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* TRANSITIONS IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD *
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by

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NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY

The National Child Development Study (NCDS) is a continuing longitudinal study which is seeking to follow the lives of all those living in Great Britain who were born between 3 and 9 March, 1958.

It has its origins in the Perinatal Mortality Survey (PMS). This was sponsored by the National Birthday Trust Fund and designed to examine the social and obstetric factors associated with the early death or abnormality among the 17,000 children born in England, Scotland and Wales in that one week.

To date there have been four attempts to trace all members of the birth cohort in order to monitor their physical, educational and social development. These were carried out by the National Children's Bureau in 1965 (when they were aged 7), in 1969 (when they were aged 11), in 1974 (when they were aged 16) and in 1981 (when they were aged 23). In addition, in 1978, details of public examination entry and performance were obtained from the schools, sixth-form colleges and FE colleges.

For the birth survey information was obtained from the mother and from medical records by the midwife. For the purposes of the first three NCDS surveys, information was obtained from parents (who were interviewed by health visitors), head teachers and class teachers (who completed questionnaires), the schools health service (who carried out medical examinations) and the subjects themselves (who completed tests of ability and, latterly, questionnaires). In addition the birth cohort was augmented by including immigrants born in the relevant week in the target sample for NCDS1-3.

The 1981 survey differs in that information was obtained from the subject (who was interviewed by a professional survey research interviewer) and from the 1971 and 1981 Censuses (from which variables describing area of residence were taken). Similarly, during the collection of exam data in 1978 information was obtained (by post) only from the schools attended at the time of the third follow-up in 1974 (and from sixth-form and FE colleges, when these were identified by schools). On these last two occasions case no attempt was made to include new immigrants in the survey.

All NCDS data from the surveys identified above are held by the ESRC Data Archive at the University of Essex and are available for secondary analysis by researchers in universities and elsewhere. The Archive also holds a number of NCDS-related files (for example, of data collected in the course of a special study of handicapped school-leavers, at age 18; and the data from the 5% feasibility study, conducted at age 20, which preceded the 1981 follow-up), which are similarly available for secondary analysis.

Further details about the National Child Development Study can be obtained from the NCDS User Support Group.

BRITISH SOCIETY FOR POPULATION STUDIES

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Introduction

The passage from adolescence to adulthood is a multi-faceted and complex process extending for many individuals over a period of years from the mid-teens to the mid to late twenties. No one single event identifies the attainment of adult status, but becoming an adult usually involves a series of changes in status which move individuals from economic dependence upon parents to economic independence and from participation in the family of origin to establishment of a family of procreation. The completion of a number of key transitions, finishing full-time education, entry into the labour market, leaving home, establishment of an independent household, and entry into marriage and parenthood, might be regarded as indicating the achievement of adult status. Not everyone experiences all these transitions nor by any means follow such a sequence. Some transitions may be by-passed altogether and others may overlap.

Studies that give joint consideration to the economic and familial transitions are rare. Specialists tend to concentrate on the transition from school to work or the transition to marriage and childbearing whilst the inter-relations and interdependence between them have received scant attention. As yet there is a lack of coherent data for studying sets of transitions in young adulthood. Cross-sectional current status data on the activity patterns and living arrangements of young adults are the most commonly available and up-to-date source, but they can only provide clues as to the

timing of transitions. In this study the 1981 Labour Force Survey is pressed into service. More direct estimates of the timing, prevalence and sequencing of transitions require longitudinal data. Such data are rare. However, for one British cohort born in 1958, it is possible to examine the dynamics of transitions in young adulthood over the age range 16 to 23 years. To set the scene, we consider how the size of the young adult population has changed in the recent past and will change in the near future.

Size of the Youth Group

Every society must somehow solve the problem of transforming children into adults, for its survival depends on that solution. Societies do find ways of coping with this perennial problem, but the task may be exacerbated if there are significant increases in the size of the youthful population to be absorbed into adult roles. There have been marked changes in the population of young adults (for the present purpose those aged 16-24 years) in the recent past, and further changes will occur in the near future. This can be clearly seen in Figure 1 which charts the size of the 16-24 year old group over the 40 year period 1956-1996. In 1956, the number of 16-24 year olds stood at 4.9 million, the numbers increased steadily over the next ten years, reaching 6.4 million in 1967. The numbers remained relatively static until 1971, whence they declined slightly, reflecting the exit out of this age group of the post-war baby boom cohorts who were followed by the smaller cohorts born during the first half of the 1950s. Since 1977, the number of young adults has risen again (reflecting the rise in fertility in the late 1950s and early 1960s) from 6.4 million to reach a peak of 7.34 million in 1985. At this peak there were more young people aged 16-24 years than at any time for half a century. After 1988 the population estimates show that the population will fall below

the 7 million mark and the numbers will continue to decline throughout the 1990s. By the late 1990s the size of the young adult population will be similar to that at the beginning of the 1960s.

From the 1950s to the present, apart from a brief respite during the 1970s, society has had to absorb a growing number of young people and all that this implies for tertiary education, the labour market and housing. But within this increasing trend there have been two more marked quantitative increases in the size of the young adult population. The first occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the other started in the late 1970s and is currently at its zenith. Both booms brought youth to centre stage, but in markedly differing ways. In the earlier boom with its relative economic prosperity and low rates of unemployment, the growing numbers of young people were viewed as an affluent consumer group, in the current boom they are viewed as a disturbing labour problem. Assimilation of increasing numbers of young people into adulthood, other things being equal, should lead to delays in the timing of transitions, for example entry the labour market and into marriage; especially given the long-standing norm that young people establish a separate household from their parents on marriage. But the example of the 1960s with its buoyant economy, less than 2 per cent unemployment rates amongst men in their teens, a growing housing market with a relatively large supply of privately rented accommodation, and the youngest age pattern of marriage on record would seem to suggest that the size of the youth group is not problematical in the face of favourable structural conditions. But the juxtaposition of an increasing number of young people and a recession is more likely to lead to the postponement of transitions in young adulthood. Unemployment rates amongst young men in their

teens of over 20 per cent, and youth training schemes with low rates of remuneration are likely to postpone the transition to economic independence and its potential for financial autonomy. Parents are likely to have to subsidise their children for longer and more young people, proportionately and absolutely, will have to rely on state benefits for basic living requirements. Preceding the recession, there had also been developments that probably led to the economic and residential transitions being later than they had been in the 1960s. For example, the minimum school leaving age was raised from 15 to 16 years in 1973, and continuation rates in education increased; the housing market became increasingly polarised into two main sectors, owner occupation and local authority tenancies, thus reducing the chance of young people living for a period in relatively cheap privately rented accommodation. Throughout the 1970s marriage rates at young adult ages declined and during the 1980s have exhibited further declines; particularly marked in the teenage years. The declines during the 1970s probably arose more from choice than from economic constraints, but economic constraints may be boosting the further declines observed in recent years.

Activity patterns and living arrangements of young people

Cross-sectional data from the 1981 Labour Force Survey allow us to examine the current activity patterns and living arrangements of a large sample of approximately 50,000 young people aged between 16 and 30. The information on activity patterns and living arrangements is first examined separately, then in combination.

Activity patterns

Four groups of activity have been distinguished; students (which includes those on government training schemes), employed, unemployed and economically inactive (in the main, housewives and the long-term

sick or disabled). Figures 2 and 3 show, for men and women respectively, the proportions in each of these four groups. At age 16 over one-half of the young people are students whilst at age 19, the great majority, nearly 90 per cent, have made the transition into the labour force. Figure 4 shows that the majority of men and women make the transition into the labour force at about the same age. Up to age 20 there are only minor differences in the proportions of men and women who are students but amongst the tiny minority who are still students at ages beyond 21, proportionately more men than women are students. Not all those who have made the transition into the labour market are in employment. Unemployment rates are conventionally expressed as a proportion of the total in the labour market (the employed plus the unemployed) rather than as proportion of the total age-group. The proportions unemployed using this convention are shown in Figure 5. At age 16, unemployment rates are over twice those at older ages, being over 40 per cent for both sexes, whilst the rates at ages 17 are around 20 per cent for both sexes. For ages 18 through to 25 the unemployment rates of men slightly exceed those for women, by around 2 to 4 percentage points. Since 1981, the year to which these data refer, there have been further increases in unemployment rates. According to Department of Employment statistics, in 1981 23.2 per cent of men in their teens were unemployed whilst the figure for 1985 was 25.3 per cent.

As men and women move through their twenties they increasingly take on family responsibilities. Since the family as an institution is still largely predicated on role differentiation by sex, not surprisingly, the activity patterns of men and women at these ages diverge. The assumption of domestic responsibilities by women is clearly seen in Figure 6. At age 20 there is only 7 percentage

points difference in the proportions of men and women in employment whilst at ages 25 and 30 it has increased to 26 and 41 percentage points respectively.

The foregoing analyses suggest that both sexes make the transition from student to worker and thus relative financial independence from their parents at about the same age, but women make an additional transition out of the labour market as they move through their twenties, becoming financially dependent on their spouses, at least for a time.

Living arrangements

The 1981 Labour Force Survey can also provide us with information on the living arrangements of young people, which give clues about the timing of the transition to residential independence. Figure 7 shows the proportions of men and women living with their parents at ages 16 through 30. To the extent that these current status data reflect leaving home patterns (i.e. to the extent that young people do not return to their parents' home after an initial period of independent living and to the extent there have been no changes between the cohorts concerned) they suggest that women leave home at younger ages and at a faster pace than men. It is clear from Figure 7 that the vast majority of 16 and 17 year olds live with their parents. It would also appear that the main period of leaving home activity amongst women spans ages 19 to 23 and amongst men ages 20 to 25. After age 18, women leave home at a rapid rate and by age 23, 4 in 5 have left home. Amongst men, 80 per cent are still living at home at age 20 (as compared with 55 per cent of women) and it is not until age 26 that the proportions of men living at home approaches the 20 per cent level. At all ages greater proportions of men than women are found to be living with their

parents and even at age 30, just over 10 per cent of men are living at home as compared with 4 per cent of women.

Figures 8 and 9 also show that a substantial proportion of the young people who were not living with their parents were living with a spouse. Amongst women this was more clearly the case after age 20 and amongst men at age 23 and beyond, when upwards of two-thirds of those not living with parents were living with a spouse. This suggests that the link between leaving home and marriage may still be relatively strong in this country, which may arise from leaving home and marriage being co-incident or people marrying fairly quickly after leaving home. This is in marked contrast to some other countries in Western Europe, notably France and West Germany where the link is more tenuous and Denmark where it is negligible. ¹

Living arrangements and activity status

Table 1 provides some information on the living arrangements of young people according to activity status. Students aged 16 to 18, most of whom are still likely to be at school, mainly live with their parents. Older students, who are more likely to be enrolled in higher education, are more likely to be living away from home. Older students are also more likely to be living away from home than their contemporaries in the labour market. It is relatively rare for students to be married. The great majority of employed teenagers live with their parents as do substantial proportions of unmarried employed persons in their twenties. For example, amongst those not living with a spouse, 75 per cent of the men aged 22 to 23 and just over two-thirds of those aged 24 to 25 are living with their parents and 66 per cent and 49 per cent of women of the same ages are also living with their parents. Even in the late twenties, 49 per cent of unmarried employed men are living with

their parents as compared with 33 per cent of the analogous group of women. It would appear that women have a greater predilection for independent living than their male contemporaries.

