogeneous, how exactly is what we would try to show in the following pages.

II. Questions and Hypothesis

As mentioned before, the first dimension we will explore is the one related to the timing of home leaving. In this regard, we have some competitive hypothesis:

a) On one hand we could expect a similar postponement as in Spain or Italy, at least among those with more education, given the extension of the period in the education system. Besides, Uruguay shares some relevant characteristics with Souther European countries, like the absence of public support or the limited extent of non-family arrangementd. However, the increasing flow of students from smaller cities to the capital could revert or buffer this trend to postponement given that most of these students leave the parental home earlier than they would normally do. In the last 20 years the number of university students went from 700.000 to 12.500 (Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Education, 1991, 2009).

b) On the other hand, the progressive decoupling between union formation and household formation among those with more education and the absence of relevant changes in living standards in the period analyzed, could prevent any significant timing changes(Ciganda and Gagnon, 2009).

Therefore, the hypotheses regarding our first dimension can be summarized like this:

H1: The transition out of the parental home has experienced a modest postponement, across all educational levels.

H2: There has not been any significant timing changes among those with medium an low educational levels, but those with higher education have postponed the establishment of a new household.

The second dimension has to do with the trend towards convergence or polarization of the behaviors studied between sub populations. As mentioned before, Uruguay shares with most Latin American countries the presence of heterogeneous demographic behaviors, but what exactly do we expect to find in this case?

Regarding social stratification (SES) we do not have solid hypotheses. Assuming postponement among those with more education, the convergence will depend on the extent to which other strata adopt this behavior. However, considering that inequalities have not tend to diminish in the period analyzed, we could also find stability or even signs of polarization.

With respect to gender differences, we know that the life course of both males and females have tended to converge in many ways, like in terms of labor market participation or years of education, therefore our hypothesis is the following:

H3: the average age at home leaving of men and women converges over the period studied.

Finally, regarding the third dimension we have to test our hypothesis about the increase in non-family households. According to the evidence on family change in the country, we certainly expect an increase of non-family household in detriment of more traditional alternatives.

H4: Non-family household have experienced and increase in the period studied in detriment of nuclear family type of households.

II. Data and Methods

This article makes part of a larger research project on the transitions to adulthood, for which an extensive work of harmonization of the two National Youth Surveys in Uruguay was undertaken. The first of them, carried out in 1990, included youth from 15 to 29 years old. The second included youth from 12 to 29, and both were conducted by the National Statistical Office. Part of the process of harmonization consisted in merging these surveys with the information available in the National Household Surveys for these two years, accessing additional information on household characteristics and living standards. After the process we ended up with a sample of 3747 cases for 1990 and 2391 for 2008.

Given the significant changes underwent between the two surveys, we decided to define some of our variables in relative instead of absolute terms. For instance, educational level was not defined in terms of an amount of years but taking the quartiles of the distribution. The lower level including the bottom 25% and the higher level the top 25%. Socioeconomic status was defined in the same way and the indicator for the poverty line was taken as 50% of the median income in the population[1].

Regarding the methods, we applied Event History Analysis in order to answer the questions on timing. We measured the duration in months and analyzed the influence of covariates using a Cox proportional Hazards Model, a non parametric approach that seems to be the most appropriate in this case given our focus on the differences between subpopulations instead of in the shape of the hazard analyzed[2]. The model we specified to account for the timing of home leaving take into account the influence of other sociodemographic variables and of other events in the TA. More specifically, we include the completion of education, the entry to the labor market, and the transition to parenthood as time-varying variables. Besides alternative specifications to this model, we also run discreet time models, obtaining similar results. After considering various alternatives we chose the Cox (continuous time) model. Proportionality checks (omitted) included relevant tests and visual exploration from scaled Schonfeld residuals. Although some variables depart mildly from the assumption, after applying discreet time models we evaluated that the bias introduced does not significantly distort the estimations.

For the analysis of the type of households we use a Logistic Regression to predict the probabilities of forming one specific type given a a series of personal characteristics.

IV. Results

IV.i Home Leaving Timing

First, we analyze timing changes between the two cohorts included in the study. As we mentioned in section II, in this case we have formulated some competitive hypothesis. Data reveals (Figure 1) that among all the alternatives considered, the hypothesis of stability is the most adequate. Although there seems to be a slight movement towards earlier home leaving, these differences are not statistically significant.

