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# **Beyond Good Intentions: The Decision-Making Process of Leaving the Family of Origin in Italy**

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## **Abstract**

It is well established that the departure from the parental home of young Italian adults occurs at a particularly late age, especially when compared to northern European countries. Moreover, in Italy a large gap exists between young people's aspirations and their subsequent realization. This study aims to explore the factors favouring or hampering the successful achievement of residential independence from the family of origin. Using data from the longitudinal surveys "Family and Social Subjects", carried out by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) in 2003 and 2007, we analyze leaving home as a mid-term decision-making process.

Our results provide empirical evidence that the inability to find a stable job reduces young adults' autonomy.

Net of employment status, attitudes and social norms also have an important effect on the intention to leave the family home. The socio-cultural status of the family of origin specifically favours the successful realization of the behaviour. Notably, this effect is gender-specific, with women more influenced by the mother and men by the father.

## 1. Introduction

Leaving the parental home, together with marriage, childbearing, and entering into the labour market, is one of the milestones on the path to adulthood (among others: Marini 1985; Avery et al. 1992; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993; Billari and Liefbroer 2007).

Compared to previous generations, in western countries young adults' pathways to achieving residential independence are experienced later in life. Within this general pattern there is a persistent, strong geographical heterogeneity in the reasons for (Aassve et al. 2002) and in the timing of leaving the family of origin (Iacovu 2002; Corijn and Klizing 2001). In particular, Italy is among the European countries with the most accentuated delay (Ongaro 2001; Eurostat 2009).

An explanation for the peculiarities of the Italian context can be found in a combination of cultural, economic, and institutional reasons. On the one hand, the presence of strong intergenerational ties is consistent with a long permanence in the family of origin (Dalla Zuanna 2001; Dalla Zuanna and Micheli 2004; Scabini et al. 2006). On the other hand, economic and social restrictions may affect the decision-making process, hampering expectations of reaching an independent adulthood. In particular, the unfavourable labour market and a public welfare ungenerous towards the young generations tend to discourage individual autonomy (Ferrera 1996; Saraceno 1994; Livi Bacci 2008; Billari et al. 2008). This may widen the gap between young people's aspirations and their subsequent realization. According to Istat reports (Istat 2009), only 53% of young Italian people aged 18-39 who declared in 2004 the certain intention of leaving home in the next three years were effectively able to achieve their goal.

The scientific literature emphasizes the impact of structural, ideational, and background factors on behaviour but, due also to the lack of suitable panel data, very few papers explicitly address the process of formation of intentions and the link with their realization. Moreover, most of these studies analyse reproductive choices and rarely the leaving-home process.

Using microdata from the longitudinal survey "Family and Social Subjects", carried out by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) in 2003, with a second wave in 2007, this paper aims to study the importance of the employment condition and, net of this, the role of parental socio-cultural resources in the decision process of leaving home in a familialistic context.

The paper is organized as follows: In the second section we review the theoretical background; data, variables, and method used are illustrated in the third section; the subsequent section contains descriptive and analytical results; and in the final section we provide concluding remarks and discussion.

## 2. Background

In the advanced economies the capacity to control and manage risks has diminished and, as a consequence, individuals' life trajectories are now more complex than in the past. In particular, post-industrialization and globalization, with their impact on the labour market, have created new opportunities, but also new social risks have emerged.

The literature on the correspondent innovation of welfare systems highlights the particularly problematic situations of young people. This is because new risks are largely connected with difficulties entering into the labour-market, coping with job instability, and income discontinuity (Taylor-Gooby 2004; Ranci 2009). Especially in countries with institutions more rigid in their responses to the potentially harmful effects of social changes, young people tend to encounter greater difficulties in finding a steady job and in attaining economic independence. This situation generates insecurity and uncertainty about the future, and consequently young people tend to postpone choices that involve the assumption of responsibilities (Blossfeld et al. 2005; Vignoli et al. 2012).

In this challenging scenario, the condition of young people appears to be particularly problematic in southern European countries.

Italy, in particular, has one of the highest rates of long-term unemployment and one of the lowest youth participation rates. Moreover, young people are employed largely on atypical contracts and are underemployed. According to Eurostat data, Italy is one of the European countries with the highest incidence of young people "Not in education, employment or training" (Eurostat 2009; Ferrara et al. 2010).