Turning to the group of unemployed persons it is apparent that such men and women in their late teens and early twenties (ages 20-21) are less likely to be living with their parents than their employed contemporaries.² This also holds for women in their later twenties. But amongst unmarried men in their later twenties greater proportions of the unemployed than of the employed are living with their parents. This older set of unemployed men may differ in a number of ways from the younger unemployed. Older unemployed men are more likely to be a residual group who may be less likely to find employment. Being unemployed at older ages is less common than at younger ages and older unemployed men may be less attractive as potential marriage partners (a women's degree of marriageability is less influenced by economic factors, other less tangible factors are more likely to enter into the calculus of mate selection). Given that divorce rates tend to be significantly higher amongst unemployed than employed men,³ the set of older unemployed men may also include divorcees who have returned to live with their parents.

The economically inactive group amongst men at all ages are a tiny minority, 2 per cent or less, but are an increasing component amongst women in their twenties. Men categorised as inactive are broadly similar to the unemployed group in terms of their living arrangements. Economically inactive women in their twenties, as to be expected, are most likely to be living with a spouse. Amongst those not living with a husband, a separate analysis showed that the majority (70 per cent or more) were lone parents.

These data from the 1981 Labour Force Survey have provided us with a valuable cross-sectional snapshot of the activity patterns and living arrangements of young people which provide us with clues as to the timing of transitions in young adulthood. Now we proceed to examine, for one cohort of young people, direct information on the timing of and inter-relations between transitions.

Transitions at young adult ages

From event histories provided by a cohort of young people born in 1958 we can examine more directly the prevalence, timing and sequencing of several transitions; completing continuous full-time education, entry into the first full-time job, leaving home for the first time, entry into first cohabiting union, first marriage and parenthood. The data come from the National Child Development Study (NCDS) which has followed up children born in the first week in March 1958 on five occasions from birth to age 23.⁴ The retrospective histories used here come from the last contact which occurred in 1981, when the sample members were aged 23.⁵ Initially we take a general overview of the timing of all the transitions, then we proceed to examine the leaving home transition in detail.

Table 2 shows the cumulated proportions of men and women who had experienced a particular transition by exact age 17 to 23 years and where applicable the quartiles of the distribution. It is clear from these data that the majority of young people have already made two transitions by around the time of their 18th birthday, namely leaving education and entering their first full-time job. The closeness of the two distributions suggest that for the majority the timing of completion of education and starting work are fairly well

synchronised. A more direct calculation showed that 48 per cent of the men had started their first full-time job in the same month as they left full-time continuous education, and a further 29 and 12 per cent started work within 1-2 and 3-5 months respectively, of finishing education. The picture was virtually identical for the women. ⁶ The great majority, 90 per cent, of men and women had made the transition from student to worker within 6 months of leaving full-time education. When this cohort left school unemployment rates at young ages were under 5 per cent.

Men and women may behave very similarly with respect to education and first job transitions, but there are marked differences between the sexes in the other transitions. Women leave home at younger ages and at faster pace than the men, one-half having left home for the first time before their 20th birthday, whilst the median age at which the men had left home was nearly two years older (21.7 years). By their twenty-third birthday, a majority of the men and women, 61 and 79 per cent respectively had lived away from home at least for a time. But a not insubstantial proportion had also returned home. By age 23, 33 per cent of the men and 26 per cent of the women had ever returned.

Cohabiting unions amongst young people are relatively new. They emerged in the early 1970s, and have continued to increase, seemingly inexorably, since. So we would expect some proportion of this cohort who passed through their teens and early twenties during this development to have experienced such unions. We see that 14 per cent of the men and 19 per cent of the women have cohabited, i.e. they have lived with at least one partner for as long as six months. Many of these unions have either become marriages or the relationship has broken down and yet others still continue. For

example, of those who had experienced a first de facto partnership, 49 per cent ended with marriage, 21 per cent broke up and 29 per cent were still continuing at age 23. 7

By age 23, just under one-third of the men had married and only 15 per cent had become fathers, whilst over one-half of the women had married and 30 per cent were mothers. At age 23, the transition to marriage is beginning to take-off amongst the men and is well under way amongst the women. If this sample of the 1958 cohort follows the national age pattern of marriage for the whole of the 1958 cohort, as it has done thus far, it is expected that 50 per cent of the men will be married by 25.7 years and nearly 75 per cent of the women will be married by age 27 years.

In reply to a question "do you ever want to get married in the future" only 10 per cent of the single men and 12 per cent of the single women gave a negative response and a further 9 per cent of the men and 8 per cent of the women said they did not know. If the expectations of those who gave a positive response are met (81 and 80 per cent of men and women respectively) then the ultimate proportions of men and women marrying would be 88 and 92 per cent respectively.

By age 23 only a minority of the cohort sample had made the transition to parenthood, which for those who have made it and will make it, is perhaps the definitive step into adulthood. A majority of men and women are likely to have made this transition by the time they reach age 30. An analogous calculation to that done for marriage showed that 90 per cent of both men and women would ultimately have children if all those who at age 23 said they would like to have children were to achieve their stated desires.

Leaving home

The NCDS is the first British national survey to have collected information on date of leaving home and reasons for leaving home. Thus it is worth considering the results in some detail.

It is noteworthy that marriage and leaving home appear to be less coincident than our analysis of cross-sectional data from the Labour Force Survey might have led us to expect. Table 2 showed that the median age at leaving home for women was 1.5 years younger than the median age at marriage and amongst the men there is likely to be a 4 year difference between the median age at leaving home (21.7 years) and the median age at marriage estimated from registration data (25.7 years). Indications of the differences that may exist between cross-sectional and longitudinal data are shown in Table 3. Here the proportions living with parents at ages 16 to 22 years in the 1981 LFS are compared with the proportions who had never lived away from home at the same ages in the NCDS sample. Notwithstanding the substantial differences in the selection of the two samples and any changes that may have occurred between cohorts in the LFS, it would seem that the cross-sectional current status information underestimate the extent to which young people leave home in their late teens and early twenties. Some and possibly much of the difference may be due to young people returning home. Reconciliation cannot be achieved, since dates of returning home were not available for the 1958 cohort sample.

We have seen that the leaving home behaviour of men and women as they move through their teens and twenties differs in terms of prevalence and timing. As well as sex differences, differences according to level of educational attainment were also expected. A

considerable proportion of 18 year old school leavers go on to higher education, and first departure from home for this group is likely to coincide with going to college or university. In the ensuing analyses the sample has been subdivided according to whether they left school at ages 16 or 17 years (71 and 9 per cent respectively of the sample) or age 18 or older (20 per cent). There were no sex differences in the proportions leaving school at different ages. This simple categorisation captures important sub-group differences in leaving home patterns. Figure 10 portrays the sex differences and Figures 11-14 the school leaving age differences by sex in leaving home behaviour. Some summary statistics are given in Table 4.

It is clear from Figures 11 and 12 that men and women who left school at 18 or later have a markedly different pattern of leaving home from those who left at 16 or 17, who have a similar pattern. Just over one-half (52 per cent) of the women who left school at age 18 or later had left home by age 19 as compared with around one-third of the 16 and 17 year old leavers. Amongst the men, nearly twice as many (42 per cent) of the 18 or older school leavers as compared with younger leavers had left home by age 19 (around 20 per cent). These graphs also show that similar proportions of women regardless of educational level have left home by age 23, whilst there is still a marked difference between the most highly educated men and the rest, 75 per cent of the former group had left home as compared with 57-58 per cent in the other two groups. This and the patterning of the quartiles of the age at leaving home distribution for the sub-group of 18 year old or later school leavers indicates, that those who did not depart home in association with tertiary education also leave home at a faster pace than their contemporaries who completed their schooling at younger ages.

The less marked difference in the prevalence of leaving home amongst the highly educated group of women and the rest at age 23 stems from a parallel force, namely marriage. The women who left school at younger ages are much more likely to marry in their late teens and early twenties. For example, 25 per cent and 50 per cent of 16 year old leavers were married by ages 19.5 and 21.5 years respectively, whilst even at age 23 only 27 per cent of the 18 year old leavers were married. Figures 13 and 14 show that differences between the leaving home behaviour of men and women are much more marked for the 16 year old leavers than for the 18 plus leavers. But women in all groups are more likely to leave home sooner than men. ^e

Reasons for leaving home

The cohort members were also asked for the main reason for their first move away from home. ⁹ The categories of reasons are shown in Table 5. ¹⁰ The most common single reason for leaving home was to live as married (which includes *de facto* and *de jure* partnerships), over one-third of the men and just over one-half of the women gave this as their main reason. A separate analysis from dates of first cohabitation, marriage and leaving home showed that for 80 per cent of the women and 74 per cent of the men this partnership began as a marriage. The next most commonly given reason was to begin studies, which was expressed to a broadly similar extent by men and women. Men were more likely than women to leave home for job reasons, they were about equally likely to leave to set up on their own and as likely to leave for negative reasons such as friction at home or their accommodation was poor.

Reasons for leaving home varied with age at departure (Table 5). The older the age at which men and women left their parental home

the more likely they were to leave in order to live with a partner. For example, 40 per cent of women who left home at ages 18-19 were in this category as compared with 78 per cent of those who left home at ages 22-23 years. The analogous proportions amongst the men were 19 and 68 per cent. At ages 18-19, as would be expected from our earlier analyses, an important reason, for both men and women, was leaving home to study. Those who left at under age 18 years were more likely to leave for reasons to do with employment than those at older ages and this was the most frequent reason given by men who left home in their early teens. Leaving home for negative reasons was also more frequent at the youngest ages. Only a small minority of both sexes said they left to set up home on their own. The proportions of women who gave this as a reason varied little with age at leaving but amongst the men, it was more commonly expressed amongst the older than the younger leavers.

Reasons for leaving home were also associated with propensity to return home (Table 6). Returnees were those who lived again for a period of six months or more with their parents. Those who left to get married or to live as married were very much less likely to return home (11 per cent of both men and women) than those who left for other reasons. Also, the small group who left to set up a home of their own were relatively less likely to return than those who left to study, or for job reasons or negative reasons. Amongst those who left for these other reasons, around 50 per cent of the women and 40 per cent of the men had returned home. A separate analysis (not shown here) also showed that the younger a person was when they left home the more likely they were to return.

The evidence presented thus far has shown that women leave home at younger ages than men, that the most highly educated minority have a

distinctly different pattern of first departure from their parental home than the rest of their contemporaries, that the older the age at leaving home the more likely it is to be associated with marriage and those who leave at younger ages and for reasons other than marriage are much more likely to return home again. These findings highlight the complexities of leaving home behaviour and mirror results from Christobel Young's pioneering and detailed studies of leaving home amongst Australian youth, based on the responses of 18-34 year olds included in the 1982 Family Formation Survey.¹¹ Young's analyses also showed that amongst the 50 per cent of men and 40 per cent of women who returned home (proportions which at least at face value are higher than those from our analysis) many of those who left home initially for 'other' reasons subsequently left home at marriage. It is highly likely that many of the returnees in the 1958 cohort study will leave again to live with a partner.

Leaving home for many young people is a process rather than a specific event and the data from the cohort study demonstrates that the fluidity in leaving home behaviour observed in other countries, such as Australia and the United States¹² also occurs in Britain. Studies based on first departure from home, simply speaking, may be said to include two separate sub-groups of people; those who have left home and have established an independent household, in the majority of cases with a spouse, and who are unlikely to return home again and those who could be described as "living away" from home in more temporary forms of living arrangements, who have a much greater probability of returning home. It may be difficult to get young people to allocate themselves to one or other of these groups with any precision, but it could be done inferentially if at a minimum, data were collected on dates of, and reasons for, first and final departure and number of times returned. From a demographic

standpoint, the interest in having information on leaving home arises because the timing and intensity with which young people leave their parents' homes are critical elements in household attrition and formation rates. ¹³ For such purposes information on final departure is likely to be more useful than that on first departure. In the context of Britain, given the imprecise nature of leaving home and the dearth of suitable data, other types of information might be more useful. Alternative information that may prove a better proxy for demographic analysis, given the increased polarisation of the British housing market, is timing of entry into owner occupation or acquisition of a local authority tenancy. This is not to deny the social, economic and psychological significance of leaving home in the lives of parents and children or the inter-relations between leaving home and other transitions in young adulthood.

