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Research Article

The changing determinants of UK young adults' living arrangements

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The changing determinants of UK young adults' living arrangements

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Abstract

The postponement of partnership formation and parenthood in the context of an early average age at leaving home has resulted in increased heterogeneity in the living arrangements of young adults in the UK. More young adults now remain in the parental home, or live independently of the parental home but outside of a family. The extent to which these trends are explained by the increased immigration of foreign-born young adults, the expansion in higher education, and the increased economic insecurity faced by young adults are examined. Shared non-family living is particularly prominent among those with experience of higher education, whilst labour market uncertainty is associated with an extended period of co-residence with parents.

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1. Introduction

The transition to adulthood in many economically developed countries has become more protracted and de-standardized (Billari and Liefbroer 2010; Corijn and Klijzing 2001; Furlong and Cartmel 2007). The decline of traditional, predictable, trajectories of transitions to work and family life has been viewed as evidence of individualization, with young adults negotiating “elective biographies” that are increasingly unbounded by pre-existing social structures (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). Previous research has emphasized trends in the average age at leaving home and entry into partnership or parenthood, particularly postponement (Billari and Liefbroer 2010; Corijn and Klijzing 2001; Iacovou 2002). Important differences in the timing of leaving home according to individual and parental resources, family structure, region of residence, and state support have also been highlighted (Blaauboer and Mulder 2010; Buck and Scott 1993; de Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer, and Beekink 1991; Goldscheider 2000; Iacovou 2010).

In the UK young adults have tended to exhibit earlier home-leaving than many other European countries (Aassve et al. 2002; Billari, Philipov, and Baizan 2001). However, this may be changing as a consequence of the extension of young adults' dependency, or ‘semi-dependency’, on their parents (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). Increasing house prices, increased labour market insecurity, and reductions in welfare support for young adults mean that for many leaving home is a precarious and non-linear transition (Aassve et al. 2002; Coles, Rugg, and Seavers 1999; Jones 1995). Rising levels of student debt may be a barrier to residential independence for young graduates, with debt from student loans alone increasing six-fold in the past decade (The Student Loans Company 2011).

At the same time, the lengthening of the transition to adulthood has provoked debate regarding the presence of a ‘new’ developmental phase of the life course between adolescence and adulthood. This ‘emerging adulthood’ tends to be presented as a largely positive development, described as a ‘volitional’ period from roughly ages 18-25 years when individuals “examine the life possibilities open to them and gradually arrive at more enduring choices in love, work and world views” (Arnett 2000). The extent to which emergent adulthood is a legitimate concept across all sections of society has been rigorously debated (Arnett 2007; Bynner 2005; Hendry and Kloep 2007). Some contend that young adults are more accurately experiencing “structured individualization” (Côté and Bynner 2008; Furlong and Cartmel 2007) with opportunities and pathways to adulthood still strongly influenced by young people's original location in the social structure, despite a greater sense of individual autonomy (MacDonald et al. 2005; Roberts 2009; Schoon 2007; Yates et al. 2010).

This paper contributes to the literature in a number of ways: firstly, we emphasize the variability in living arrangements across age, gender, country of birth, educational

background, and economic activity. We extend previous research by differentiating those young adults living outside of the parental home according to whether they are living in a new family, living alone, or sharing with others outside of a family. We present new findings relating to the living arrangements of young migrants to the UK and the impact of this migration on overall patterns of living arrangements. We also provide new evidence concerning the role of gender in the transition to adulthood. On the one hand the increased take up of higher education among women in recent decades means that more women are leaving home for education rather than for family formation. Hence we might expect the leaving (and returning) home patterns of women to become more similar to those of men. However, early motherhood remains a key factor in influencing the ability of young women to negotiate their way to adulthood. Of particular relevance here is the greater tendency in the UK, as compared with other developed countries, for young mothers to be living as a lone parent and young fathers to be non-coresident. Young men, therefore, are increasingly not living with either a parental family or a new family, but are living outside of any family. By drawing out these changes we provide a more nuanced description of the socio-economic and gender-based differences in the transition to residential independence.

2. Research questions

We address four key research questions outlined below:

1. *How have the living arrangements of young adults changed over the past decade?*
2. *To what extent does increased international migration to the UK explain these changes?*
3. *What has been the impact of increased enrolment in higher education on the living arrangements of young adults?*
4. *What has been the impact of increased economic uncertainty on the living arrangements of young adults?*

2.1 Changes in young adults' living arrangements

The last decade has seen a number of changes that could potentially influence the living arrangements of young adults, including increasing participation in higher education, continued decline in the youth labour market, increasing house prices, and increased international migration (Fergusson 2002; Mills and Blossfeld 2005; Wilcox 2008).

Financial obstacles to residential independence could delay or prevent departure from the parental home, as well as family formation (Francesconi and Golsch 2005). Delayed partnership and family formation also mean that the residential destinations of young adults on leaving the parental home are changing (Billari and Liefbroer 2010). Young adults are increasingly likely to experience a period of living outside a family (Waite, Goldscheider, and Witsberger 1986).

The presence of periods of “non-familial forms of life” in young adulthood is not new - in pre-industrial England, children would routinely leave the parental home at any time between the ages of 10 and 30 years for entry into employment (Wall 1989). However, in such cases leaving the parental home would often result in “transferred attachment” to maids and others working in service considered to be part of their employer’s family (Snell 1985). In contrast, non-family living during the latter part of the twentieth century does not tend to include such ‘surrogate’ parents.