In recent decades, new social risks affected young Italian cohorts in particular in terms of precarious employment, unstable and carousel careers, and exclusion from welfare entitlements (Barbieri and Scherer 2009; Reyneri et al. 2004; Kahn 2010; De Rose et al. 2008; OECD 2011).

The fact that social expenditure in Italy is far more absorbed by old-age risks than favouring the new generations—particularly with regard to unemployment, housing, and social exclusion (Pizzuti 2006; Iacovu and Skew 2011)—it renders young people more vulnerable when they leave home and heightens their dependence on the family of origin. Moreover, "Active Labour Market Policies" are lacking, in particular for what concerns public employment services, public training programs, and employment subsidies (Eurostat 2012).

It is not, therefore, surprising that Italy is also one of the European countries with the highest delay of the main events in the transition to adulthood (see e.g., Cavalli and Galland 1996; Cook and Furstenberg 2002; Billari et al. 2001), and this is particularly true for the exit from the family of origin (Ongaro 2001; Micheli and Rosina 2009; Rosina et al. 2007). While in most of Europe at the age of 25 the majority of young people live independently from their parents, in Italy the median ages at leaving home are 27,5 for females and 30 for males (Iacovu and Skew 2011).

The huge diversity observed in when and how young people leave the nest in Europe also stems from cultural and anthropological factors that interact with the great forces of economic and social change. This interaction produces unforeseen implications on the system of constraints and opportunities encountered by young people in building their adult lives, and on their expectations and behaviours.

Together with the socio-economic constraints, a mix of cultural elements such as ideational factors, the persistence of the social norm, and the emotional and economic ties between children and parents, jointly contribute to the decision to leave (Palomba 2001). Billari and Liefbroer (2007) for instance, referring to a Dutch sample, state that beliefs and parental norms play a decisive role in determining the age at which young adults leave home. An et al. (2003) note the role of parents' attitudes and beliefs in adolescents' choices to start an independent life. Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1993) show that the expectations that parents have about the timing of their child's leaving home affect the event significantly.

More specifically, the study of the transformation in the transition to adulthood cannot ignore the role of family ties and intergenerational solidarity. Various studies show that Southern European countries are characterized by the presence of solid and enduring relations between parents and children (Reher 1998; Dalla Zuanna and Micheli 2004). This strong relationship expresses itself through support by the parental family of the young adult, not only up to the age of consent, but also until he/she has reached a satisfactory employment position. Parental support tends to continue even after the children have formed their own families. Strong ties induce adult children to live close to their parents, and this proximity favours a constant flow of material and emotional resources in subsequent life-phases (Barbagli et al. 2003; Tomassini et al. 2003). The crucial role of the family of origin in Mediterranean countries can be considered both the cause and effect of the under-development of public welfare systems able to adequately assist young people in the crucial events of their transition to adulthood (Saraceno 1994). Following Reher (1998), Iacovu (2011) states that in the Southern European area "togetherness" (a sense of belonging or kinship) is more valued than independence and this is consistent with different patterns of intergenerational co-residence.

In general, various international studies specifically focus on the impact of the characteristics of the family of origin—in particular the economic and social conditions of the parents—for the timing and main reasons for leaving home (De Jong-Gierveld et al. 1991; De Marco and Cosner Berzin 2008; Santarelli and Cottone 2009; Rosina and Fraboni 2004). The quality of the parents' housing also plays a key role in orienting the decision of potential nest-leavers (Mulder 2013).

Several research studies have shown the presence of a positive impact of a young person's predicted wage level and a negative effect of parents' income on the propensity to leave home (Avery et al. 1992; Whittington and Peters 1996). Moreover, Laferrere (2005) found a non-linear effect of social class.

In various cases (Nilsson and Strandh 1999; Mulder and Clark 2000; Berrington et al. 2013), the parental characteristics markedly reduce or lose their significant impact net of the young adult's own characteristics (in particular, education and working conditions).