Sequencing of transitions

To reduce the complexity and diversity of experiences in the sequencing of transitions in young adulthood, we will confine our attention to four transitions: date of completing continuous full-time education (E), date of entry into first full-time job (J), date of leaving home (LH) and date of first marriage (M). Such a specification excludes persons who had, for example, interrupted educational careers, leaving full-time education, working for a time and then resuming full-time education. For the majority this was a rare sequence but for graduates it was not uncommon. Ten per cent of the sample were graduates, and, of these, 21 per cent of men and 14 per cent of women had entered their first full-time job by age 19 years.

Potentially we could examine durations between the six pairs of transitions; E-J, E-LH, E-M, J-LH, J-M and LH-M. However in an earlier section we showed that leaving full-time continuous education and entering first full-time job were fairly well synchronised and the nature of our specification of the educational transition precludes disorder in the sequencing of these two transitions. Consequently, the duration of the pairs of transitions E-LH and J-LH, and E-M and J-M are almost identical. Thus we will confine our attention to the relationship between first employment and leaving home and first employment and marriage. ¹⁴

Figure 15 shows the duration in months from entry into first full-time job to first departure from home for the total sample of men and women. Given the data are censored at age 23, men and women who start work at different ages have varying lengths of exposure between starting work and leaving home, so the durations shown here are derived from life-table analyses. It is clear that women generally spend a shorter time living with their parents as economically independent adults than do men. Women on average spent only 3 years with their parents compared with almost 5 years spent by men. Figures 16 and 17 show, for men and women respectively, the time elapsed from entering first job to leaving home according to age at starting to work, subdivided into whether they started work at ages 16, 17, 18, and 19 or older. Some summary statistics are also shown below the graphs. A substantial proportion of the men and women started work at age 16 years (66 and 59 per cent respectively of the sample), and these youngest entrants into the labour market lived at home longer than those who started work at older ages. It is noticeable that very few of the young people who started work before age 19 left home prior to entering employment. But, those who started to work at age 19 or later (14

per cent of the men and 15 per cent of the women) were more prone to have left home before achieving economic independence; 63 per cent of the men and 69 per cent of the women did so (these are in the main men and women who left home as students).

The duration between entering first full-time job and leaving home can only be regarded as rough estimate of how long economically independent young people live with their parents before leaving home. Leaving home is a reversible event and entry into first full-time job does not imply continuous employment. A true estimate would only include periods when children are in employment and co-residing with their parents.

Interesting questions that cannot as yet be satisfactorily answered for this cohort, as under one-third of the men and just over one-half of the women had married, are how long after achieving economic independence do young people marry and how does it vary between different sub-groups of men and women? The estimates thus far, again derived from life-table analyses, are that 25 per cent of the women had married within 2.75 years and 50 per cent had married within 5 years of starting work; and 25 per cent of the men had married within 5 years of starting work.

The available data for the cohort do not permit a meaningful analysis of duration from leaving home to marriage. There are extensive selection and censoring problems that make life-table analyses problematical. For example, 36 per cent of the men had neither married nor left home and a further 32 per cent had left home but not married and amongst the women the analogous proportions were 18 and 27 per cent.

Finally we turn our attention to the sequencing of the transitions E-J-LH and E-J-LH-M, to ascertain the extent to which young people make an orderly or disorderly progression through the transitions to adulthood and to assess the degree to which transitions overlap. Figures 18 and 19 provide some of the relevant data for studying these complicated issues. We see from Figure 18 that 86 per cent of the total number of men in the sample made an orderly transition from education to job (E-J) and Figure 19 shows that 84 per cent of the women did so. The bulk of the remainder started their transitions to adulthood with leaving home, 11 and 12 per cent of the men and women respectively. The residual group, 3 per cent of the men and 4 per cent of the women includes other permutations such as E-LH, and those who had not completed their education nor started work by exact age 23.

Those who made the progression E-J, can be subdivided into those who started work in the same month as they completed full-time education E/J and those who commenced work later E-J. Forty-seven per cent of the men and women had what could be termed synchronised education and work transitions (E/J's) and 40 per cent of the men and 36 per cent of the women had a gap between education and work transitions (E-J's). Further subdivision which charts the leaving home and marriage transitions show that the most common sequence amongst those who had completed all four transitions was synchronised education and work transitions and synchronised leaving home and marriage transitions, E/J-LH/M, 17.6 per cent of the total sample of women had followed this pattern and 9.3 per cent of the men. More than three times the number of women and twice as many men followed this sequence than followed a sequence with gaps between education and job and leaving home and marriage, E-J-LH-M. Altogether, 28.5 per cent of the women and 15 per cent of the men had a synchronised

leaving home and marriage (LH/M) sequence which represents 68 per cent of the women and 58 per cent of the men that had made the transition to marriage within the E.J set. Altogether, by age 23, 59 per cent of all women in this cohort and 48 per cent of the men had made an orderly progression through E.J.L. (including synchronised sets) and 42 per cent of the women and 26 per cent of the men had made an orderly progression through E.J.LH.M. As the cohort ages there is substantial potential for increases in these proportions.

Thus it would seem that amongst men and women who have made all four transitions by their early twenties, the sequencing of transitions is fairly well ordered but with a substantial amount of synchronisation between pairs of transitions (E/J:LH/M). It is likely that the degree of synchronicity of LH/M will be less amongst those who marry at older ages.

Conclusion

The most important transitions made by young adults and the ones largely regarded as symbols of adulthood by the young themselves ¹⁵ are the entries into employment, marriage and parenthood. Having a job provides the potential for financial autonomy and the responsibility for meeting one's own needs. Marriage carries with it the commitment to another person and typically the joint responsibility for maintaining a separate household. Whilst parenthood is an essentially irreversible and manifold commitment to supporting another who will remain dependent for a long time. Education is a preparatory stage, and leaving home and cohabitation (at the present) are more diffuse and less permanent statuses but still significant dimensions of the transition to independent living. Growing up female as opposed to male, working class as

opposed to middle class, in areas of high unemployment versus low unemployment and level of educational attainment are all characteristics which are likely to affect the prevalence, timing, sequencing and inter-relations between the transitions in young adulthood.

This particular study has not been able to address these issues fully, in part owing to data restrictions, nor has it shed any light on the extent of change in the transitions made by young people. Hopefully the future will bring the fuller data necessary for a more detailed study; the necessary longitudinal information on status change amongst successive cohorts of young men and women; and the analyses of cross-sectional time series that would permit an assessment of change. As "Every society uses the vehicle of the new young adult cohort of males and females to write its future history" (N Ryder, 1974) ¹⁶, more systematic studies of the lives of young people are clearly warranted.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to the ESRC Data Archive for providing the 1981 Labour Force data tape and the OPCS for making the data available for further analyses, and Sandra Eldridge of the Centre for Population Studies for setting up the data file. Thanks also go to the ESRC funded Users Support Group at The City University (Grant H04250001), in particular Bob Wellburn, for assistance in setting up the NCDS data base. My thanks also go to OPCS Population Estimates Section and Population Statistics 1 for providing unpublished statistics.

Footnotes

1. K.E. Kiernan (1986), Leaving Home: Living arrangements of young people in six West-European countries. *European Journal of Population*, Vol. 2, No 2/3.
2. For a detailed analysis of the inter-relationships between unemployment and household structure amongst young adults using the 1981 LFS see; M. Murphy and O. Sullivan (1986), Unemployment, housing and household structure among young adults. *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol 15, No 2.
3. J. Haskey (1984), Social Class and socio-economic differentials in divorce in England and Wales. *Population Studies*, Vol 38, No 3.
4. For further details on the National Child Development Study see; P. Shepherd (1985), The National Child Development Study: an introduction to the background to the study and methods of data collection. NCDS User Support Group, Working Paper No 1. Social Statistics Research Unit, The City University.
5. The bulk of the interviews took place in the period September to November 1981 when the sample members were approximately 23.5 years old.
6. The analogous proportions for the women were; 50 per cent entered their first job in the same month they completed full-time education, 8 per cent within 1-2 months and 11 per cent within 3-5 months of completing their education.
7. For detailed analyses of the union histories of this sample see the set of discussion papers prepared by Dorothy Henderson. NCDS Working Papers prepared by the NCDS4 Research Team, Nos. 9, 20, 23 and 28. Social Statistics Research Unit, The City University.
8. Gill Jones has also examined the NCDS data on leaving home for her study of Social Stratification and Youth. Paper forthcoming, *Journal of Social Policy*.
9. Only 2.5 per cent of the men and women in the sample left from a household in which neither parent was present.

10. The interviewers showed the sample members a card with the categories as shown in Table 5. The only category not shown on the card was "accommodation poor" which was the most frequent "other reason" given by the sample members.

11. C. Young (1977), The family life cycle: literature review and studies of families in Melbourne Australia. Australian Family Formation Project, Monograph No 6, Department of Demography, Australian National University, Canberra. C. Young (1983), Leaving home and returning home: a demographic study of young adults in Australia. Paper presented at the Institute of Family Studies, Australian Family Research Conference, Canberra, 23-25 November. C. Young (1984), The effect of children returning home on the precision of the timing of the leaving home state of the family life cycle. Paper presented at an IUSSP/DGBW seminar on The Later Phases of the Family Life cycle, West Berlin, September 1984.

12. F. Kobrin Goldscheider and J. da Vanzo (1985), Living arrangements and the transition to adulthood. Demography, Vol 22, No 4. For a review of data and the literature on leaving home in developed countries see; K. E. Kiernan (1985), The Departure of Children: the timing of leaving home over the life-cycles of parents and children. Paper presented at an IUSSP/DGBW seminar on The Later Phases of the Family Life Cycle, West Berlin, Centre for Population Studies, Research Paper, 85-3.

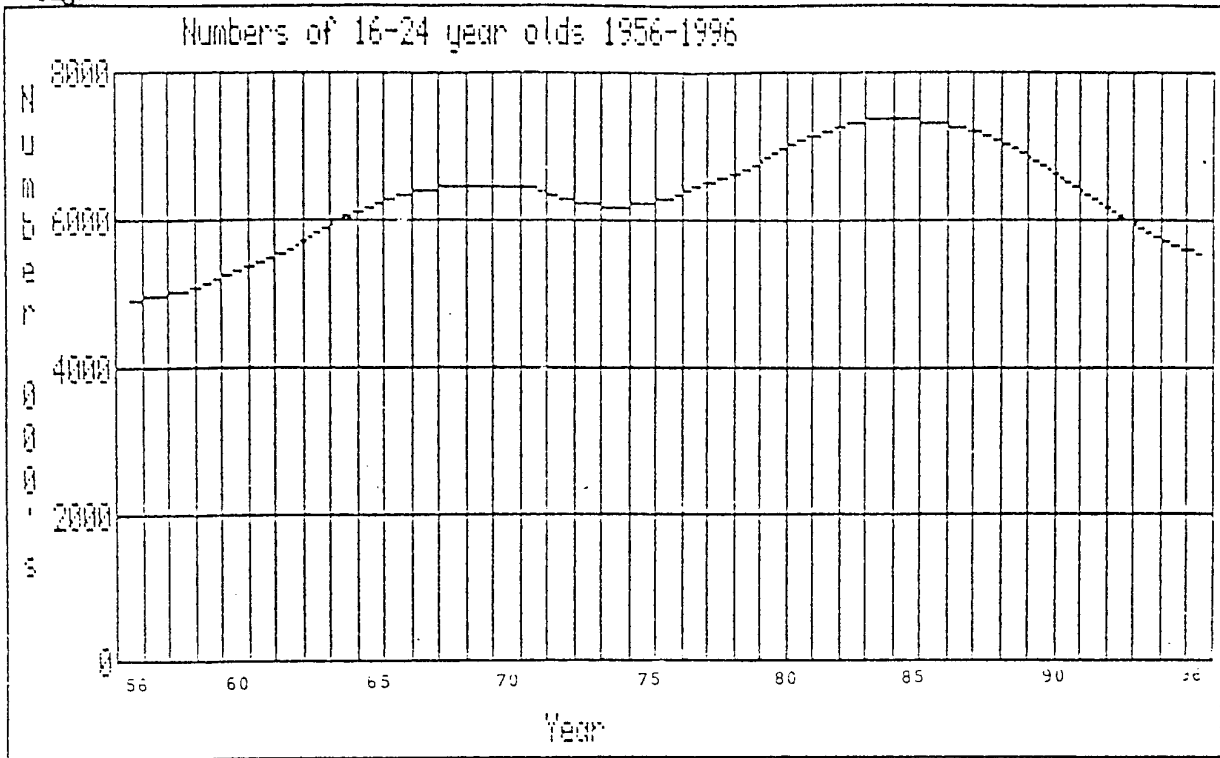
13. W. Brass (1983), The formal demography of the family: an overview of the proximate determinants. In The Family, Proceedings of the British Society for Population Studies, 1983 Conference, Office of Population and Censuses and Surveys, Occasional Paper No. 31.