Previously attention has focused on the rising prevalence of living alone, especially among young men during the 1980s (Chandler et al. 2004; Hall and Ogden 1997; Jamieson et al. 2003). More recently the existence of an extended period of ‘post-adolescence’ has also begun to be discussed with reference to living in shared housing with friends or other non-relatives (Heath and Cleaver 2003). In some cases living in shared accommodation may arise out of necessity – for example, the introduction in 1996 of the Single Room Rent (SRR) for under 25s meant that these young adults would only be able to claim housing benefit based on the cost of a single room or bedsit (Kemp and Rugg 1998). However, shared housing might also be an active choice for young people, providing social and financial benefits (Heath and Kenyon 2001), with “relationships of choice” becoming increasingly important (Budgeon 2006; Pahl and Pevalin 2005). A rise in living in shared accommodation has further been linked to concurrent and ongoing expansion of higher education (Berrington, Stone, and Falkingham 2010) but may also be increasingly embedded as a socially accepted “norm” (Billari and Liefbroer 2007) across the young adult population.

In summary, over the past decade we expect to see a delay in partnership and family formation, counteracted by an increase in living outside a family or living in the parental home.

2.2 The impact of increased international migration

Globalization processes, including the internationalization of markets, intensification of competition, and the spread of global networks, have led to uncertainty for young adults across the realms of finance, education, and family (Mills and Blossfeld 2005). The dramatic increase in international migration to the UK, peaking in 2004 with a net gain

of over 200,000 migrants⁴, is particularly significant for the employment prospects of young adults. In the UK, sales/customer service occupations and ‘elementary’ occupations – including jobs such as labourers, waiting staff, and cleaners – have a higher proportion of employees aged 16-34 years than other industries (Begum 2003). In turn, migrant workers are also commonly employed in these industries (Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs & Communities and Local Government 2009).

In terms of living arrangements, young migrants are more likely to live outside a family than the native born. We hypothesize that to some extent the proportion of young adults living outside a family has increased as a consequence of an increased influx of migrants, who may have migrated without their parents or other family members. Furthermore, we differentiate migrants according to their country of origin, since reasons for and the timing of migration will differ according to country of birth. For example, migrants from other European countries are more likely to migrate for work or study-related reasons, whilst those from South Asia, particularly women from Pakistan and Bangladesh, are more likely to migrate for family formation (Office for National Statistics 2008a; Peach 2006; Raghuram 2008).

2.3 The impact of higher education

The impact of higher education on young adults’ living arrangements is likely to be complex. The longer young adults remain in education, the longer they are likely to delay family formation (Kneale and Joshi 2008). At the same time enrolment in higher education promotes early home leaving (Ford, Rugg, and Burrows 2002). In the UK around 80% of students live away from their parents in the first year of study (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2009). Recent data indicate that by their final year at university, more than one third of UK students are living in shared accommodation with friends or relatives, while around one in five are living alone, and a similar proportion are living as a couple (Brennan and Tang 2008). Nevertheless, certain sub-groups are likely to remain living in the parental home, including students from specific ethnic groups (particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi young adults), those studying in Greater London, and those from more disadvantaged socioeconomic groups (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2009; Patiniotis and Holdsworth 2005).

Moreover, those who do ‘leave home’ to attend university may often return during vacations and, in many cases, for an indeterminate period after completion of their

⁴ In 2005 and 2006 combined 177,000 British citizens, 124,000 Polish citizens, 104,000 Indian citizens and 49,000 Pakistan citizens migrated to the UK (Office for National Statistics 2008a).

degree. This cycle of leaving and returning to the parental home can be regarded as a form of “semi-autonomy” (Goldscheider and Davanzo 1989), whereby young adults are not yet fully independent from their parents, residentially or financially. In the UK we have very little quantitative information on returning home so cannot measure this process directly, but anecdotal evidence and ongoing media attention suggest that this may be an increasingly important trend (Bingham 2009; Waite 2008).

Most commentators agree that higher education promotes exploration and a reconsideration of world views, including a “cultural expectation” of communal living (Ford, Rugg, and Burrows 2002). We wish to examine whether experience of higher education is not only associated with shared living among students, but whether it persists after leaving higher education in the absence of a new family.

Using multiple regression we explore how living arrangements differ by education and include interactions between educational attainment and survey year to assess how these relationships have changed over time. We hypothesize that postponement of family formation and the experience of non-family living will be more prevalent amongst those with experience of higher education, and that consequently living outside a family will have become more widespread as a result of the expansion of higher education.

2.4 The impact of economic uncertainty

Discussion of ‘uncertainty’ during the transition to adulthood tends to relate primarily to labour market experiences. Uncertainty may be manifested in various ways, including periods of unemployment (or risk of unemployment), part-time or irregular work hours, fixed-term contracts and poor “occupational standing” (Mills, Blossfeld, and Klijzing 2005), with labour market experiences “characterized by a constant, individualized, ‘churn’ between different forms of insecure employment” (Furlong and Cartmel 2007:35).

The past decades have witnessed significant changes to the nature of the British labour market, with particular implications for youth, including the shift from manufacturing to a service economy, the decline in influence of the trade unions, the feminization of skills, and decreased demand for unskilled workers (Nickell 2001; Schmelzer 2008). During the recent period of recession young people under the age of 25 years have accounted for an increasing proportion of those classified as unemployed, rising from 31% in 1992 to 42% in 2008 (Leacker 2009).

Over the past decade young adults’ ability to afford residential independence has been reduced by rising housing costs. House prices relative to individual earnings have

almost doubled since 1990⁵ (Wilcox 2008). Social housing is often not accessible to young adults without dependents, especially in rural areas (Anderson 1999). Increasingly, therefore, young adults are relying on the private rented sector. Whilst it is the case that the cost of rents relative to earnings has actually decreased (Wilcox 2008), private sector rents remain out of the reach of many low paid youth.

In the context of the UK much research has focused on a so-called ‘youth divide’, characterized by ‘fast-track’ versus ‘slow-track’ transition pathways in multiple domains, including labour market entry, educational experiences, leaving home, and family formation (Bynner et al. 2002; Jones 2002). ‘Positive’ individualization processes are argued to apply primarily to young people from more advantaged backgrounds, who have, for example, access to higher education and the financial resources necessary to fund a period of ‘role exploration’, reflected in a ‘slow-track’ route to adulthood. In contrast, the ‘fast-track’ route remains more commonly experienced by those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, with earlier entry into work and family life (Bynner 2005). However, we believe that this simplistic dichotomy does not tell the full story.