[1] In the context of our research, the definition of indicators in absolute terms will result in categories that are not strictly comparable. Having 8 years of education, for example, is not the same attribute in 1990 than in 2008, the relative position with respect to the number of years obtained by peers differs notably.

[2] Since we did not count with information on the month of events, we decided to impute this information randomly assuming events are distributed linearly over the year. We compare results with different imputation criteria, like assigning the mid of the interval to all cases, finding no significant differences.

Figure 1: Kaplan-Meier estimator. Home Leaving, 1990 vs. 2008 cohorts, 20-29 year olds, Uruguay.

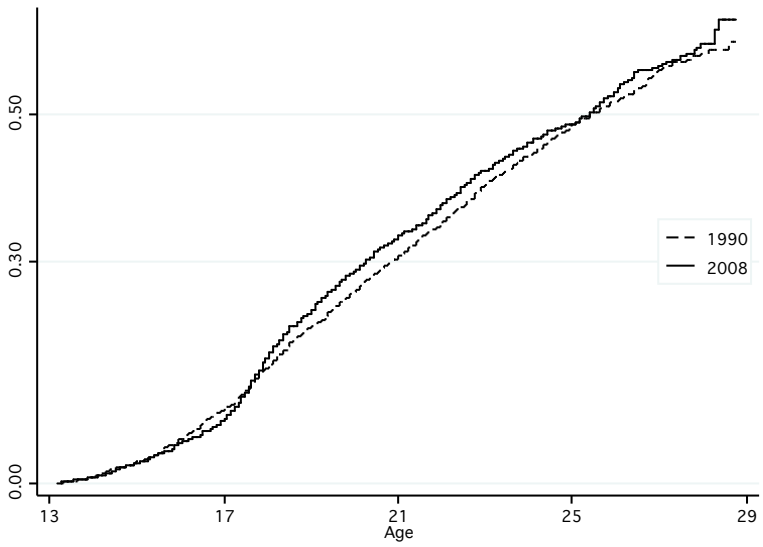


Table 1 shows that 50% of young people leave home between ages 25 and 26, without differences between the cohorts. It is also interesting to notice that more than a 25% of youth were still living with parents at age 29.

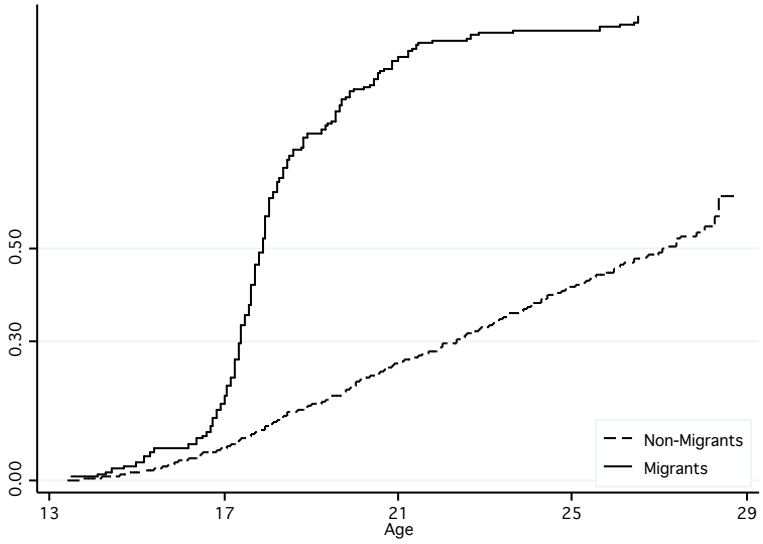
Table 1: Age at Home Leaving by Cohort, Ages 20-29 | Uruguay.

	Proportion Leaving Home		
Year	25%	50%	75%
1990	20.1	25.9	–
2008	19.5	25.6	–

Hypothesis H1, predicting a generalized postponement of the transitions out of the parental home, is not confirmed for the Uruguayan case. It is worth noting, however, that this first results represent an average of markedly different situation, whose changes are hidden behind this apparent stability.

One of the most striking differences in the timing of home leaving arises when we look at those that migrate to the capital, mostly to continue with their education, and those that had not changed their place or residence until the time of the survey (Figure 2). Migrants experience a much earlier transition, as most of them move to the capital after finishing high school (around age 18). Given the weight of this subpopulation of migrants on the average estimates, and given the fact that the bias is more pronounced for the 2008 cohort, we decided to exclude this group from the remaining analysis.