14. Amongst more recently born cohorts who left full-time education in a period of economic recession and high youth employment the Education-Job transition will be more protracted than it was for the 1958 birth cohort.

15. Young People in the 1980s: a survey (1983) HMSO

16. N. Ryder (1975), The Demography of Youth. In Youth: Transition to Adulthood. Report of the Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Figure 1



OPCS Population Estimates for England and Wales

Figure 2

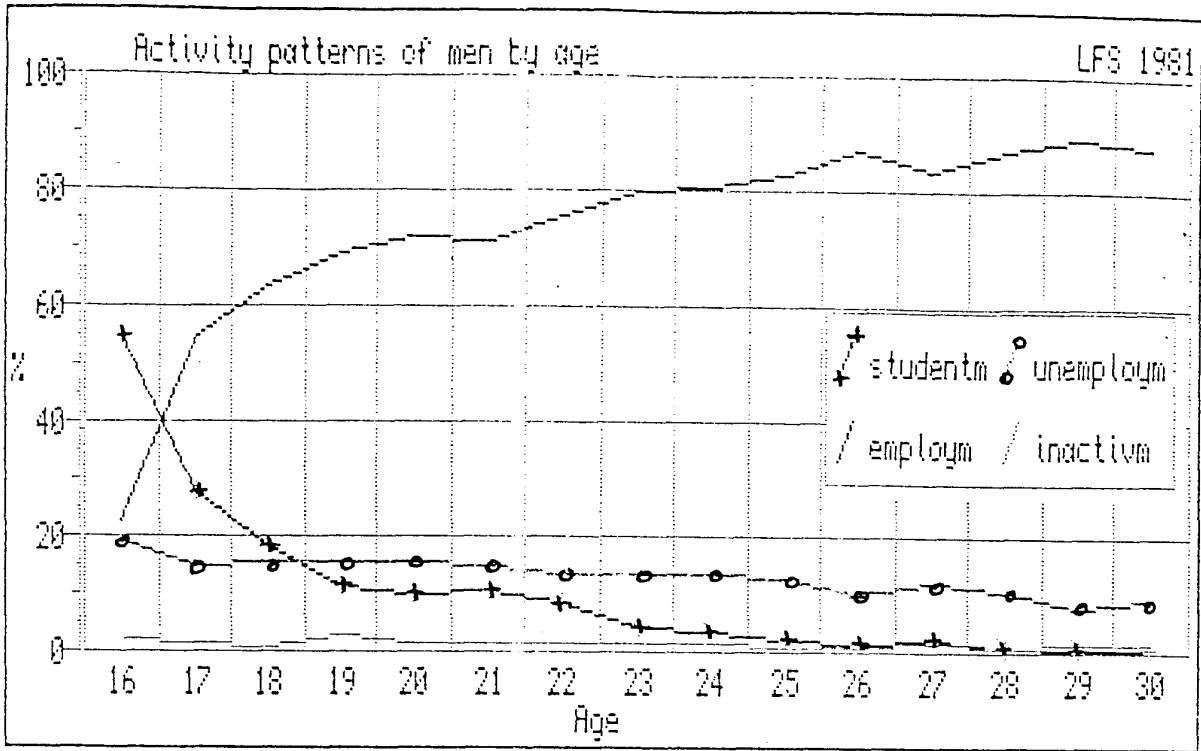


Figure 3

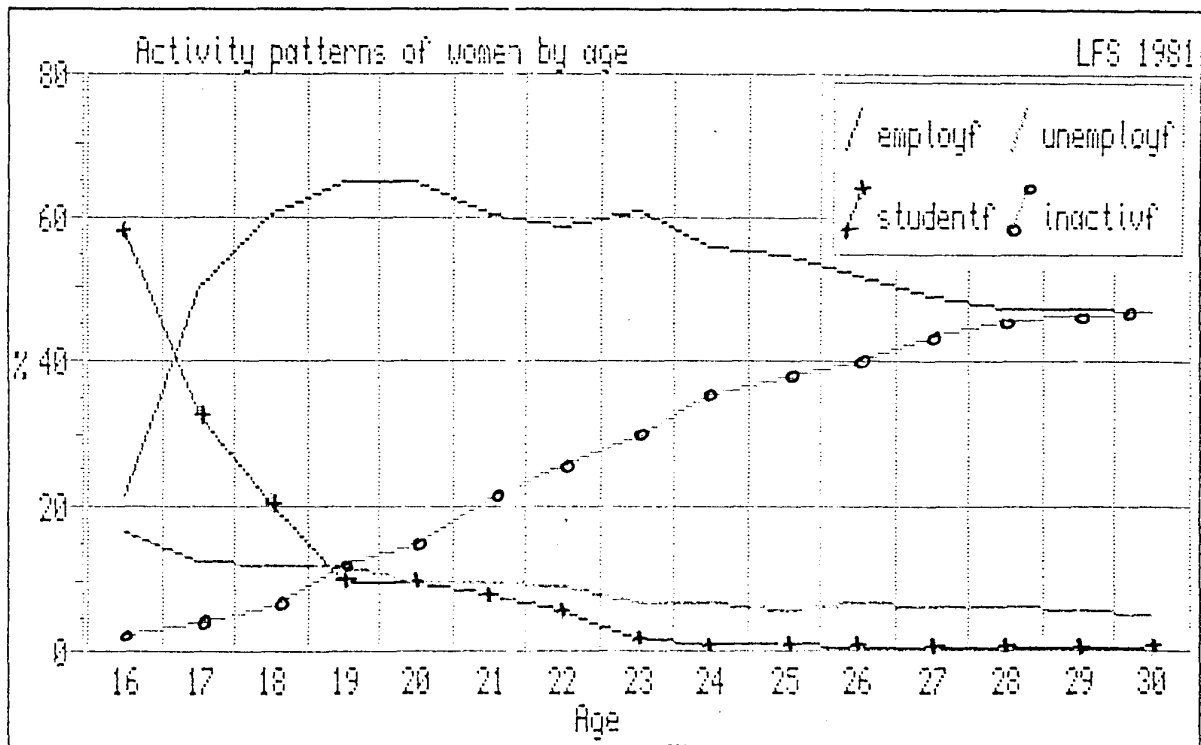


Figure 4

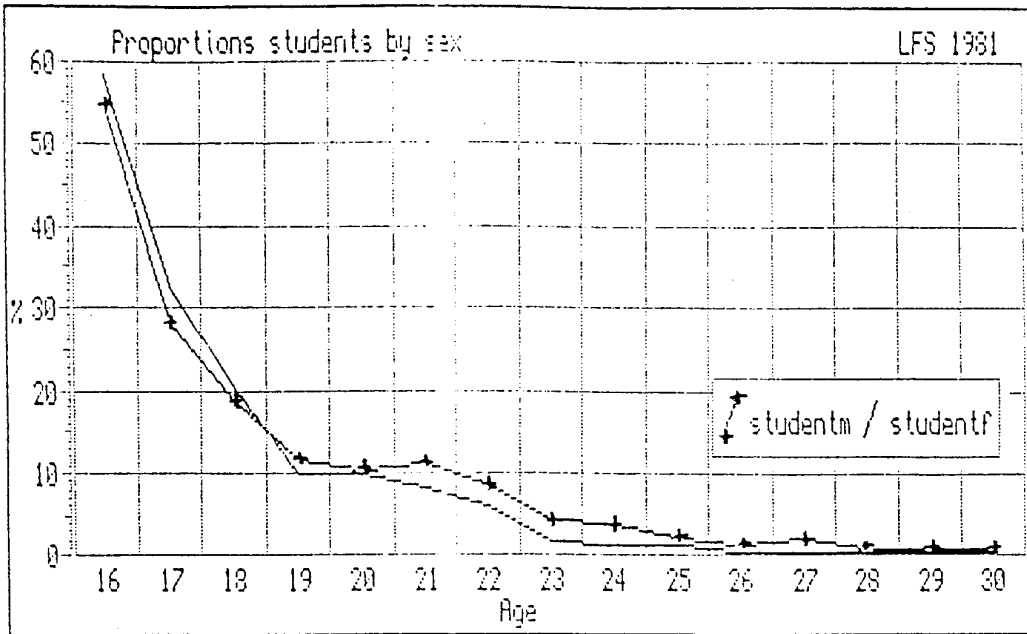


Figure 5

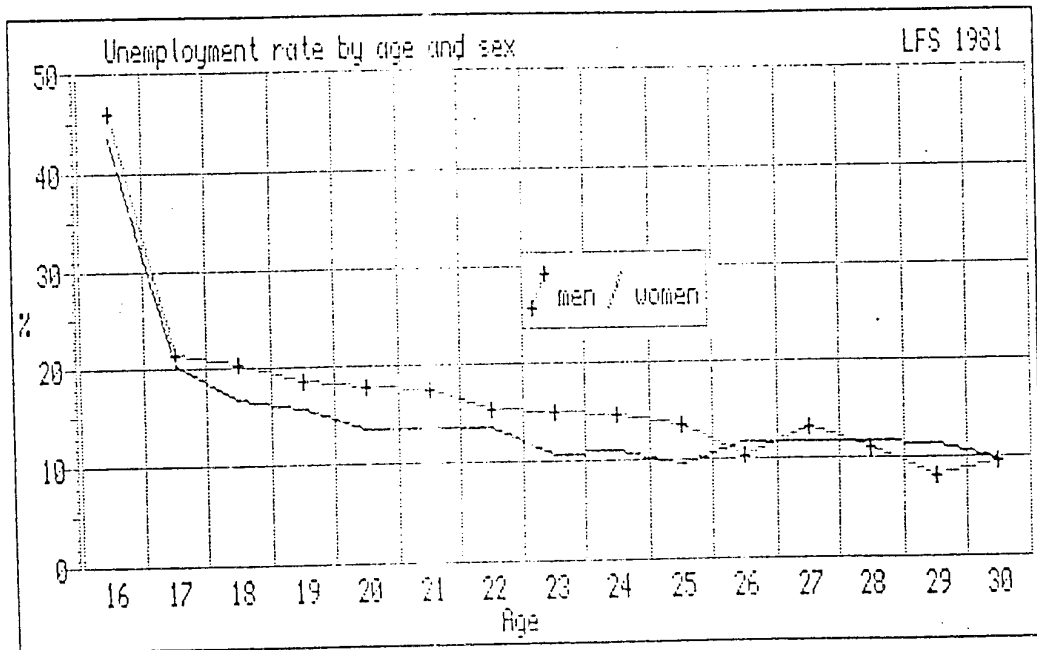


Figure 6

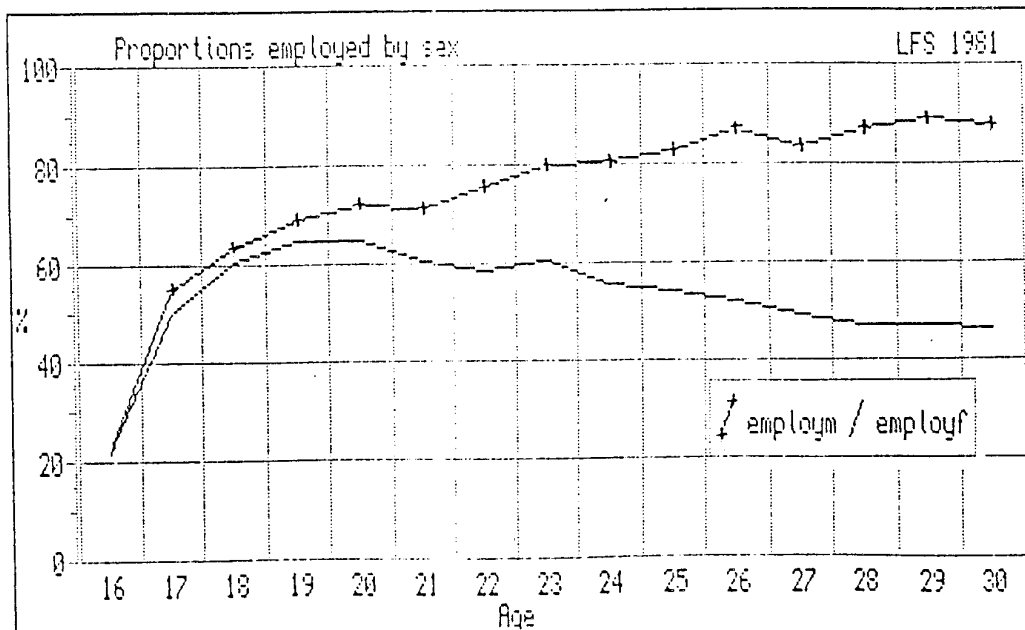


Figure 7

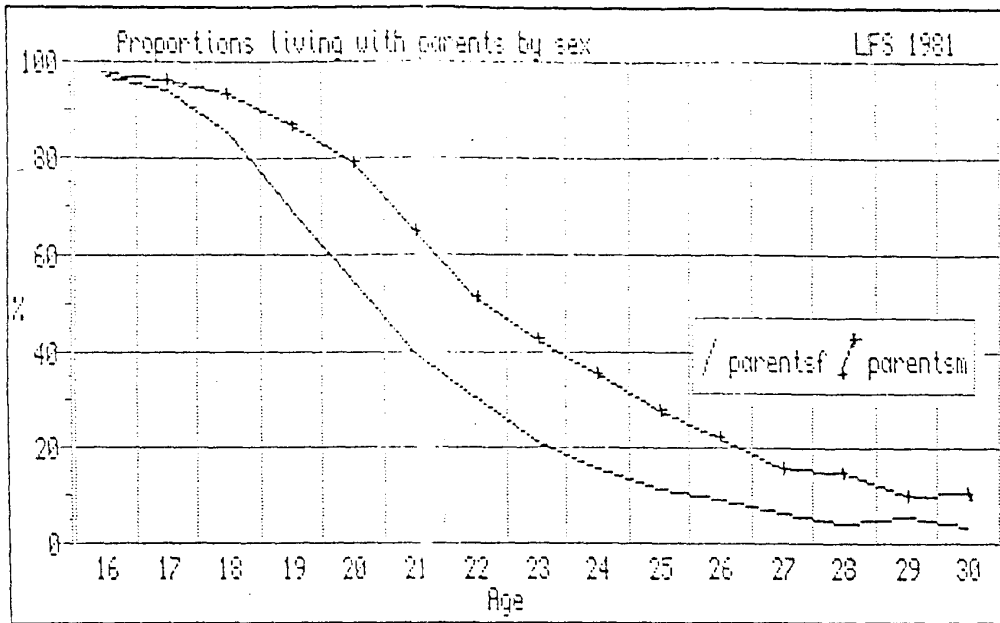


Figure 8