The family can be considered an insurance mechanism against employment risk (Mc Elroy 1985) and this role is expected to be stronger in a context characterized by a weak public welfare system (Chiuri and Del Boca 2010).

Specifically concerning the Italian context—in a rare case using panel data (two waves of the ECHP) for the analysis of the process of starting an independent life—Aassve et al. (2002) find both personal and parental income levels to be crucial factors in the decision to leave home. They conclude that these results suggest that stable employment is an important prerequisite for men to start their own household, whereas for women the presence of a partner seems to be the most important factor.

The interaction of material conditions and cultural beliefs in determining behavioural intentions and subsequent behaviour has been framed in sociological literature as the “Theory of Reasoned Action” (TRA) and the “Theory of Planned Behavior” (TPB).

The TRA (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) and its subsequent evolution into the TPB (Ajzen 1988, 1991) represent here our theoretical reference in linking the intention to a specific behaviour and its realization. This model has been used recently in demography to investigate the decisional process allowing an individual to plan and to realize specific life course choices. The TPB has been developed to predict the intention to engage in a behaviour at a specific time and place. The theory aims at explaining all behaviours over which individuals have the ability to exert self-control: the central aspect of the TPB is that intentions are good indicators for predicting behaviour in the case who people act under volitional control.

In the causal chain the main antecedents of behaviour are the intentions that are in turn affected by three sets of factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

Following Ajzen (1991), attitudes represent “the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question”, subjective norms refer to the customary codes of behaviour in a group or larger cultural context, and perceived behavioural control refers to people’s perceptions of their ability to perform a given behaviour.

Therefore, TPB asserts that the realization of a specific behaviour under volitional control is predicted by the formation of positive intentions of performing that behaviour. The formation of intentions is the consequence of the interactions of a system of personal beliefs and collective perceptions that are in turn affected by a set of background factors, including both material constraints and value orientations.

TPB applications in a demographic context have mainly been limited only to fertility matters (Billari et al. 2009; Ajzen and Klobas 2013), even if this approach is appropriate to evaluate all life course events on which individuals act under volitional control and where the intentions are not a deterministic premise of their realization. Therefore, this theoretical model appears suitable, too, for analysing the decision to leave home.

### **3. Data, variables, and model**

#### **3.1. Data**

We analyse the intention and the realization of leaving the parental home using data from the panel survey “Family and Social Subjects”, carried out by the Italian National Statistical Institute (Istat). The first wave was conducted in November 2003 and it is part of the UNECE population unit’s “Generations and Gender Program”. The Italian sample is composed of approximately 50,000 males and females who were interviewed on topics regarding household demographic and socio-economic characteristics, children, partnership, parents and parental home, fertility, health and well being, individuals’ and partner’s work and income, and values and attitudes. The second wave, promoted by the Labour and Social Policies Minister, was gathered in February 2007 on a subsample of approximately 10,000 individuals aged 18 to 64 in 2003, with a specific focus on working careers from a gender perspective. It also contains information on intentions and realizations of the main steps in the transition to adulthood process. We restricted the analysis to the sample of individuals whose age was between 18 and 34 years old in the first wave (belonging to 1969-1985 cohorts) and thus between 21 and 38 in the second. Our final dataset has a sample size of 2,605 individuals, of which 1,640 were still living with at least one parent.



We used the first wave to study the factors that act in forming young adults' intentions of leaving home in the following three years and the second wave to evaluate the factors that impede or facilitate their transition to independent life.

### **3.2. Variables**

The empirical analysis has been conducted separately for males and females since there are substantial gender differences in the way adult roles are undertaken, even if in the last century these differences have progressively narrowed (Fussell and Furstenberg 2005; Chiuri and Del Boca 2010).

Our dependent variable accounts for the fact that the individual has left the parental home in the time between the two waves and therefore it consists of a dummy variable that assumes the value "1" if the individual lives autonomously and "0" if he/she is still living in the parental home.