Figure 2: Kaplan-Meier estimator. Home Leaving Migrants vs. Non-Migrants, 20-29 year olds, Uruguay.



The trajectories of men and women also present relevant differences. In the case of males the average age has decreased in the most recent cohort, while for females we observe almost no change (Figure 3). This last result is somewhat puzzling giving the significant changes observed in the type of households women form and in other dimensions of the TA. However, as we will see later, the apparent stability can be, again, hiding movements in opposite directions.

Figure 3: Kaplan-Meier estimator. Home Leaving by Sex and Cohort, 20-29 year olds, Uruguay

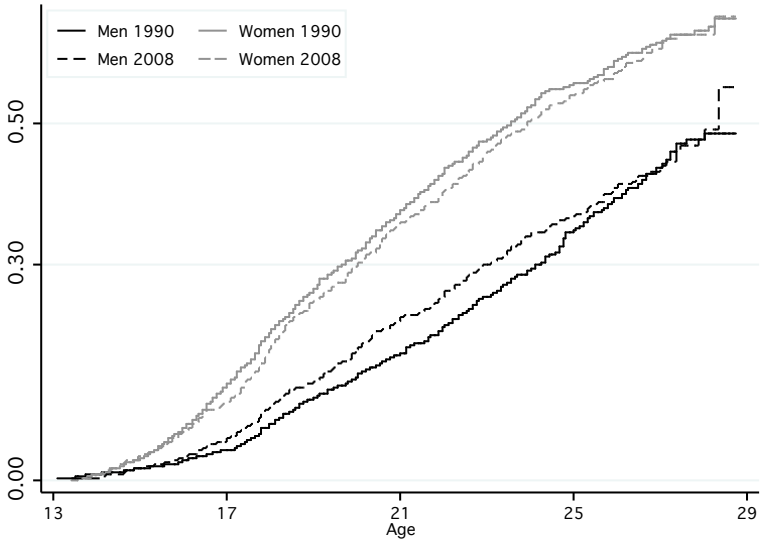


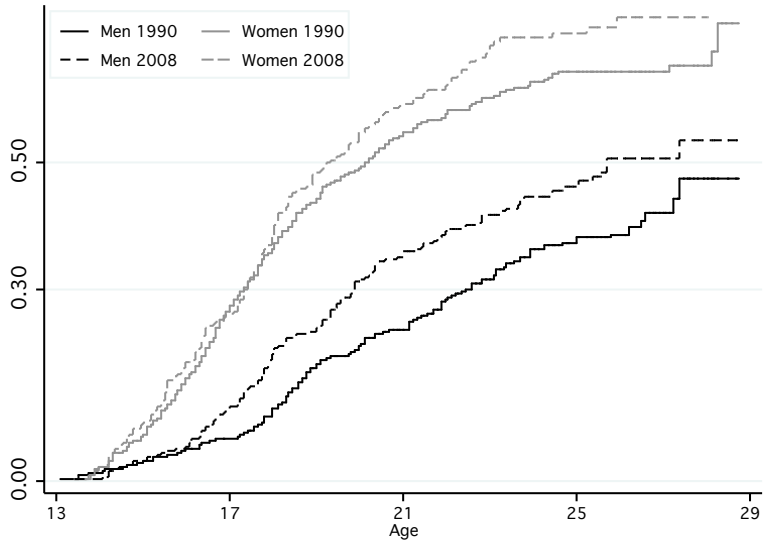
Table 2 expresses the results by sex and cohort in terms of ages. In the case of men, the movement forward appreciated before is reflected in the age at which 25% had left home in the two survey, although the difference is less than a year. Women's transitions occur earlier and in the same proportion in both cohorts.

Table 2: Age at Home Leaving by Sex and Cohort, Ages 20-29 | Uruguay.

	Percentage Leaving Home		
Year	25%	50%	75%
1990 Men	22.4	28.1	-
2008 Men	21.2	28.6	-
1990 Women	18.6	23.3	-
2008 Women	18.7	23.4	-

Analyzes by educational level also provide some interesting results. Both men and women with low education have experienced a decrease in their average ages at home leaving (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Kaplan-Meier estimator. Home Leaving by Sex and Cohort, 20-29 year olds. Low Education | Uruguay.