On the one hand, economic disadvantage could lead a proportion of young adults to leave the parental home via a “chaotic” pathway in search of employment (Ford, Rugg, and Burrows 2002). Conversely, economic disadvantage can represent a barrier to residential independence and family formation, manifested as a delay in leaving and/or increased returns to the parental home. We are also likely to see an interaction with age. While more advantaged young adults may delay the transition to adulthood through their early twenties, partly due to enrolment in higher education, we suggest remaining in the parental home at age 30 and beyond is more likely to be an indicator of disadvantage, with these young adults ‘left behind’ in comparison with their peers. As such, we argue that the idea that disadvantage is associated with a ‘fast-track’ to adulthood and advantage with a ‘slow-track’ is over-simplistic and may mask important interactions with age group. Moreover, gender differences in the impact of structural factors are also likely to interact with age, resulting in a complex picture that has been somewhat neglected in previous research.

In the multiple regression analyses we compare living arrangements by economic activity, with separate models for men and women and including interactions with time. We expect to see an association between economic uncertainty and the propensity to live in the parental home, but we anticipate that the nature and magnitude of this association will vary by age and gender.

⁵ This figure is based on average individual earnings for those in full-time work and average first time buyer house prices. Readers should note that since many first time buyers are dual earner couples, the ratio based on one individual’s earnings tends to exaggerate lack of affordability.

3. Data and Methods

3.1 The UK Labour Force Survey

This paper examines changes in the living arrangements of young adults aged 16-34 during the period between 1998 and 2008⁶. We require the possibility of identifying statistically significant changes in relatively small sub-groups of the population, further stratified by gender. The best source of data to carry out such an analysis is the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS), a large cross-sectional study that includes many of the questions necessary for our analyses, with consistency across time. Using these data we can compare living arrangements at a certain age over time⁷. We note that changes in living arrangement over historical time for a particular age group reflect both period and cohort effects.

Analyses were carried out using the autumn quarter LFS household datasets for 1998 and 2008. The LFS comprises a nationally representative sample of households living at private addresses in the UK. It also includes National Health Service (NHS) hospital accommodation – primarily used by nurses - but excludes communal establishments such as prisons, hostels, and halls of residence⁸. The response rate for wave 1 interviews was 79.2% in 1998 and 67.2% in 2008 (Barnes, Bright, and Hewat 2008; Office for National Statistics 2008b). Our analyses are based on responses from 17,006 men and 18,251 women aged 16-34 years in 1998 and 12,038 men and 13,050 women in the same age group in 2008. The analyses are weighted to adjust for differential non-response and to make the sample representative of the UK household population.

In making comparisons across time it is important to be aware of changes in the composition of the UK population. Of particular note has been the increased level of net migration. The percentage of the LFS sample aged 16-34 who were born outside of the UK increased from around 8% to 17% between 1998 and 2008 (Table 1).

⁶ 2008 is the last survey round for which household data were available from the UK LFS at the time the research was undertaken. We contrast these data with those from 1998, just after the Labour Government took office, since this was when a household grid was introduced into the Labour Force Survey and hence from this time we can identify hidden families that do not contain the household reference person and can differentiate those living with other relatives from those who are sharing with other unrelated persons.

⁷ Ideally, such work would be carried out using an extremely large, long-running panel study. However, there are no such data available for the UK with adequate sample sizes for our purposes.

⁸ Since 1996 the LFS has included a question asking whether any household members are currently living in halls of residence. In our sample of young adults aged 16-34 years, 868 (1.4%) were coded as living in halls of residence, with the highest percentage (4%) at ages 16-21 years. These individuals are included in our analyses and are coded as 'living with others'. UK university students usually move out from halls of residence into private sector accommodation after their first year and so our estimates of living arrangements for those aged 20 and above will be generally unbiased.

Table 1: Distribution of young adult population (aged 16-34) by country of birth, UK, 1998 and 2008¹

| Country of birth | Men | | Women | |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 1998 | 2008 | 1998 | 2008 |
| UK | 92.2 | 82.8 | 91.0 | 82.3 |
| Europe A8 ² | 0.0 | 3.0 | 0.2 | 3.5 |
| Other Europe | 2.6 | 3.5 | 3.2 | 3.6 |
| Pakistan and Bangladesh | 0.6 | 1.6 | 0.6 | 1.3 |
| India | 0.9 | 1.6 | 1.0 | 1.7 |
| Other | 3.7 | 7.5 | 3.9 | 7.5 |
| Total (unweighted) sample | 17,003 | 12,038 | 18,251 | 13,050 |

Notes: ¹ Unweighted *n* and weighted percentage.

² Europe A8 refers to the eight countries: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Source: LFS.

There has been a doubling in the number of migrants from Europe (particularly an increase in migration following the accession of eight eastern European countries to the European Union in 2004), but also an increase in migrants from South Asia (particularly India) and other regions of the world. The LFS asks migrants for their year of arrival. The vast majority of those aged 22-34 who were born overseas had migrated in adulthood. This is particularly the case for migrants from Europe and less so for migrants born in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

3.2 Measures

The LFS relationship grid allows identification of household members who are outside the respondent's 'family unit', including non-relatives. This is especially useful for characterizing young adults who are living 'outside a family', who may nevertheless be sharing with relatives and/or non-relatives. We classify a young person as living outside a family if they are not coresident with a parent, a partner and/or with their own child(ren). In the exploratory analyses a four-category classification of living arrangements is used: (1) Living with parents; (2) Couple; (3) Lone parent; (4) Living outside a family. Category 2 (living as a couple) includes those living with a spouse or cohabiting partner, with or without children. In the subsequent multivariate analyses 'Living outside a family' is disaggregated into two sub-categories: (1) Sharing with others and (2) Living alone. Few men in the age groups of interest were living as a lone parent and the prevalence of this living arrangement stayed fairly constant over time.