In order to analyse the factors favouring or hampering the effective exit from the parental home, we consider three sets of covariates that might have an impact on the studied process: (1) individual socio-economic factors, (2) background and family characteristics, and (3) attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control. Age, level of education, employment condition, partnership status, other autonomous experiences and religiosity belong to the first category. Number of siblings, parents' level of education, mothers' activity status, and parental divorce lie in the group of variables related to the family of origin. Finally, framing the analysis within the TPB, we account for factors concerning the three major elements that Fishbein and Ajzen relate to the formation of intentions—that is attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control linked to the specific phenomenon of leaving the parental home. In the next paragraphs we briefly outline the theoretical reasons for controlling for the above-cited factors.

In this paper we are mainly interested in evaluating the impact of the employment condition and the parents' characteristics on the possibility of realizing the intention to leave the parental home. These are our main explanatory variables, the others essentially have the role of control covariates.

Our main hypothesis is that in Italy, which is characterized by a familialistic welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1999; Aassve et al. 2002), employment and parental resources are particularly important in favouring the possibility of converting a positive intention of leaving the parental home into an effective behaviour.

### 3.2.1. *Individual socio-economic characteristics*

#### *Level of education*

We do not have specific expectations about the effect of education on the intention to leave, but we can anticipate that individual resources can generally favour the possibility of obtaining a desired goal. Therefore, our hypothesis is that people with a higher level of education willing to start an independent life are more able to effectively realize this behaviour.

#### *Employment*

Assuming that economic assets represent a prerequisite for becoming independent from the parental home, having a job, and in particular being permanently employed, is expected to be a crucial condition for achieving positive intentions to exit. As a matter of fact, young adults who are still enrolled in education or without a (stable) job, *ceteris paribus*, have fewer material resources than those who are employed. Moreover, the increasing economic uncertainty deriving from the absence of a (stable) job could prevent them from seeking residential independence. If this is typically true in other European countries (Mills and Blossfeld 2005), in Italy it frequently happens that young people even with stable employment, especially males, carry on living in the parental home because their income is not believed to be enough to start residing independently, or simply because they wish to keep their current living standard and save money (Menniti et al. 2000).

In the empirical analysis we split the variable into five categories: students (our reference), unemployed, people with a permanent job, people with fixed-term employment, and self-employed.

Consistent with most of the literature, we expect that young adults (permanently) employed are more likely both to be willing and to succeed in realizing their intention to form an independent residence with respect to other categories.

### 3.2.2. *Background assets*

#### *Parental education*

Among the background assets considered here, we believe that one of the more crucial aspects is parental education as an indicator of the level of material resources available for young adults' independence (Billari and Liefbroer 2007). Theoretically, a higher availability of background resources could more likely support young adults' residential autonomy (at least under the accommodation viewpoint). However, in Italy previous studies found that the higher the parental social class the later young adults leave home (Barbagli et al. 2003). On the one hand, young adults'

perceived well being inside the parental home could raise the opportunity cost of leaving and thus depress their expectation of becoming independent. On the other hand, a higher parental level of education could result in more economic resources available for their children's autonomy. Indeed, a higher level of parental education might affect the actual exit either as an economic support to the expenses burden or as a cultural asset that positively influences young adults' approach towards residential autonomy. Traditionally, in the Italian context, the father's education is considered a proxy of the household income level, since the father still represents the breadwinner figure. The mother's educational level would affect her children's human capital and, in this particular case, her children's positive attitude towards a sense of seeking independence.

In our model we are able to better clarify the impact of parental socio-cultural resources on the leaving home process, not only exploring the distinct effect by gender, but also distinguishing the different impact on the intention and on the behaviour. In particular, especially in a context where the public welfare system does not support young adults' autonomy, we can assume that a high level of education of the parents will reduce young individuals' intention to exit, but increase the likelihood that they actually reach independence, if they intend to.

#### *Number of siblings*

Some scholars assert that one of the main causes of the later age at leaving the parental home in Italy is the fertility decline that has occurred in the last 40 years and the subsequent family size reduction (Barbagli et al. 2003; Livi Bacci 2008). As a matter of fact, in larger families the quantity of available material and non-material resources are diluted (Blake 1989; Ferrari and Dalla Zuanna 2010). Moreover, in larger families young adults usually have social and autonomy limitations due to lack of space and the presence of siblings (Menniti et al. 2000).