Here we find more notable changes. In the case of men the age at which 25% leave home decreased more than two years. In this case of women is less outstanding and it is only observed by the time 50% leave home.

Table 3: Age at Home Leaving by Sex and Cohort. Ages 20-29, Low Education | Uruguay.

	Percentage Leaving Home		
Year	25%	50%	75%
1990 Men	20.8	28.1	-
2008 Men	18.7	25.7	-
1990 Women	16.8	19.7	-
2008 Women	16.8	19.3	-

On the other end, those with high education show a modest trend towards postponement. In both cases postponement occur at older ages and is more notable in the case of women (Figure 5). This coincides with what the literature shows in industrialized countries, where postponement is the most relevant phenomena.

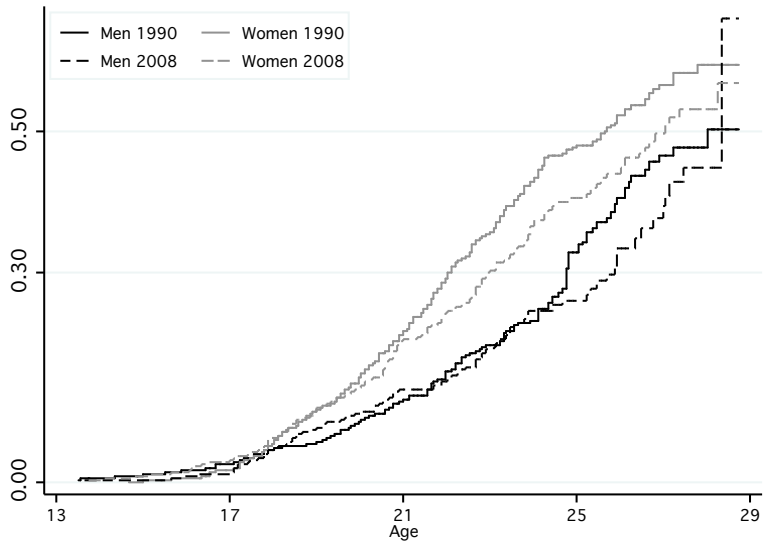
Timing differences found using the eduction level are in line with those found using other indicators of social stratification like mother's education, income quartiles or poverty (analyzes not

Table 4: With whom did you move when you first left home? Men Ages 20-29, | Uruguay

	Men			Women	
	1990	2008		1990	2008
Nuclear	58.1	48.2		81.0	65.9
Single	19.3	23.7		2.8	10.2
Shared	3.9	9.7		1.6	7.4
Other family	14.0	14.5		9.4	13.5
Other non family	1.4	1.6		4.1	1.4
College, institution	3.2	2.3		1.1	1.7
Total	100	100		100	100

shown). In all cases we witness a decrease in the age at home leaving for young people in more vulnerable situations and a trend towards postponement, although modest, for those with more education/resources.

Figure 5: Kaplan-Meier estimator. Home Leaving by Sex and Cohort, 20-29 year olds. High Education | Uruguay



Another characteristic associated with timing changes is the size of place of residence, with the capital city showing also a trend towards postponement (omitted). Thus, the changes observed in the timing of home leaving present different directions depending on social strata, sex and place of residence: young people form lower strata, and specially men in this group, have tended to push forward their transitions out of the parental home, while those in upper strata, urban and with more education have experienced some postponement, specially in the case of women.

IV.ii Destinations

In this section we show how in parallel to timing changes, the type of households young people form after leaving home have also changed. Table 4 gives a preliminary idea of the extent of these changes. The most relevant being the substantial decrease of nuclear households and the subsequent increase of single and shared arrangements. Thus, the evidence provides support for our hypothesis H4.

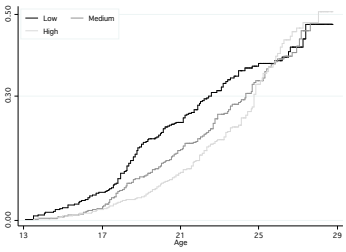
Although nuclear family type of households are still the most common destination, it is easy to appreciate the increase in non-family type of households. Although these are more common among men, the rate of change seems to be more rapid in the case of women, a decrease of 15 percentage points in those moving in with partner. If for the 1990 cohort one out of 35 women decided to live on her own, for the 2008 cohort the figure is one out of ten. Although the trend is more marked in the case of more educated young people, in all cases there is an increase of single and shared households.