Therefore, for multivariate analyses we combine lone parents and those living in a couple into a single category of living in a 'new family'.

We identify respondents according to their country of birth, highlighting those in the numerically largest migrant groups, as shown in Table 1. Ideally, we would wish to differentiate between individuals of Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani origin, not least due to differences in their patterns of migration and cultural traditions around family formation (Ballard 2008; Peach 2006). Indeed, greater proportions of Pakistani and Bangladeshi respondents arrived in the UK as children, and hence are more likely to have a parent with whom they may co-reside. For men, sample size restrictions mean that we have to combine those born in Pakistan and Bangladesh and compare their experiences with men born in India. Since the majority of South Asian women live either with a parent or in a new family, we have found it necessary to combine them into a single group to obtain reliable model estimates of sharing or living alone⁹.

Educational attainment is based on respondent's (self-reported) highest qualification. This is classified using three categories: (1) Degree or equivalent (which includes nursing and teaching qualifications), (2) Below degree level qualification, and (3) No Qualifications¹⁰. One percent of the sample aged 16-34 years did not provide a qualification. These individuals are included in the descriptive analyses, reported in Tables 1, 2.1, and 2.2, but are excluded from the multivariate analyses. Since we are interested in the impact of attainment of higher education on living arrangements, we focus our analyses that include education on young adults aged 22 years and above in order to minimize the number of respondents who have not yet completed their education.

Following Mills and colleagues, 'uncertainty' is operationalized using indicators of economic insecurity and unstable employment relations (Mills, Blossfeld, and Klijzing 2005). Specifically, unemployment, a non-permanent employment contract, and part-time employment are all taken to be indicators of uncertainty. These are incorporated into a detailed economic activity measure: (1) Full-time, permanent employment; (2) Other employment; (3) Unemployed; (4) Student; (5) Other inactive. The categories were further disaggregated for women, among whom part-time employment is more common than for men and is often related to childcare responsibilities rather than economic instability. An additional two category (2) is added to the measure: (1) Full-

⁹ In fact, none of the South Asian women in the age group 22-24 were sharing with others outside of a family. As a result we could not fit the same multinomial model as for the other age groups. Therefore, for this age group only, we combine South Asian migrants with the "Other" group.

¹⁰ In other analyses we tested whether a more detailed breakdown of educational qualification provided further insight. However, we found little difference in the living arrangements of those with intermediate levels of education, for example those who left school at age 16 with GCSE level qualifications and those who attained some advanced level qualifications at age 18. Hence, for parsimony we present the results for just three groups: those with no qualifications, those with below degree level qualifications, and those with degree level qualifications.

time, permanent employment; (2) Part-time, permanent employment; (3) Other employment; (4) Unemployed; (5) Student; (6) Other inactive.

Increasingly, young adults occupy more than one role concurrently. For example, full-time students may also be working part-time to help fund their studies. We identify young people as being a student if they report themselves to be full-time students irrespective of whatever else they are doing e.g., paid employment¹¹. We prioritized student status as we believe that this will have a stronger influence on young adults' living arrangements than their employment status, particularly given that the majority of employed students are working part-time – around 76% of this group in 2008¹².

3.3 Method

In order to assess the overall change in living arrangements the weighted percentage distribution of men and women in each living arrangement is calculated for age groups 16-19, 20-21, 22-24, 25-29 and 30-34 for 1998 and 2008, and the results compared. To better understand the potential role of immigration in driving changes in living arrangement we calculate weighted percentages living outside a family among the UK and foreign-born in 1998 and 2008. Weighted multinomial logistic regression is then used to identify the independent association between each of the explanatory factors and living arrangements in 1998 and 2008. Since different trends in living arrangement have been observed according to age and gender we undertake separate models for men and women and by age¹³. We focus on those who have reached age 22, the majority of whom will have completed their full-time education.

Following Agresti (2002) let J denote the number of categories of our dependent variable of living arrangement. Let $\{\pi_1, \dots, \pi_J\}$ denote the response probabilities, satisfying $\sum_j \pi_j = 1$. Each outcome category is paired with the baseline category. When the last category (J) is the baseline, the baseline category logits are

$$\log\left(\frac{\pi_j}{\pi_J}\right), \quad j = 1, \dots, J - 1.$$

¹¹ In the 2008 LFS 38% of full-time students aged 20-34 years are classified as 'in employment' using the International Labour Organization definition, the majority of whom (76%) are working part-time.

¹² Hence our estimates, e.g., of the numbers employed on temporary contracts, will refer to the non-student employed population, and we will estimate a lower prevalence of such contracts than other commentators such as Barham et al. (2009).

¹³ If the age groups were to be combined this would necessitate the inclusion of interaction effects between covariates and age. This would complicate interpretation since our hypotheses that are to be tested require the inclusion of interactions between coefficient and year.

This is the log odds that the category is j .

The baseline category logit model with a vector of predictors \underline{X} is

$$\log\left(\frac{\pi_j \underline{X}}{\pi_J \underline{X}}\right) = \alpha_j + \beta_j^T \underline{X}, \quad j = 1, \dots, J-1.$$

Living in a new family (either as a couple or as a lone parent) is chosen as the baseline category since this is the living arrangement that has seen the most change over the decade. We thus examine the effect of the covariates on the log odds of being in each of the other categories of living arrangement relative to living in a new family. Our dependent variable has four levels: living with a parent, sharing with others, living alone, and living in a new family. We only need $J - 1$ equations to describe a dependent variable with J response categories, and hence Tables 3, 4.1, and 4.2 contain three columns of coefficients for each model.