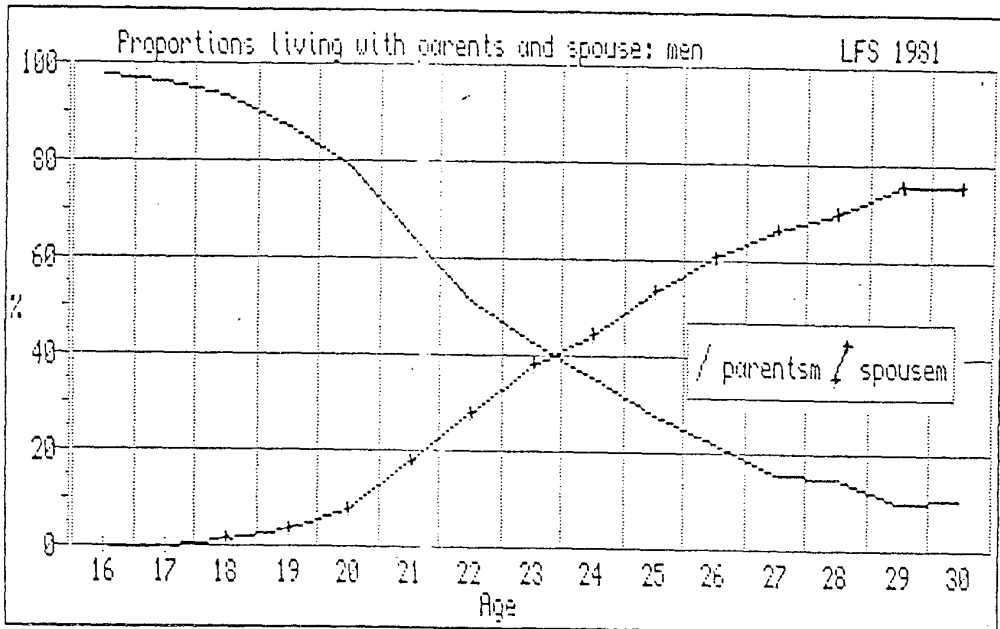


Figure 9

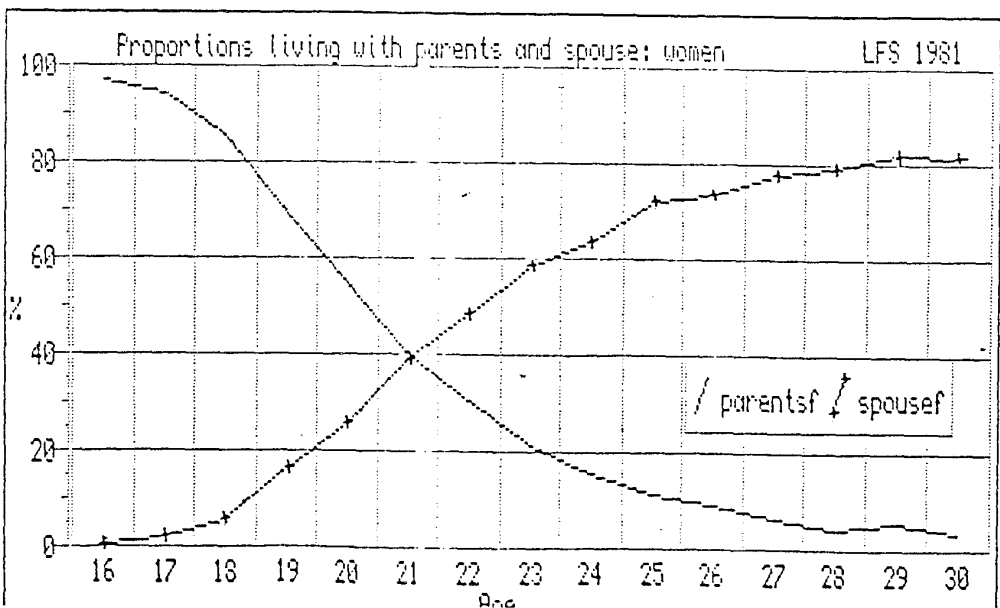


Figure 10

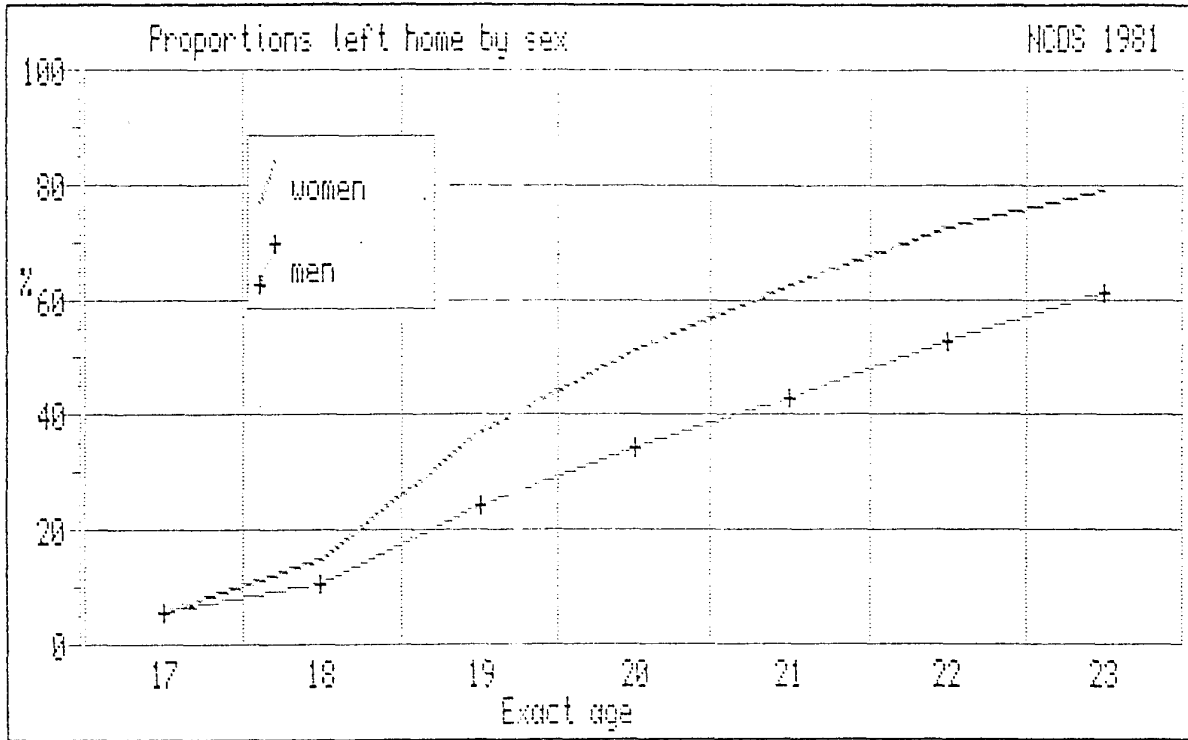


Figure 11

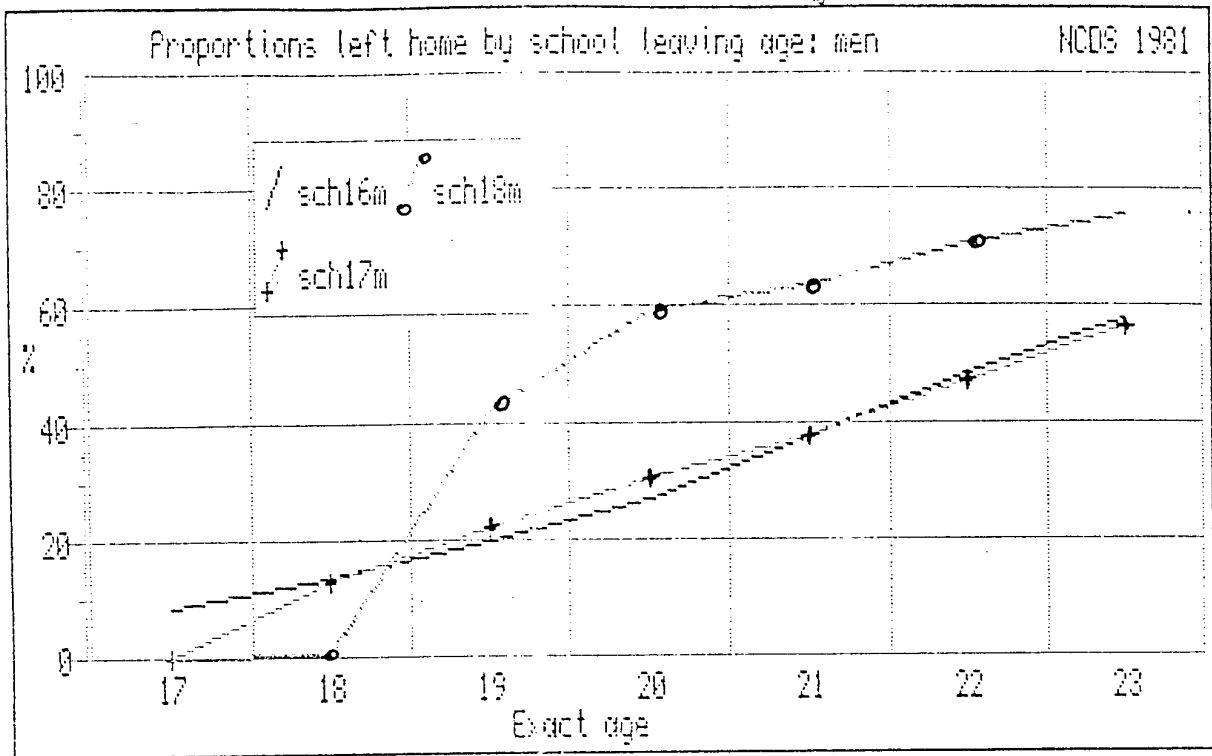


Figure 12

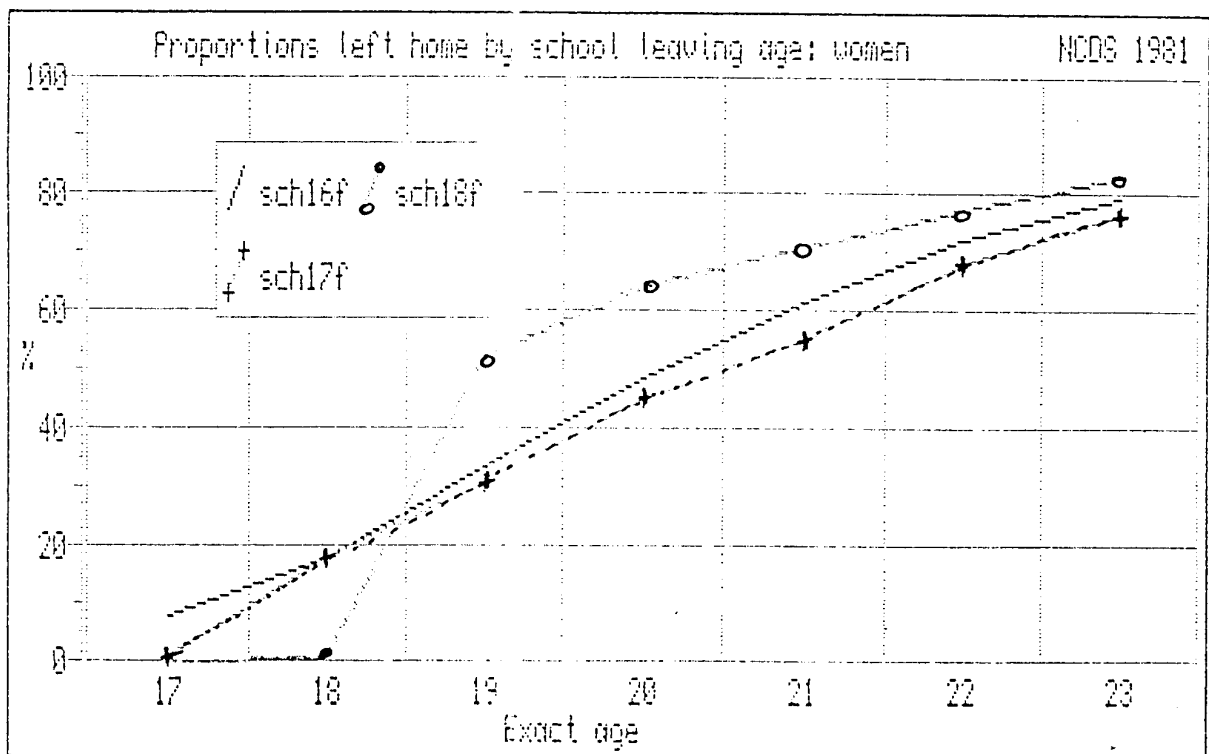


Figure 13

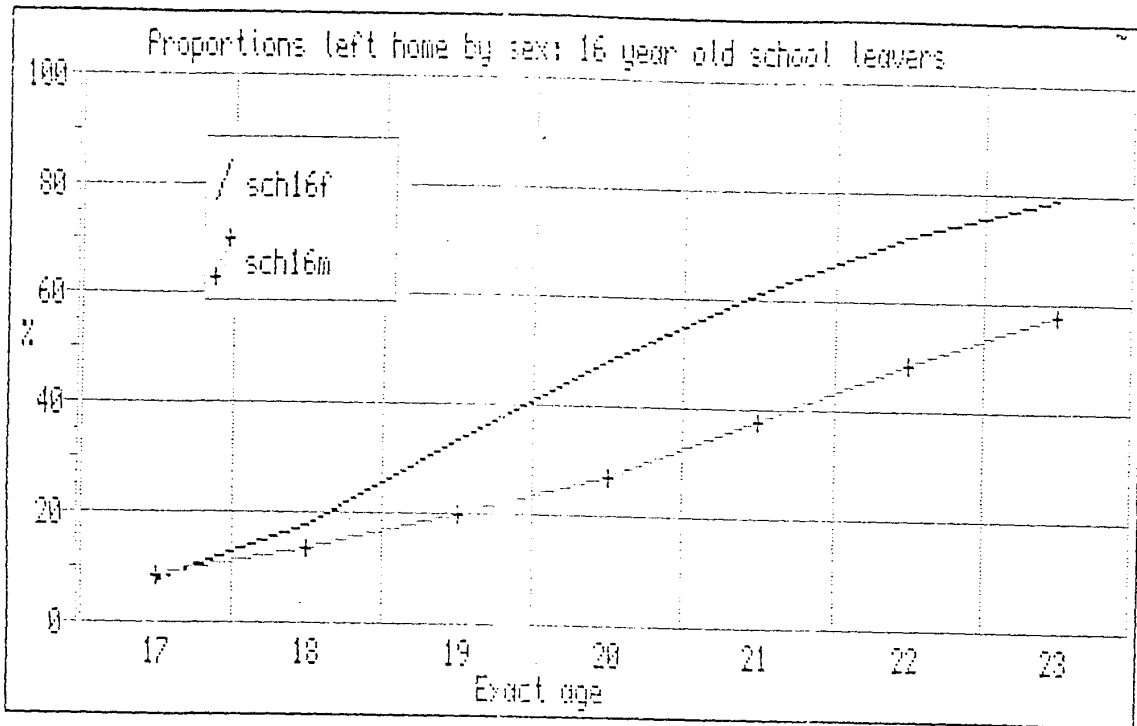


Figure 14

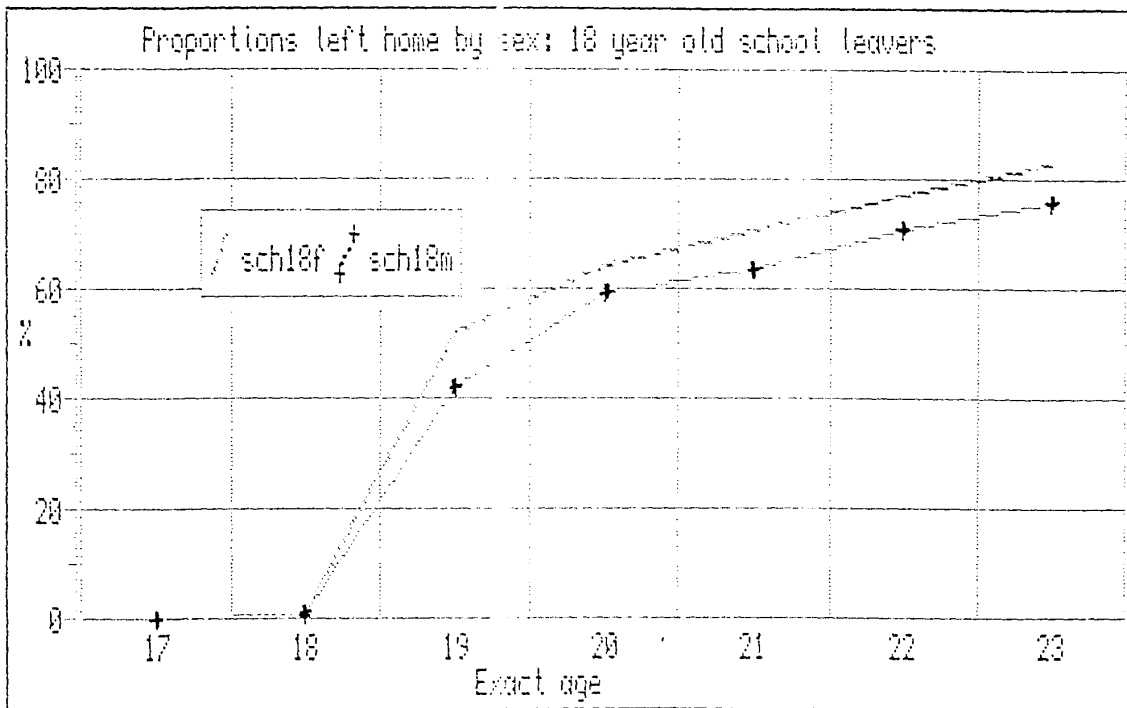
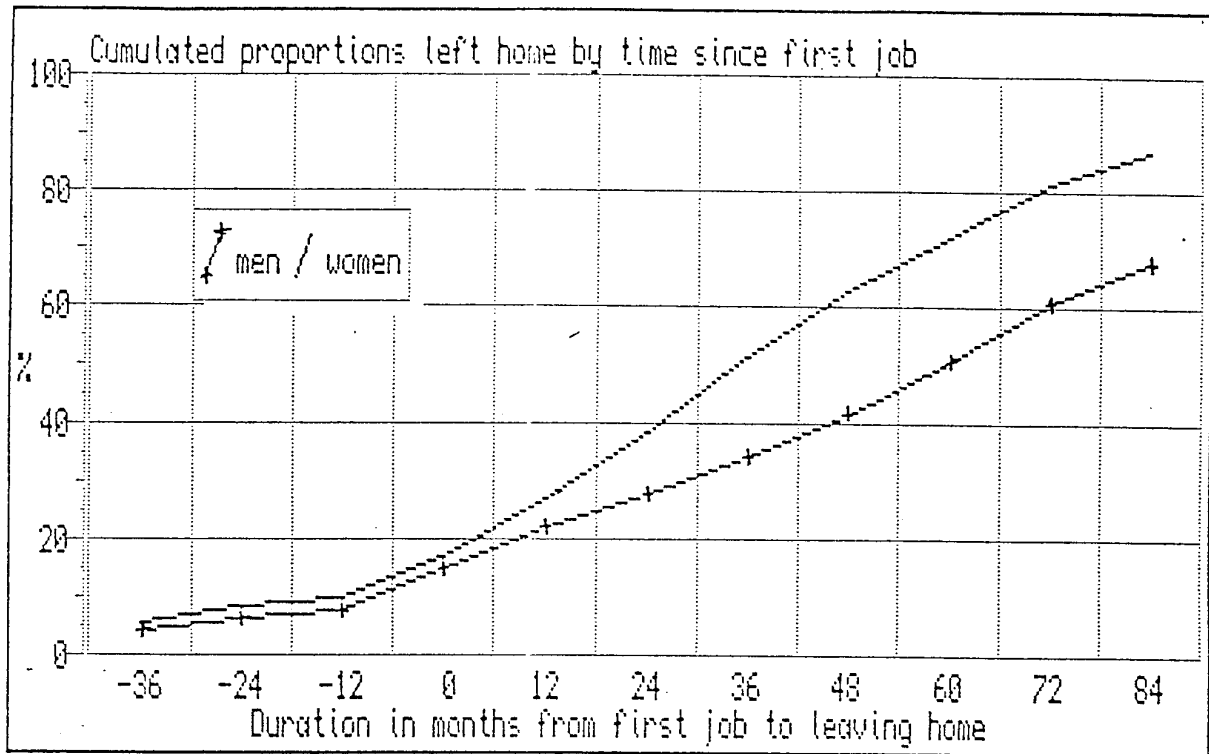