The trends towards earlier ages at home leaving among those with lower education could be partly explained by the diversification of the destinations available. In fact, analyses performed (nor presented here) showed how shared and one-person households for all strata and in both cohorts have an earlier schedule, which is expected given the lower costs, emotional and financial, associated with this alternative.

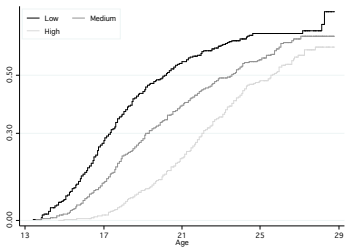
iii. Polarization or Convergence?

Now we turn our focus to the third dimension of our analysis: Has there been convergence in the timing of home leaving or have the gaps widened over time?

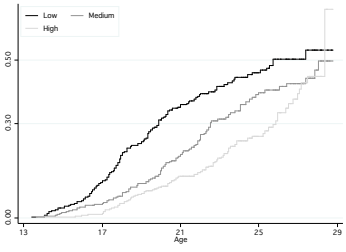
The trend is relatively clear when we use social stratification indicators. Although in 1990 there were already substantial gaps, in 2008 these difference are even larger. When we look at it by sex, using education as an indicator of social stratification, we find that in 1990 differences are more modest in the case of men (figure 6a) and a bit more notable in the case of women (Figure 6). Towards 2008 the gap widens for both sexes (Figures 6c and 6d), specially for men. We observe a trend towards polarization of less educated young people with respect to all other groups. These trend can be observed using other indicators like income or mother's education (not shown).



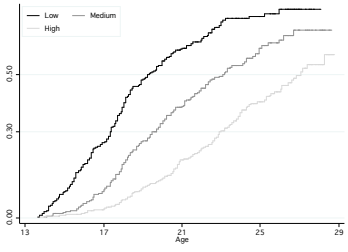
(a) Home Leaving by Education. Men 1990 | Uruguay



(b) Home Leaving by Education. Women 1990 | Uruguay



(c) Home Leaving by Education. Men 2008 | Uruguay



(d) Home Leaving by Education. Women 2008 | Uruguay

Contrary to what happens with social stratification indicators the age at home leaving tends to converge for men and women (not shown), although the earlier pattern for women remains given heterogamy in Uruguayan couples with respect to age. This result is expected, given the general trend to convergence of men's and women's life course, however in this case the movement is relatively weak. If we consider that the period of observation includes the decades of most

significant change in family and gender dynamics in Uruguay, with a radical transformation on the dynamics of formation and dissolution of unions (Cabella, 2007) and rapid increase in female labor force participation, it is somewhat surprising that men and women's calendars have not become more similar.

V. Multivariate Analysis

To finish our analysis we present the results of a series of models that allow us to identify the specific effects of those variables analyzed in the preceding descriptive section (sex, SES, education), after controlling for other relevant personal characteristics. In the first place, by looking at the effect of this variables on the probability of leaving home, and later by looking at their effect on the probabilities of choosing one of the destinations analyzed above.

V.i Factors Associated with Home Leaving

Here we present the results form the Cox Proportional Hazard's model described in III. The different specifications of the model will allow us to evaluate the robustness of results and the way variables interact with each other.

Model 1	**Model 2**
Sociodemographic variables (Sex, SES, Edu)	Sociodemographic variables
	TA events (childbearing, comp. edu., first job)
	Type of household: nuclear vs. other

Result from the models are presented in graphical form (Figure 6). When confidence intervals do not include 0 in its range, the result is statistically significant. When the coefficient is located in the right quadrant (bigger than zero) it indicates a higher risk of leaving home; when it is on the left, a lower risk.