In the present analysis we assume that a larger family size, here meant as living with two or more siblings, positively affects the intention to become residentially independent from parents and its actual realization, since the lack of autonomy in a crowded household could motivate young adults to leave, when compared to single-children and to those with only one sibling.

#### *Parental divorce*

The last background factor that we use in the empirical analysis concerns young adults' experience of parental marital dissolution. Divorce and the creation of step-families are quite new phenomena for the Italian society, and interestingly, their impact on young adults' patterns of leaving home are becoming significant (Barbagli et al. 2003). However, whether they facilitate or prevent young adults' intentions and behaviours surrounding leaving the family home is still

unclear. On the one hand, parental conflict may have created a hostile environment to live in, and therefore young adults may be more oriented toward leaving home. On the other hand, children of divorced people may be less prone to marry (Thornton 1991) and, as noted above, since in Italy the main motivation to start living independently is marriage (Di Giulio and Rosina 2007), we could expect that this variable increases the probability of actually leaving.

### 3.2.3. *Attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control*

In order to analyse the impact of attitudes towards the intention of leaving the parental home, we performed a factor analysis on a set of related questions provided by the survey. In particular, young adults were asked whether their decision to leave would improve or worsen a) their independence, b) their job opportunities, c) their economic situation, d) their sexual life, e) other people's opinions, and f) their joy and life satisfaction. The first resulting factor relates to the individual's increased independence, while the second is linked to their economic and job opportunity improvement.

Social norms are also extracted by means of a factor analysis on a set of items about the level of agreement of "important others", that is mother, father, and friends. The three items were reduced into one factor.

Finally, perceived behavioural control is summarized by a factor based on the question of whether the eventual choice to leave in the next three years would depend on a) individual economic situation, b) her/his working conditions improvement, c) his/her living arrangement conditions, d) his/her health, and e) the improvement of his/her partner's working conditions.

We do not have specific expectations for the other covariates (age, area of residence, religion, presence of a partner, past experience out of the parental home), which are included in our model merely in the role of control factors.

### 3.3. Model

Because we have a binary response for the purpose of jointly estimating the determinants of intentions and of related behaviour, we adopt a two-equation modelling strategy, using a bivariate probit. We focused our study on young women aged between 18 and 34 at the time of the first interview (thus aged 21 to 37/38 three years later) and living in the parental home. Using a latent variable approach, the model can be specified as follows:

$$\begin{cases} y_{i1}^* = x_{i1}^T \beta_1 + u_{i1} \\ y_{i2}^* = x_{i2}^T \beta_2 + u_{i2} \end{cases} \quad \begin{pmatrix} u_{i1} \\ u_{i2} \end{pmatrix} \sim N \left[ \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}; \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \rho \\ \rho & 1 \end{pmatrix} \right]$$

$y_{i1}^*$  is the dependent variable of the first regression, indicating the propensity of an individual to be intentioned ( $y_{i1} = 1$ ) or not intentioned ( $y_{i1} = 0$ ) to leave the parental home between 2003 and 2007;  $y_{i2}^*$  is the dependent variable of the second equation, where  $y_{i2}^*$  is a continuous latent variable for the event of home leaving labelled as  $y_{i2} = 1$  and indicating the propensity of exiting for each individual. The correlation between the error terms underlines the presence of a potential link between omitted variables that may affect both the likelihood of intending to leave the nest in the first wave and the effective departure from the parental home after three years. The decision to infer a correlation between the error terms of the two equations stems from the recent discussion that the empirical literature has had around TPB. In fact, unlike the standard paradigm emerging from Ajzen (1988, 1991), which considers the effect of background factors on the intentions only through the mediation of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, Mencarini et al. (2011) find that background factors also have a direct impact and affect both intentions and behaviour (with respect to childbearing). Given that the data used in the analysis are longitudinal and the second interview took place three years after the first, it is reasonable to assume that changes in the individual background circumstances, such as a change in employment status, partnership, or the completion of the educational path may modify the intentions of leaving home or the realization of the planned behaviour. Hence, observable background factors (that in literature are considered suitable predictors of the departure from home) are included among the determinants of the intentions and of the behaviour. Furthermore, since some of these confounders may be omitted in the model or unobservable, we decided to test and eventually take into account the presence of a correlation between the errors.