We build up the model by first including a dummy for survey year and then the main effect for country of birth. By so doing we can evaluate the extent to which immigration can explain period changes in living arrangement, particularly the increase in non-family living. Subsequently, to investigate the potential role of increased take up of higher education and increased economic insecurity, we include in the model highest level of education and economic activity as covariates, and test for significant interactions between each covariate with survey year. Parameter estimates corresponding to interactions between country of birth and calendar year were not found to significantly improve model fit for any model and are not included. Interactions between education and calendar year and economic activity and calendar year were found to significantly improve model fit in at least one of the age groups and hence are included. The final models are presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2¹⁴.

To facilitate interpretation predicted probabilities of being in each of the outcomes are calculated. The predicted probability of being in a particular response category for an individual with covariates \underline{X}_j is

$$\pi_j \underline{X} = \frac{\exp(\alpha_j + \beta_j^T \underline{X})}{1 + \sum_{j=1}^{J-1} \exp(\alpha_j + \beta_j^T \underline{X})}, \quad j = 1, \dots, J-1.$$

We present predicted probabilities of being in each of the different living arrangements within particular sub-groups in Figures 2 to 5.

¹⁴ We have not included an interaction between economic activity and year for women aged 30-34 since the sample of women engaged in permanent part-time work who are also sharing accommodation outside of a family is too small for the model to fit.

4. Results

To answer the first research question we identify the marginal changes in living arrangements between 1998 and 2008 by sex and age, as shown in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. To answer the further research questions we additionally refer to results from the multinomial logistic regressions of living arrangements among men and women aged 22-24, 25-29, and 30-34, shown in Table 3 and Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

4.1 Changes in living arrangement 1998-2008

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show the overall trends in living arrangements for men and women aged 16-34 years in 1998 and 2008, by age group. In their late teens the majority of young adults are living with their parents. However, by age 22-24 only around one half of men and around one third of women remain living with a parent. Living outside of a family is most prevalent among those in their twenties, whilst forming a new family through partnership and/or parenthood is often delayed until the late twenties. Entry into partnerships and parenthood continues to occur at an earlier age on average for women than for men. It is not until age 30 that a similar proportion of men and women are living with a partner (around 70%). Lone parenthood remains far more prevalent among women but the level of lone parenthood has remained constant over the past decade. As a result, men in their early 30s are twice as likely as women to remain living with their parent(s), or to be living outside of a family.

Table 2.1: Changing distribution of living arrangements of young men in the UK by age group in 1998 and 2008

| Type of living arrangements by age group | 1998 (n) % | 2008 (n) % | Absolute change 1998-2008 |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| 16-19 | <i>(n=3,636)</i> | <i>(n=2,883)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 88.9 | 87.5 | -1.4 |
| In a couple | 1.2 | 1.1 | -0.1 |
| As a lone parent | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Outside a family | 10.0 | 11.5 | 1.5 |
| 20-21 | <i>(n=1,396)</i> | <i>(n=1,218)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 66.3 | 60.4 | -5.9 |
| In a couple | 7.6 | 8.5 | 0.9 |
| As a lone parent | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Outside a family | 26.1 | 31.0 | 4.9 |
| 22-24 | <i>(n=2,121)</i> | <i>(n=1,722)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 52.7 | 49.4 | -3.3 |
| In a couple | 23.8 | 24.1 | 0.3 |
| As a lone parent | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Outside a family | 23.5 | 26.4 | 2.9 |
| 25-29 | <i>(n=4,474)</i> | <i>(n=3,085)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 24.2 | 24.5 | 0.3 |
| In a couple | 52.5 | 47.6 | -4.9 |
| As a lone parent | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.0 |
| Outside a family | 23.1 | 27.7 | 4.6 |
| 30-34 | <i>(n=5,379)</i> | <i>(n=3,130)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 10.2 | 10.3 | 0.1 |
| In a couple | 70.8 | 69.7 | -1.1 |
| As a lone parent | 0.9 | 0.7 | -0.1 |
| Outside a family | 18.2 | 19.3 | 1.1 |

Note: Unweighted *n* and weighted percentage. Absolute changes over time where 95% confidence intervals for individual years do not overlap are shown in bold.

Data source: LFS.

Table 2.2: Changing distribution of living arrangements of young women in the UK by age group in 1998 and 2008

| Type of living arrangements by age group | 1998 (n) % | 2008 (n) % | Absolute change 1998-2008 |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| 16-19 | <i>(n=3,398)</i> | <i>(n=2,829)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 81.1 | 85.1 | 4.0 |
| In a couple | 4.7 | 3.9 | -0.9 |
| As a lone parent | 1.9 | 1.6 | -0.4 |
| Outside a family | 12.3 | 9.5 | -2.8 |
| 20-21 | <i>(n=1,463)</i> | <i>(n=1,264)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 41.5 | 44.4 | 2.9 |
| In a couple | 23.1 | 20.8 | -2.4 |
| As a lone parent | 7.7 | 7.0 | -0.8 |
| Outside a family | 27.7 | 27.9 | 0.2 |
| 22-24 | <i>(n=2,420)</i> | <i>(n=1,847)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 29.7 | 33.6 | 3.9 |
| In a couple | 39.7 | 39.0 | -1.0 |
| As a lone parent | 10.1 | 11.1 | 1.0 |
| Outside a family | 20.5 | 16.4 | -4.1 |
| 25-29 | <i>(n=5,105)</i> | <i>(n=3,564)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 10.7 | 12.8 | 2.1 |
| In a couple | 61.5 | 62.5 | 1.0 |
| As a lone parent | 12.5 | 11.0 | -1.5 |
| Outside a family | 15.3 | 13.8 | -1.5 |
| 30-34 | <i>(n=5,865)</i> | <i>(n=3,546)</i> | |
| With parent(s) | 4.1 | 4.9 | 0.8 |
| In a couple | 73.0 | 72.5 | -0.5 |
| As a lone parent | 13.9 | 11.8 | -2.1 |
| Outside a family | 9.0 | 10.8 | 1.8 |

Note: Unweighted *n* and weighted percentage. Absolute changes over time where 95% confidence intervals for individual years do not overlap are shown in bold.