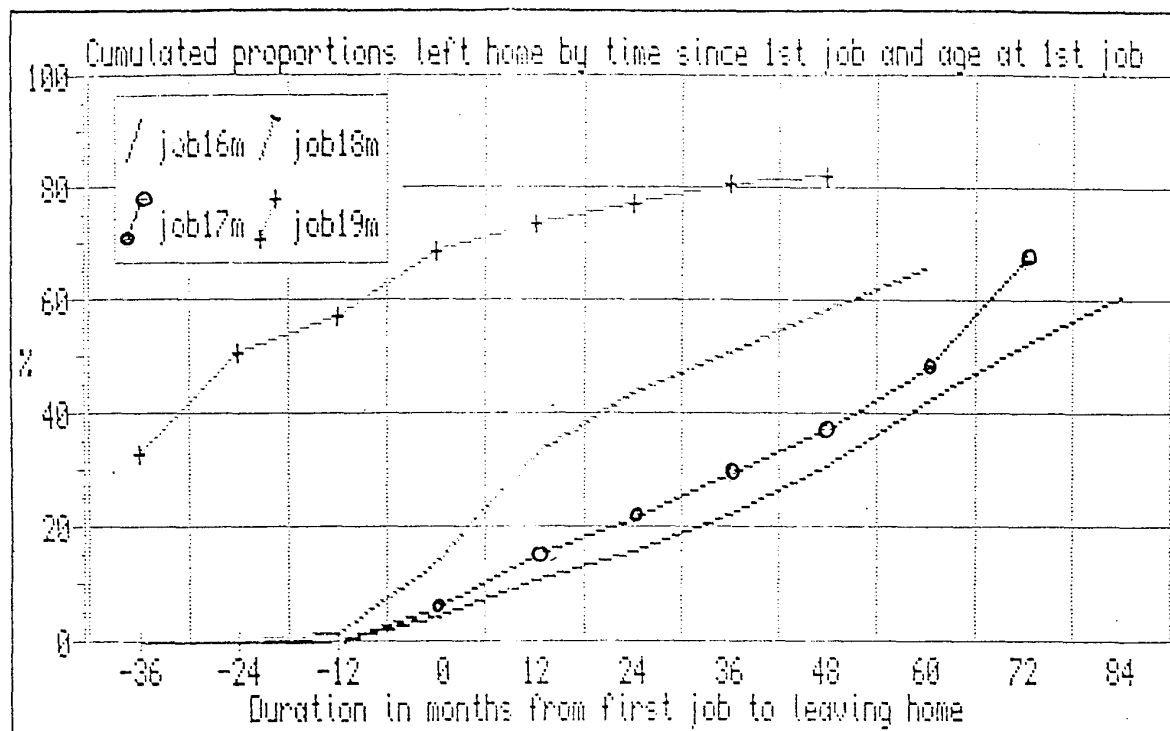
Figure 15



Quartile distributions in months

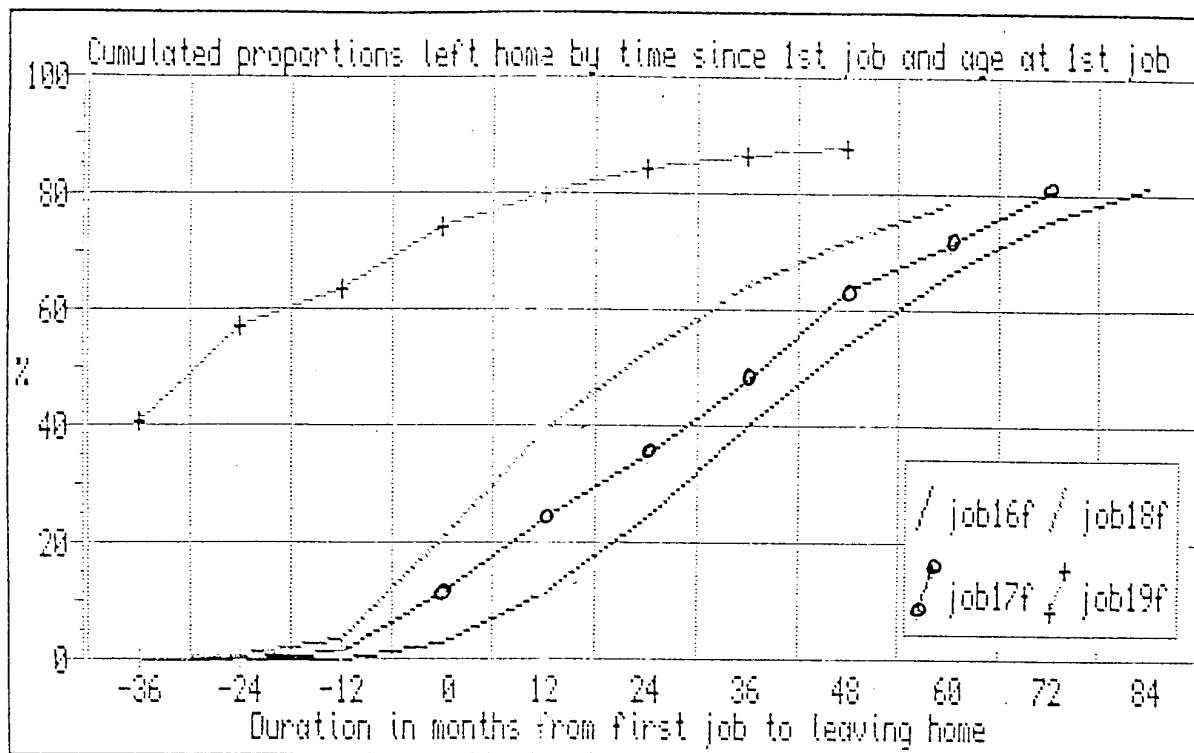
	Men	Women
Lower quartile	18	10
Median	59	36
Upper quartile	-	62

Figure 16



	Age at first job			
	16	17	18	19 or older
Lower quartile (months)	41	29	7	-37
Median	68	62	36	-24
Upper quartile	-	-	-	17
% left home	64	59	68	83
% starting work	66	9	11	14
Number	4058	570	649	844

Figure 17



	Age at first job			
	16	17	18	19 or older
Lower quartile (months)	24	13	3	-44
Median	44	37	23	-33
Upper quartile	70	63	54	2
% left home	84	82	79	88
% started work	59	12	14	15
Number	3604	749	856	924