Going into more detail in the model specification, we must recall that identification conditions allow an identical vector of covariates for both the equations, even if the econometric literature suggests that more reliable estimates of parameters are obtained if at least one variable included in  $x_{i1}$  does not appear in the other equation. Following the TPB (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975), we find that three sets of variables associated with the intentions of leaving home do not directly affect subsequent behaviour: indeed, attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and social norms are directly linked only to intentions.

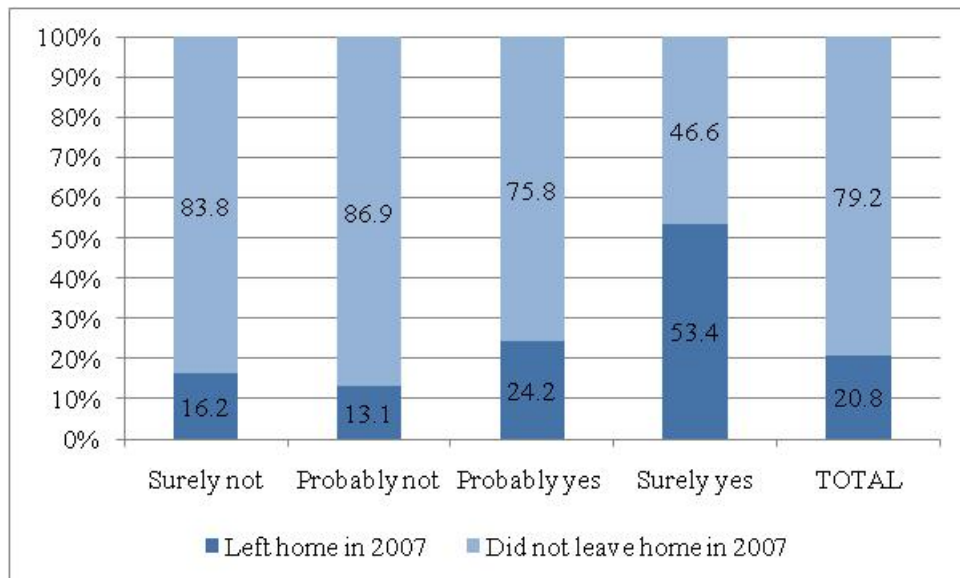
Observable confounders, taken into consideration for controlling changes in intentions and their realization due to a change in respondents' background, are included both in  $x_{i2}$  and  $x_{i1}$  instead.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Description

Respondents were asked about their intentions in 2003 in the following way: “Do you intend to leave the parental home in the next three years?” The four different options presented in the survey were: “Surely not”, “Probably not”, “Probably yes”, and “Surely yes”. Figure 1 presents the percentages of people who answered the question according to the subsequent behaviour.

**Figure 1. Realization of intention to leave the parental home within 3 years.**



From Figure 1 we can see, as expected and suggested in the literature, that positively intentioned respondents are more likely to realize their goal. In particular, young adults who declared their being surely intentioned to leave show the highest rate of departure in 2007. However, only 24.2% of people answering “Probably yes” actually left the parental home by the time of the second interview.

In Table 1 we computed descriptive statistics on the covariates included in the model. From these data we can obtain a basic indication of the main characteristics of individuals according to their intention to leave the parental home expressed in 2003 and their actual outcome observed 3 years later. From this crude picture, we can see that people more able to succeed in realizing their intention to leave tend to be on average older females with a medium/high level of education, are employed either permanently or temporarily, have a previous experience outside the home, have a

partner, reside in the Centre-North area of Italy, are only children or have only one sibling, their parents' level of education is medium-high, and they experienced a parental divorce.