Figure 6: Cox Proportional Hazards. Model 1: Home Leaving. Ages 20-29 | Uruguay

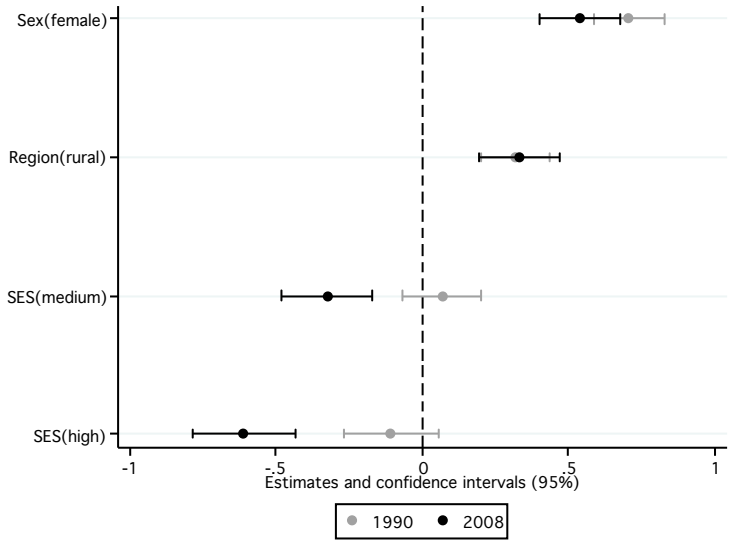
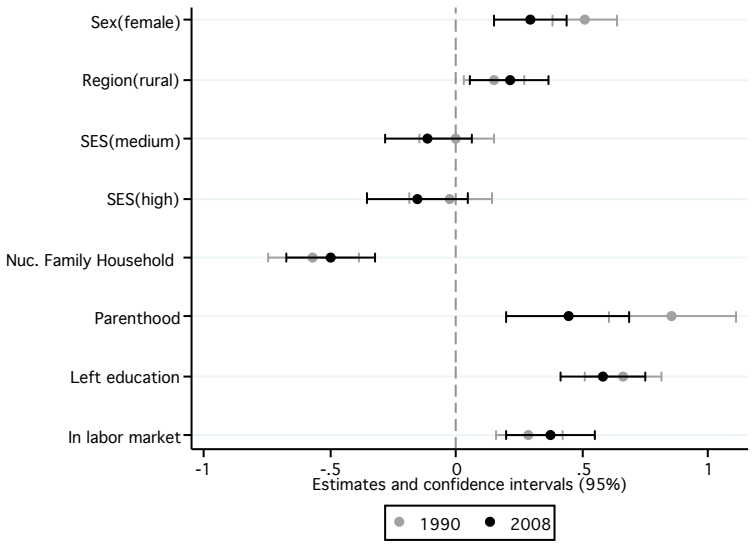


Figure 7: Cox Proportional Hazards. Model 2: Home Leaving. Ages 20-29 | Uruguay



The higher probabilities of leaving home for women confirm what we observed before. We now find that the result holds even after controlling for the effect of place of residence and social stratification (Model 1). Even including other events in TA and the type of household formed (Figure 7), although in this case the coefficient gets closer to zero, given that these variable are correlated to sex. Also, the decrease in the coefficient associated to sex between 1990 and 2008, confirms what we stated before about the trends towards convergence between men and women. From our series of hypotheses thus, H3 (referring to convergence between sexes) still holds after including control variables.

The influence of place of residence is more limited, but we can identify an earlier transition for those outside the capital city. Regarding social stratification, it is interesting to note that in model 1 high SES seems to be associated with a delayed departure in 2008 while in 1990 there are no significant differences. This confirms the trend towards higher social polarization observed in IV. In Model 2 this effect disappears, probably picked up by those coming form other TA events and the type of household, in both cases correlated to SES.

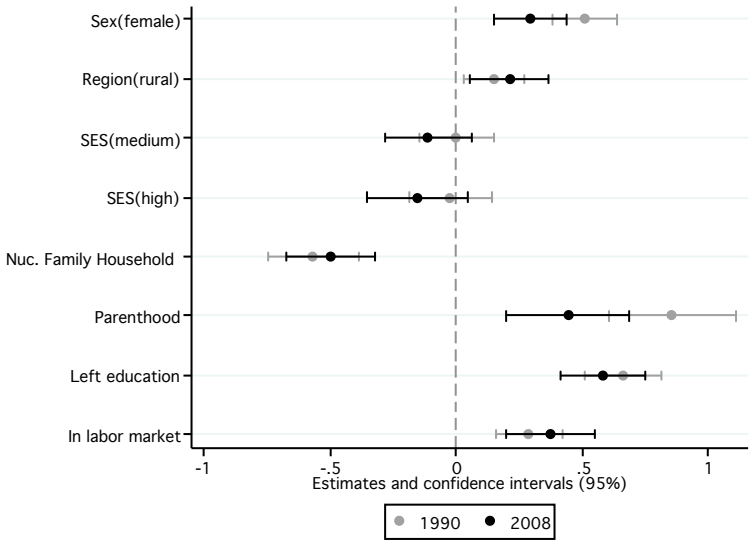
Regarding the link with other transitions, we observe the expected strong interconnection. All the beginning of reproductive life, the completion of education and the entry into the labor market are associated with a higher risk of leaving the parental home. It is interesting that in all three cases the effect is less strong for the younger cohort. Although it is necessary to complement these analyzes with further evidence, we can take this as a first sign of a progressive decoupling of TA events (at least for those included in our second model).