Source: LFS.

As can be seen in the final column of Tables 2.1 and 2.2, there have been some significant changes in the living arrangements of young adults during the past decade. Women in their late teens and twenties have become more likely to be living with their parents and less likely to be living outside a family. It should be stressed that men still remain more likely to be living with their parents than women - although this gender gap has narrowed over the past decade. For men, the most pronounced changes in living arrangements occurred among those in their twenties. Between 1998 and 2008 the proportion of young men living outside a family increased in all age groups. While for those in their early twenties this appeared to be offset by a decline in living in the parental home, for those aged 25 and older it was counteracted by a move away from partnership and parenthood.

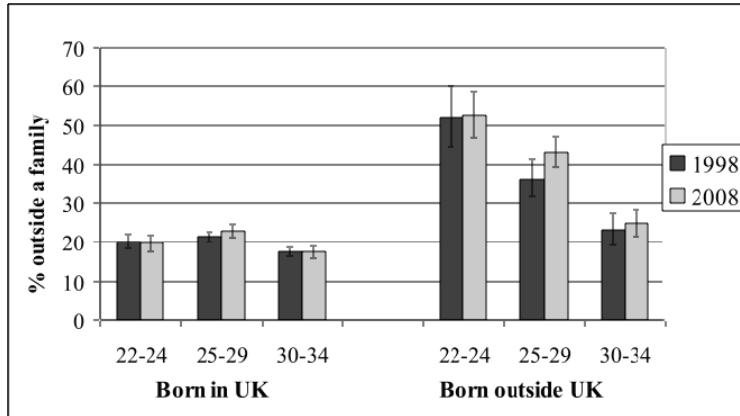
4.2 Impact of immigration on young adults' living arrangements

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show the proportion living outside of a family in 1998 and 2008 by country of birth and age group for men and women. Young people born outside the UK are significantly more likely than those born in the UK to be living outside of a family, particularly those in their early twenties. In addition, the change in the prevalence of living outside a family appears to be more pronounced for non-UK born young adults. This means that much of the overall move towards non-family living among young men can be attributed to increased immigration.

The impact of increased migration of young adults, particularly from the A8 accession countries into the UK during the 2000s, is seen in the results from the multivariate analyses. Table 3 compares the value of the parameter estimates for survey year for two models: the first when survey year is included on its own into the regression model (Model 1) and the second when country of birth is also included as a categorical main effect (Model 2). The three columns for each model provide the coefficient associated with each of the three alternative living arrangement outcomes reference to the baseline group of living in a couple.

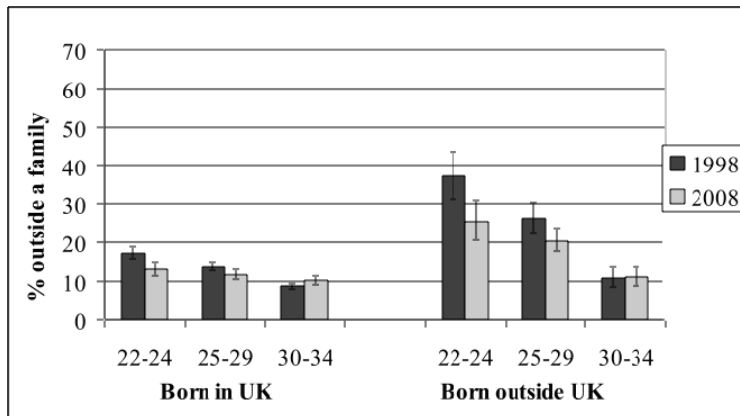
Once country of birth is controlled, the value of the coefficient for survey year for the outcome living with parent becomes more positive and more significant, whilst the value of the coefficient for sharing with others became less positive and less significant. In other words, increased immigration is masking a trend towards remaining living with parents among UK born men and women in their twenties and early thirties.

Figure 1.1: Observed percentage and 95% confidence intervals for living outside of a family in 1998 and 2008 by age among UK born and foreign born men



Source: LFS.

Figure 1.2: Observed percentage and 95% confidence intervals for living outside of a family in 1998 and 2008 by age among UK born and foreign born women



Source: LFS.

Table 3: Parameter estimates for survey year from multinomial logistic regression of living arrangements. Model 1 includes only survey year, model 2 additionally includes country of birth. Separate models run for each sex and age. Baseline outcome is living in a new family.

| | Model 1 – Survey year only | | | Model 2 – Survey year and country of birth | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|----------|----------|--------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| | with parents | sharing | alone | with parents | sharing | alone |
| men | | | | | | |
| 22-24 (n=3804) | | | | | | |
| Survey = 2008 | -0.09 | 0.16 | -0.13 | -0.03 | -0.01 | -0.18 |
| 25-29 (n=7473) | | | | | | |
| Survey = 2008 | 0.11 | 0.53 ** | 0.06 | 0.23 *** | 0.34 *** | 0.06 |
| 30-34 (n=8414) | | | | | | |
| Survey = 2008 | 0.02 | 0.27 ** | -0.01 | 0.14 * | 0.00 | 0.03 |
| women | | | | | | |
| 22-24 (n=4232) | | | | | | |
| Survey = 2008 | 0.10 | -0.22 ** | -0.34 ** | 0.16 ** | -0.31 *** | -0.33 ** |
| 25-29 (n=8605) | | | | | | |
| Survey = 2008 | 0.18 ** | -0.01 | -0.18 ** | 0.28 ** | -0.21 ** | -0.18 ** |
| 30-34 (n=9341) | | | | | | |
| Survey = 2008 | 0.23 ** | 0.53 *** | 0.08 | 0.32 *** | 0.34 ** | 0.13 |

Source: LFS.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the coefficients for the final models of living arrangement (where the explanatory variables are survey year, country of birth, highest qualification, and current economic activity), for men and women in each of the three age groups.