**Table 1. Conditional distributions of the independent variables according to the combined categories of the response variables (intention and behaviour of leaving home).**

	Intende d to leave and left (n=200)	Intended to leave and did NOT leave (n=497)	Did NOT intend to leave and did NOT leave (n=778)	Did NOT intend to leave and left (n=165)	Total (n=1.640)
<b>Variables</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>					
Age 25 and more	92	83	58	67	70
Age less than 25	8	17	42	33	30
<b>Gender</b>					
Females	52	47	41	47	45
Males	48	53	59	53	55
<b>Level of education</b>					
Low	11	22	30	19	24
Medium-high	89	78	70	81	76
<b>Employment</b>					
Permanently job	38	34	26	24	30
Fixed-term job	70	62	52	45	56
Self-employment	17	13	8	10	11
Unemployed	16	19	12	16	15
Student	23	27	44	44	36
<b>Past experience out</b>					
Yes	19	10	9	24	12
No	81	90	91	76	88
<b>Partner</b>					
Yes	56	35	26	21	32
No	44	65	74	79	68
<b>Religious</b>					
Yes	41	40	42	47	42
No	59	60	58	53	58
<b>Geographical area</b>					
Centre-north	63	58	61	53	60
South	37	42	39	47	40
<b>Number of siblings</b>					
Only-children-one sibling	70	67	72	64	70
Two or more siblings	30	33	28	36	30
<b>Father's level of education</b>					
Low	57	66	60	52	61
Medium-high	43	34	40	48	39
<b>Mother's level of education</b>					
Low	61	67	59	51	60
Medium-high	39	33	41	49	40
<b>Parent's divorce</b>					
Divorced	8	5	5	67	5
Not divorced	92	95	95	33	95



## 4.2. Results

In order to analyse the net effect of each covariate of interest on the decision process of leaving the family of origin, we performed a multivariate analysis simultaneously on intention and behaviour using the model illustrated in section 3.3. The estimates are displayed in Table 2, where we included only covariates with a significant effect (at the 0.1 level) at least in one equation. For this reason geographical area of residence, number of siblings, past independent experience, and parental divorce are excluded.

**Table 2. Determinants for the intentions of leaving home and their realization.**

		Males		Females	
		coef.	sign.	coef.	sig n.
<b>Equation I: Intention</b>					
Age (ref: less than 25)	<i>Age 25 and more</i>	0.48	***	0.59	***
Educational level 2003 (ref: low)	<i>High</i>	0.10		-0.04	
Employment status 2003 (ref: student)	<i>Self-employed</i>	0.51	**	0.56	**
	<i>Fixed-term employed</i>	0.02		0.35	*
	<i>Permanently employed</i>	0.40	**	0.55	***
	<i>Unemployed</i>	0.53	***	0.17	
Presence of a partner (ref: without partner)	<i>With partner</i>	0.29	**	0.38	***
Father's educational level (ref: low)	<i>High</i>	0.02		0.01	
Mother's educational level (ref: low)	<i>High</i>	-0.06		-0.01	
Negative attitudes towards individual independence	<i>Factor 1</i>	-0.26	***	-0.28	***
Negative attitudes towards economic changes	<i>Factor 2</i>	-0.31	***	-0.37	***
Perceived behavioural control	<i>Factor</i>	0.00		0.02	
Social norms: mother, father, and friends agreement	<i>Factor</i>	-0.24	***	-0.32	***
Intercept		-1.46	***	-1.29	***
<b>Equation II: Behaviour</b>					
Age (ref: less than 25)	<i>Age 25 and more</i>	0.45	**	0.63	***
Educational level 2003 (ref: low)	<i>High</i>	0.39	**	-0.05	
Employment status 2003 (ref: student)	<i>Self-employed</i>	0.40	**	0.82	***
	<i>Fixed-term employed</i>	-0.03		0.05	
	<i>Permanently employed</i>	0.35	**	0.70	***
	<i>Unemployed</i>	0.17		0.63	**
Presence of a partner (ref: without partner)	<i>With partner</i>	0.51	***	0.30	**
Religiosity (ref: religious)	<i>Not religious</i>	-0.02		0.34	**
Father's educational level (ref: low)	<i>High</i>	0.25	*	0.01	
Mother's educational level (ref: low)	<i>High</i>	-0.22		0.46	**
Intercept		-2.86	***	-2.90	***
$\rho$		0.29	***	0.17	*

\*\*\* significant at 0.01 level; \*\* significant at 0.05 level; \* significant at 0.1 level

Our findings suggest that the likelihood of intending to leave home depends significantly upon employment status. In particular, for both males and females, in comparison to the student condition, all the other categories are positively linked to the willingness to project an independent life. This is particularly true for people having a permanent job or being self-employed. Unemployment is significant only for men and a fixed-term job only for women.