Finally, the type of household formed after leaving home is also clearly associated with its timing, as it was also observed in the descriptive analysis. Those that establish a nuclear family type of household tend to delay their transition with respect to those that form other types of households, which provides a key to understand forward timing movements. We will explore in more depth in the next section where we analyze the profile of those that opt for nuclear and non-family households.

V.i Factors Associated with the Formation of a Nuclear Household

We have seen already how non-family arrangements have increased between the two points analyzed. Now we create a profile of those that make this type of transition using a Logistic Regression. Coefficients are expressed as odds ratios: a value higher than one indicates a higher probability of forming a nuclear household.

Figure 8: Logistic Regression model. Household Formation. Ages 20-29 | Uruguay



In both cohorts women are more likely to form a nuclear household (Figure 8), although there are some signs of convergence with the trajectories of men. The model shows that for women interviewed in 1990 this probability was four times higher than for men, while there is a reduction to a half of that magnitude for those interviewed in 2008.

While in terms of regions there are no significant differences, in terms of timing the model confirms what was observed in the Cox models: those who leave home to form a couple, leave at older ages. Finally, the most interesting conclusions have to do with the stratification variables. We observe that those from higher strata start to show different behaviors than those from lower strata in the most recent cohort: they present a higher risk of forming a non-family household, while in 1990 there was no association between type of household and SES. The same trend shows if we focus on education level.

V. Conclusions

In comparison with the amount of evidence and knowledge gathered on the home leaving process in Europe or North America, the Uruguayan case has been barely studied. Our challenge consisted in presenting the timing and characteristics of this transition and their evolution over time, overcoming the limitations imposed by our data and paying special attention at how social characteristic shape divergent paths in the transitions to adulthood.

Our first hypotheses about a generalized postponement of home leaving was not confirmed. However, we did find significant timing changes for specific subpopulations. More precisely, youth

from higher SES and those that accumulate more years of education have indeed postponed their transitions out of the parental home, while males with low educational levels are experiencing it earlier than their counterparts in 1990. Therefore, our second hypothesis is partially confirmed although we add the unexpected timing change for those with less education.

On the other hand, the third and fourth hypotheses did hold. Timing differences between males and females were reduced (although mildly) and there is a clear trend towards a higher proportion of single and shared households after leaving the parental home. These change was experienced by youth in all classes and educational levels, but it seems to be driven by those with higher education.

These changes in the destinations also prove to be key to understand timing changes: Forming a household with a romantic partner implies doing it later than in the case of moving in alone or with friends. Therefore, and in spite that non-family household are still a minority, their expansion could explain the absence of postponement, allowing a less costly alternative for those that want to start living independently.

Besides, the movement towards earlier home leaving could also be explained by looking at the rapid increase in cohabitation, which has become the most common arrangement for Uruguayan couples, even above marriage(Cabella, 2007). We know that this type of unions, although similar to marriages in many respects, is associated with less planned decisions about living arrangements, which means they present an earlier calendar than that of marriages.

Another element that emerged from our analyzes is the progressive disconnection between the timing of home leaving and that of other relevant life course transitions. However, as we observed throughout the paper, some of these changes are embraced only by a fraction of the youth population. Further research will have to show whether they generalize. So far the evidence suggests that the timing of home leaving does not follow the same trend than other TA events.

In any case, and related to the previous point, our main conclusion coincides with what has been observed in other regions. The most relevant change observed in relation to the home leaving process in Uruguay is not related to its timing, it is the change in the type of living arrangements young people form at the beginning of their life as adults.

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