Table 4.1: Parameter estimates from final multinomial logistic regression of living arrangements. Baseline outcome is living in a new family. Men.

| Age group Living arrangements | 22-24 | | | 25-29 | | | 30-34 | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|
| | With parents | With others | Alone | With parents | With others | Alone | With parents | With others | Alone |
| Year | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(ref=1998)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| 2008 | -0.13 | -0.43 * | -0.53 * | 0.35 *** | 0.03 | 0.15 | 0.05 | 0.06 | -0.11 |
| Country of birth | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(ref = UK born)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| Europe | -2.02 *** | 0.62 *** | -0.35 | -2.27 *** | 1.00 *** | 0.10 | -2.21 *** | 1.54 *** | -0.13 |
| Pakistan & Bangladesh | -0.40 | -0.51 | -0.44 | -0.62 ** | 0.13 | -1.01 ** | -1.27 *** | 0.51 | -1.89 *** |
| India | -0.52 | 2.14 *** | -0.19 | -1.86 *** | 1.33 *** | -0.62 | -1.74 *** | 0.86 ** | -1.17 *** |
| Other | -0.72 *** | 0.67 *** | 0.72 *** | -1.28 *** | 0.78 *** | 0.04 | -1.08 *** | 1.03 *** | -0.13 |
| Highest qualification | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(ref = Degree)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| Below degree | -0.33 ** | -1.34 *** | -0.84 *** | -0.01 | -1.00 *** | -0.49 *** | 0.28 ** | -0.49 *** | -0.53 *** |
| None | -0.24 | -1.18 *** | -0.99 ** | 0.65 *** | -1.48 *** | -0.35 * | 1.39 *** | -0.30 | -0.66 *** |
| Interaction year x qualification | | | | | | | | | |
| 2008 x below degree | -0.03 | 0.67 ** | 0.35 | -0.11 | 0.13 | -0.25 | 0.13 | 0.12 | 0.23 |
| 2008 x none | -0.15 | 0.28 | 0.70 | -0.61 *** | 0.33 | -0.78 ** | 0.07 | 0.71 * | 0.10 |
| Economic activity | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(ref = Full-Time employed)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| Other employed | 0.59 *** | 0.23 | 0.20 | 0.91 *** | 1.21 *** | 0.59 *** | 0.50 ** | 0.93 *** | 0.71 *** |
| Unemployed | 0.30 | 0.63 | 0.62 ** | 0.75 *** | 1.03 *** | 0.52 *** | 0.87 *** | 1.51 *** | 1.26 *** |
| Student | 0.80 *** | 2.41 | 0.77 ** | 1.01 *** | 1.90 *** | 1.06 *** | 0.73 * | 2.28 *** | 0.83 *** |
| Inactive | 0.11 | -0.03 | 0.87 ** | 0.82 *** | 1.20 *** | 1.16 *** | 0.74 *** | 0.87 *** | 0.95 *** |
| Interaction year x economic activity | | | | | | | | | |
| 2008 x other employed | -0.03 | 0.34 | -0.58 | -0.22 | -0.69 | -0.30 | -0.04 | -0.83 * | -0.32 |
| 2008 x unemployed | 0.74 ** | 0.06 | 0.55 | 0.38 | -0.59 | 0.77 ** | 0.51 * | -1.27 ** | -0.70 ** |
| 2008 x student | 0.53 | 0.40 | 1.11 ** | -0.27 | -0.33 | -0.14 | -0.66 | -1.34 *** | -0.73 |
| 2008 x inactive | 0.16 | 0.62 | -0.79 | 0.15 | -0.06 | 0.44 | 0.40 | -0.07 | 0.22 |
| Constant | 0.97 *** | -0.19 *** | -0.68 *** | -0.93 *** | -1.53 *** | -1.19 *** | -2.38 *** | -2.95 *** | -1.41 *** |
| Sample n | 3804 | | | 7473 | | | 8414 | | |

Source: LFS.

Table 4.2: Parameter estimates from final multinomial logistic regression of living arrangements. Baseline outcome is living in a new family. Women

| Age group Living arrangements | 22-24 | | | 25-29 | | | 30-34 | | |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| | With parents | With others | Alone | With parents | With others | Alone | With parents | With others | Alone |
| Year | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(ref=1998)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| 2008 | 0.22 | -0.42 * | -0.23 | 0.21 * | -0.50 *** | -0.52 *** | -0.11 | -0.40 * | -0.41 *** |
| Country of birth | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(ref=UK born)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| Europe | -1.74 *** | 0.90 *** | -0.19 | -1.94 *** | 1.33 *** | 0.06 | -1.89 *** | 1.03 *** | -0.34 * |
| South Asian | | | | -0.80 *** | 0.58 * | -2.70 *** | -0.84 * | 0.06 | -1.45 *** |
| Other | -0.52 *** | 0.81 *** | -0.10 | -1.13 *** | 1.25 *** | 0.43 *** | -0.92 *** | 1.08 *** | -0.42 ** |
| Highest qualification | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(ref=Degree)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| Below degree | -0.50 *** | -1.65 *** | -0.24 | 0.11 | -1.23 *** | -0.67 *** | 0.02 | -1.43 *** | -0.61 *** |
| None | -0.91 *** | -1.94 *** | -0.57 | 0.70 *** | -1.70 *** | -1.04 *** | 0.75 *** | -0.57 | -1.27 *** |
| Interaction year x qualification | | | | | | | | | |
| 2008 x below degree | -0.30 * | 0.65 ** | -0.10 | -0.22 | 0.37 * | 0.04 | 0.61 ** | 1.09 *** | 0.56 *** |
| 2008 x none | 0.11 | 0.12 | 0.44 | -0.07 | 0.92 | 1.06 ** | 0.83 ** | 0.96 * | 1.20 ** |
| Economic activity | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(ref = Full-Time employed)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| Part-Time permanent | -1.09 *** | -0.58 ** | -0.87 *** | -1.54 *** | -1.23 ** | -2.45 *** | -1.51 *** | -2.54 *** | -2.78 *** |
| Other employed | 0.30 | 0.67 ** | 0.77 *** | -0.10 | 0.39 * | -0.33 | -0.30 | 0.15 | -0.37 * |
| Unemployed | -0.14 | -0.21 | 0.31 | -0.82 *** | -0.53 | -0.53 ** | -0.26 | -0.26 | -0.38 ** |
| Student | 1.34 *** | 2.78 *** | 1.37 *** | -0.22 | 1.35 *** | 0.38 | -0.45 | 1.10 *** | 0.04 |
| Inactive | -1.76 *** | -2.13 *** | -2.01 *** | -1.66 *** | -2.39 *** | -1.91 *** | -1.17 *** | -2.08 *** | -1.69 *** |
| Interaction year x economic activity | | | | | | | | | |
| 2008 x permanent part-time | 0.30 | -0.79 | -0.40 | 0.51 * | -0.22 | 1.19 *** | | | |
| 2008 x other employed | -0.19 | -0.61 | -0.30 | 0.53 * | -0.20 | -0.32 | | | |
| 2008 x unemployed | 0.27 | 0.12 | -0.30 | 0.49 | -0.08 | 0.57 | | | |
| 2008 x student | -0.78 *** | -1.47 *** | -1.03 ** | 0.53 | -0.91 *** | -0.71 * | | | |
| 2008 x inactive | 0.36 | 0.45 | 0.67 | 0.45 * | 0.17 | 0.91 ** | | | |
| Constant | 0.28 *** | -0.62 *** | -1.61 *** | -1.48 *** | -1.57 *** | -1.19 *** | -2.56 *** | -2.68 *** | -1.36 *** |
| Sample n | 4232 | | | 8605 | | | 9341 | | |