As expected, net of the other covariates, negative attitudes and social norms significantly influence the formation of intentions: parents' and friends' agreement regarding a potential departure impact positively on the individual decision process.

The second equation is our main interest in order to evaluate our hypotheses on the factors that favour or hamper the possibility of effectively achieving the goal of residential autonomy.

We found empirical evidence that being self- or permanently employed is not only positively linked to the intention to leave home but also to the opportunity to complete the process and thus realize the behaviour. Again, this is true for both men and women.

The only exception is unemployment for female young adults. This unexpected result may be due to the fact that, while for men having a job is a crucial prerequisite for becoming independent and forming a new family, this is less true for women also in the new generations. As a matter of fact, the model of dual-earner couples is less widespread in Italy than in the rest of Europe (Naldini and Jurado 2013).

Interestingly, a remarkable gender-specific effect emerges from the impact of parental education. Consistent with our main hypothesis, in the Italian familialistic context, net of individual characteristics and of employment status, the socio-cultural dimension of the family of origin exerts a noticeable impact on fulfilling the desired goal in the transition to adulthood.

In particular, young women's realization of their intentions is more associated with the mother's characteristics, and in particular with her education, which may transmit to the daughter an orientation and instrumental encouragement of female cultural autonomy. The father's education, in contrast, is more important for young men.

Lastly, the number of siblings and the experience of parental divorce, even if resulted in line with the expectation in the descriptive analysis, turn out not to be statistically significant in the model, net of the other independent variables.

We briefly note, too, that the covariates included in the model are merely in the role of control factors. For what concerns age, the impact is as one can expect with a significant positive effect. Less clear is the effect of religiosity, which is important only for young females. This may be due to the higher propensity of Italian women to start an independent life in connection with marriage,

even if this traditional behaviour is declining (Ongaro 2001). The effect of the area of residence and of a past experience out of the parental home are not significant.

Finally, the positive and significant correlation between the error terms of the two equations is evidence of the presence of concomitant unobserved factors and justifies the use of a bivariate probit.

## **5. Discussion and conclusions**

In this paper we studied the decision-making process of leaving home in a familialistic context using longitudinal panel data. The aim was to analyse the factors favouring or hampering young Italians' realization of the intention to start living independently from their parents.

Increasing postponement of leaving home may be due both to factors that delay the formation of positive intentions and to increased obstacles on the path to successfully realizing the behaviour. This is particularly true in a country like Italy, which is characterized by a segmented labour market with unfavourable conditions for new cohorts and the lack of a public welfare system for young generations, combined with a marked propensity toward mutual intergenerational support inside the family.

The main focus of our analysis was on the effect of the employment condition and on the role of the family of origin. We found that employment status is crucial both for the intention and the behaviour. For men and women, self-employment and a permanent contract have an encouraging effect on starting to project residential autonomy and on the possibility of achieving this goal. This provides empirical evidence of the fact that the decline for the new generations in the opportunity to find a stable job, in a context of inadequate social protection and active labour market policies, may produce a negative impact on the transition-to-independent-adulthood process.

Net of employment status, attitudes and social norms (mother's, father's, and friends' agreement) have an important effect on the intention. Partially in line with our main hypothesis, the socio-cultural status of the family of origin, and in particular parental education, presents a significant effect favouring the effective realization of the behaviour. Interesting to note, this effect seems to be gender-specific, with women more influenced by the mother and men by the father.

Since most of the research adopting the TPB approach is typically devoted to the analysis of fertility and usually limited only to a specific step of the decision-making process, this paper is a contribution enriching the scientific literature on the process of leaving home using panel data and simultaneously modelling intention and behaviour.

We also believe that Italy is a case of particular interest because this country, where postponement of the choice to start an independent adult life is more pronounced, lacks longitudinal surveys following the life course of young generations. Improving the availability of suitable data and research is thus a crucial prerequisite, not only to understand how new generations face recent risks and opportunities in different cultural and institutional contexts, but also to act as an incentive and empirically support the adoption and implementation of efficient policy measures.

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