FIGURE 18. Sequencing of Transitions: men

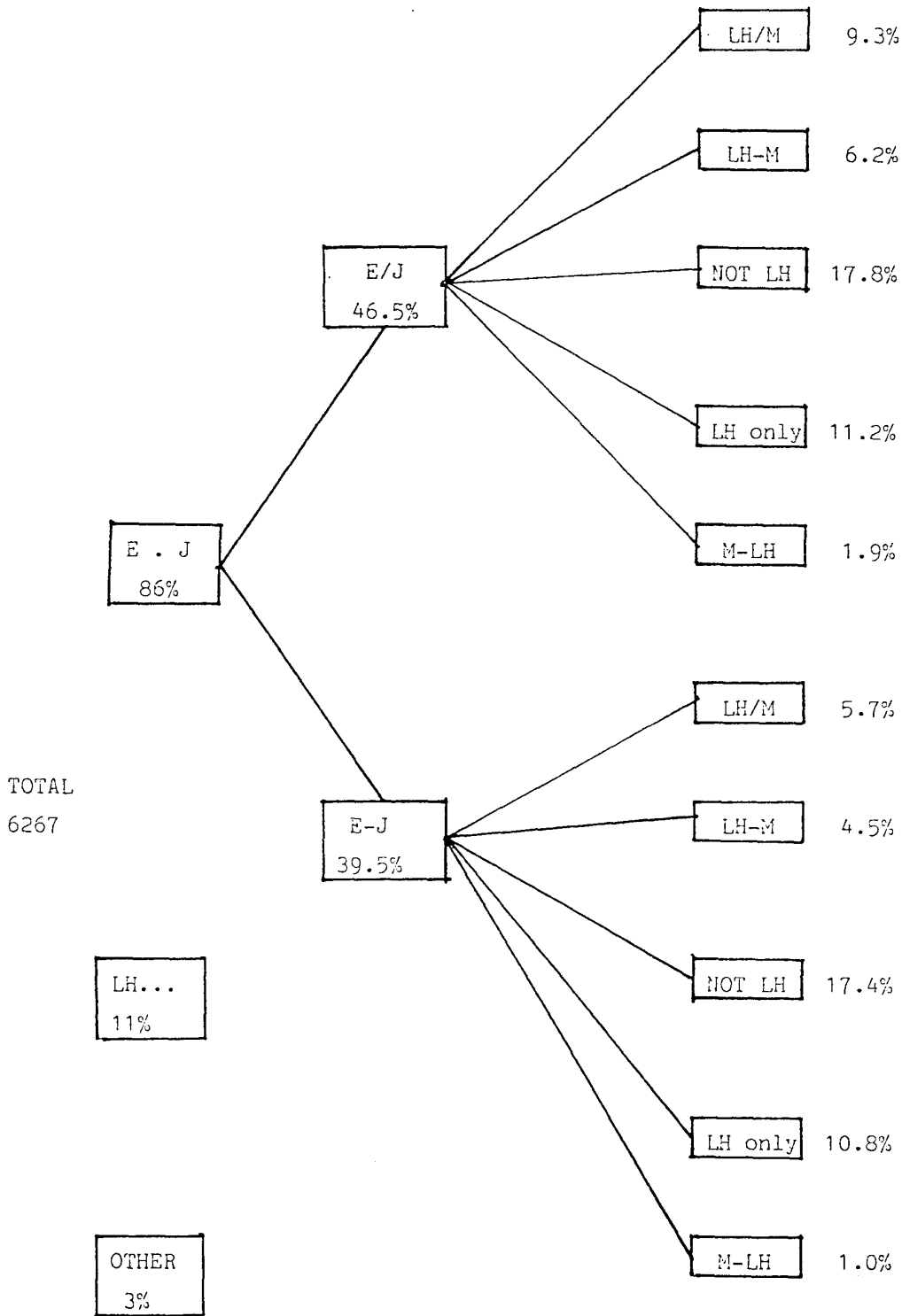


FIGURE 19. Sequencing of Transitions: women

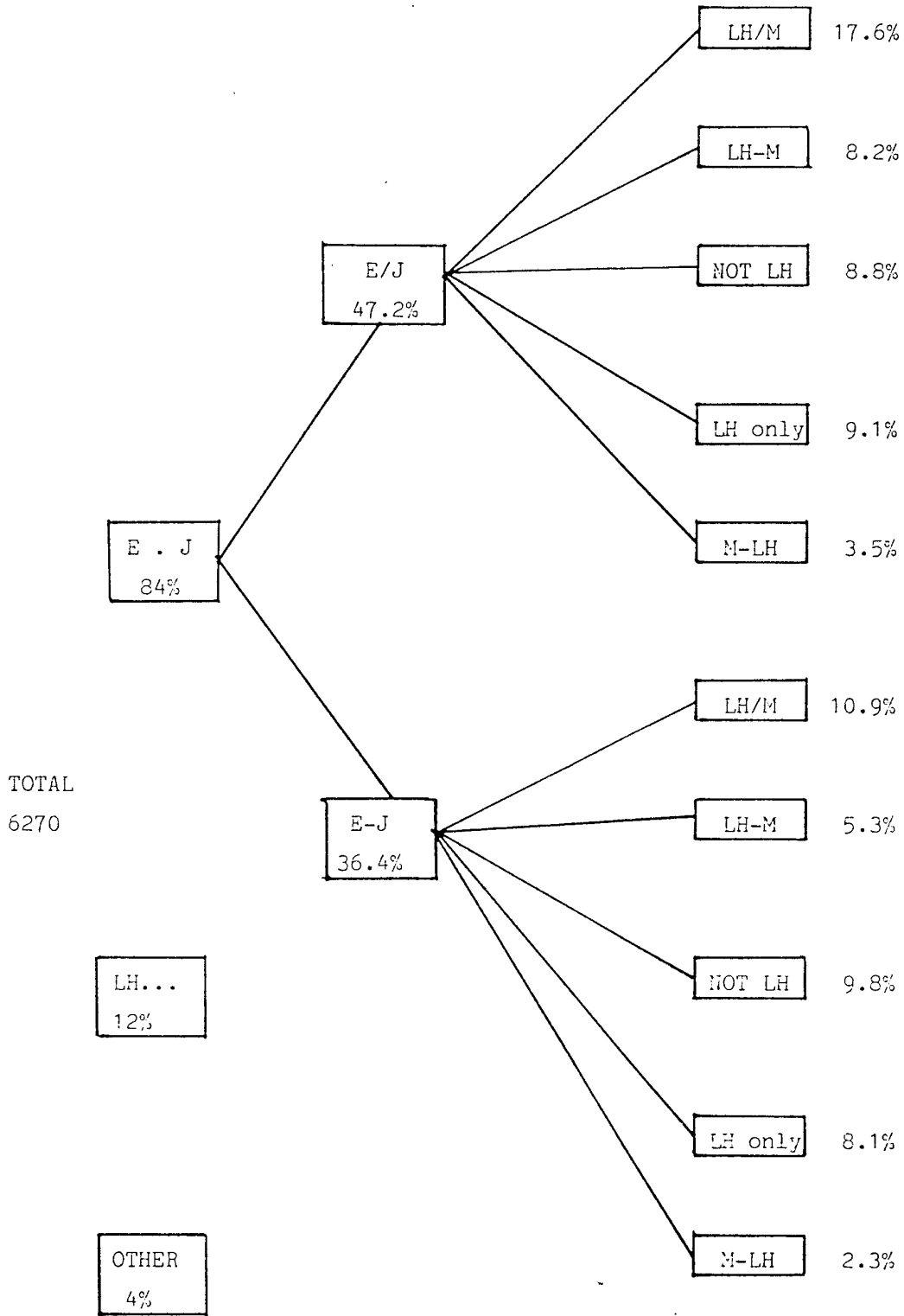


TABLE 1 Living arrangement according to activity status and age for men and women

	Men					Women				
	With parents	With spouse	Alone	Other	Number (=100%)	With parents	With spouse	Alone	Other	Number (=100%)
Student										
16-17	97.8	0.5	0.1	1.7	1603	97.3	0.4	0.0	2.3	1690
18	96.6	0.3	0.3	2.7	326	94.6	0.6	1.1	3.7	353
19	75.8	0.5	5.9	17.7	186	78.9	0.7	1.3	19.1	152
20-1	47.6	1.6	3.1	42.7	382	40.5	3.3	6.8	48.9	294
22-3	27.1	5.4	15.3	51.3	203	29.3	10.5	7.3	52.4	124
24-30	10.4	29.9	12.3	52.6	211	11.1	38.0	14.8	36.1	108
Employed										
16-17	96.4	0.6	0.3	2.8	1514	95.7	0.9	0.3	3.0	1362
18-19	92.3	2.3	0.8	4.1	2243	85.9	6.1	1.0	6.9	2107
20-1	77.7	13.6	2.1	6.6	2480	61.1	24.1	2.8	12.0	2058
22-3	48.6	35.3	4.2	11.3	2419	36.3	44.3	4.3	14.6	1873
24-5	31.2	51.7	5.4	11.6	2491	21.3	56.2	4.9	17.6	1725
26-30	13.7	71.9	5.7	8.7	6627	9.9	70.1	6.3	13.7	3792
Unemployed										
16-17	95.9	1.2	0.1	2.7	664	94.8	1.0	0.5	3.7	562
18-19	84.6	6.4	2.0	7.0	545	70.3	14.2	1.0	14.0	401
20-21	65.7	17.7	4.0	12.5	519	41.9	37.2	4.1	16.8	320
22-23	43.8	31.6	5.6	13.9	428	28.3	49.6	2.3	19.8	258
24-5	38.9	40.1	4.3	16.7	391	16.0	67.0	2.0	15.0	200
26-30	23.6	53.1	5.4	12.8	745	5.9	74.4	3.6	16.1	473
Inactive										
16-17	93.6	-	1.3	5.2	78	56.7	23.9	4.5	14.9	134
18-19	81.3	1.6	-	17.2	64	14.3	55.5	0.6	29.1	310
20-21	64.3	3.9	3.6	23.3	56	5.9	73.9	0.7	19.5	595
22-23	47.3	34.6	1.3	16.3	55	2.9	80.7	0.1	16.3	353
24-25	42.0	42.0	2.0	14.0	50	2.6	86.7	0.4	10.3	1133
26-30	29.1	49.5	4.3	17.1	117	1.2	89.3	0.3	9.2	3467

Source: 1991 Labour Force Survey

TABLE 2 Transitions experienced by exact age 17 to 23 according to sex: cumulated proportions and quartiles

Transitions	Exact age							Quartiles (years)			
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	Inter-Quartile range
Men											
Left full-time education	66.3	75.1	85.5	88.7	89.8	94.4	97.5	16.3	16.3	17.9	1.6
Entered first job	65.1	74.2	84.4	87.9	89.2	93.2	96.6	16.3	16.4	18.2	1.9
Left home	6.3	11.1	24.7	34.1	42.8	52.7	61.4	19.1	21.7	-	-
² First cohabiting union	0.3	1.1	2.4	4.4	7.1	10.5	13.6	-	-	-	-
First marriage	0.1	1.0	3.0	7.4	14.6	22.8	31.6	22.2	[25.7] ¹	-	-
First child	0.2	0.7	1.8	3.6	6.4	10.1	15.2	-	-	-	-
Women											
Left full-time education	60.1	71.9	85.6	88.2	89.7	94.7	98.4	16.3	16.3	18.2	1.9
Entered first job	58.0	69.8	83.5	86.4	88.1	92.3	96.5	16.3	16.5	18.3	2.0
Left home	6.0	15.0	37.0	51.5	62.7	72.4	79.4	18.5	19.9	22.3	3.8
² First cohabiting union	1.1	3.1	5.8	9.2	12.5	15.9	19.2	-	-	-	-
First marriage	1.8	6.2	13.9	24.3	35.2	45.3	54.4	20.1	22.4	[27+] ¹	-
First child	1.7	4.8	8.8	13.1	17.9	23.6	29.6	22.2	[26.6] ¹	-	-

Source: NCDS 4 1981

1. Figures in brackets refer to estimates for vital registration statistics, OPCS unpublished

2. Excludes marriages

TABLE 3
Comparison of LFS and NCDS results on first leaving home

Age	Men		Women	
	LFS	NCDS	LFS	NCDS
16	97.8	94.2	96.7	94.6
17	95.9	89.5	93.3	86.3
18	93.6	76.1	85.4	64.3
19	86.9	66.8	69.4	49.8
20	79.1	53.1	54.3	38.4
21	65.0	48.2	39.5	28.2
22	51.6	39.3	31.0	21.1
N	12,197	5,267	11,891	6270

LFS = Labour Force Survey, 1981

NCDS = National Child Development Study, 1981

TABLE 4
Quartiles of distributions of ages at leaving home
according to sex and school-leaving age

	Age left school			All
	16	17	18 or older	
Men				
Quartiles ages (years)				
Lower quartile	19.75	19.3	18.6	19.1
Median	22.75	22.4	19.6	21.7
Upper quartile	-	-	22.8	-
Proportion left by age 23	58.0	56.5	75.5	61.4
Number	4453	556	1258	6267
Women				
Quartiles ages (years)				
Lower quartile	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5
Median	20.1	20.5	18.8	19.9
Upper quartile	22.4	22.8	21.5	22.3
Proportion left by age 23	79.0	76.2	82.3	79.4
Number	4460	585	1225	6270

Source NCDS 4, 1981

TABLE 5
Distribution of reasons for leaving home by sex and age at leaving home

Reason	Men					Women				
	Age	left	home			Age	left	home		
	<17 %	18-19 %	20-21 %	22-3 ² %	All %	<17 %	18-19 %	20-21 %	22-3 ² %	All %
To get married/live as married	9.3	19.1	59.3	67.9	39.1	32.4	39.8	72.4	78.3	52.0
To set up home on own	4.9	5.4	12.5	14.0	9.1	9.1	6.8	8.9	9.9	8.2
To undertake an educational or training course	12.8	48.9	6.4	1.8	21.2	13.3	31.7	4.3	2.2	17.6
To take up a job or look for work	50.0	14.9	13.1	8.6	18.7	20.2	12.3	6.4	4.2	11.0
Wanted to leave because of friction at home	11.6	4.9	3.5	2.6	5.1	16.5	5.6	3.4	2.4	6.4
Accommodation poor	7.6	5.2	4.2	4.7	5.1	6.2	3.3	3.9	2.7	0.9
Other negative ¹ reasons	3.9	1.6	0.9	0.5	1.5	2.3	0.5	0.7	0.2	3.9
Total number (=100%)	658	1412	1164	852	4086	860	2283	1342	668	5153

Source: NCDS 4 1981

1. Includes "has asked to leave because of friction at home and no longer allowed to stay"

2. Includes those who had left home by the date of interview.

TABLE 6
Proportions (%) who returned home according to
reason left home

Reason for leaving home	Men		Women	
	%	N	%	N
"Marriage"	11.4	1564	10.7	2588
Set up on own	27.0	381	26.5	419
Education	53.4	814	43.4	865
Job	50.0	738	54.0	548
Negative reasons	46.5	510	44.3	566
Total	33.0	4007	26.3	4986

Source NCDS4 1981

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