Source: LFS.

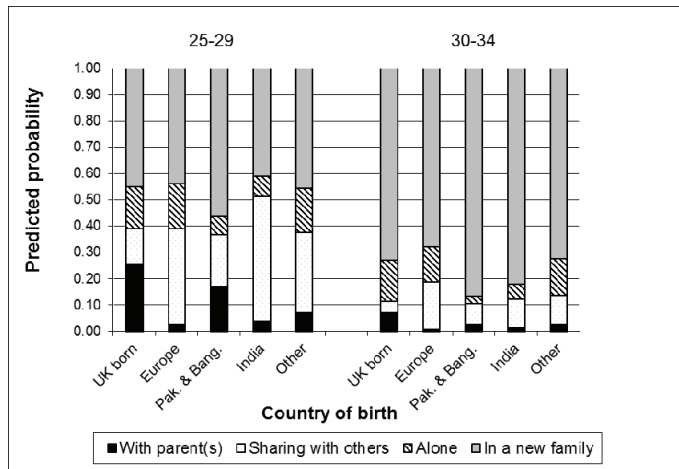
The large and significant coefficients for country of birth reflect the distinctive living arrangements of young migrants. These can be seen more clearly in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 which show (for men and women respectively) the predicted probability of being in each of the types of living arrangement according to age group and country of birth in 2008¹⁵. Foreign born men are significantly more likely to be living outside family, but it is clear that South Asian men and women are much less likely to live alone. In comparison with the other migrant groups, those born in Pakistan and Bangladesh are more likely to be living with a parent. Indian men in their late twenties are less likely to be living with a parent or in a new family and more likely to be living outside a family, whereas men born in Pakistan and Bangladesh are more likely to be living in a new family. By age 30 a higher proportion of men and women born in all three South Asia countries have made the transition to family formation than other migrant groups or those born in the UK.

4.3 The impact of higher education on living arrangements

Findings relating to the impact of higher education on living arrangements are multifaceted since relationships between higher education and living arrangements differ by age and by gender and also appear to have changed over the past decade (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). To aid interpretation we first calculate the predicted probability of living with a parent by age, highest qualification, and survey year (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). We keep the other variables at their reference value and hence the probabilities refer to UK born individuals who are in permanent full-time work. Recall that, in the UK, many undergraduates leave home to study at university but may well return home following the completion of their first degrees, generally at around 21 or 22 years of age. Among UK born men and women in permanent full-time work, around half of those with higher education will be living with a parent at ages 22-24, but this percentage drops dramatically to around 6% among similarly qualified men and women in their early thirties (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). This pattern contrasts with that for men and women with no educational qualifications, who are far more likely to remain living with their parents into their late twenties and early thirties. A gender difference is observed whereby women with no qualifications demonstrate early home leaving behaviour, more often experiencing early partnerships and or parenthood. In contrast, less qualified men are very likely to remain in the parental home.

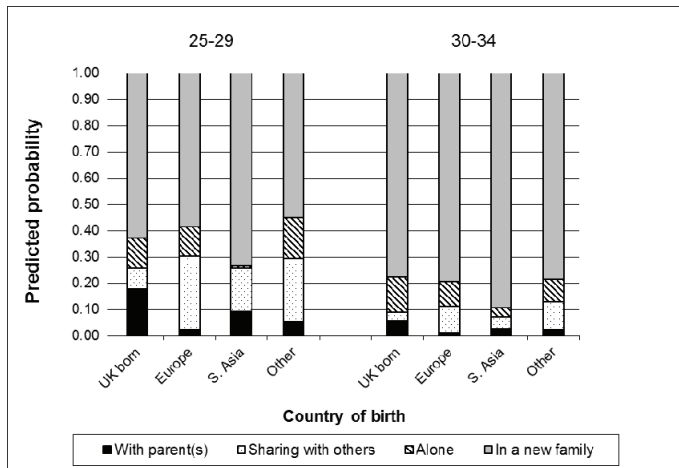
¹⁵ We focus on the two older age groups since for these age groups we can separate out female migrants from South Asia from other migrants.

Figure 2.1: Predicted living arrangements for men by age and country of birth in 2008



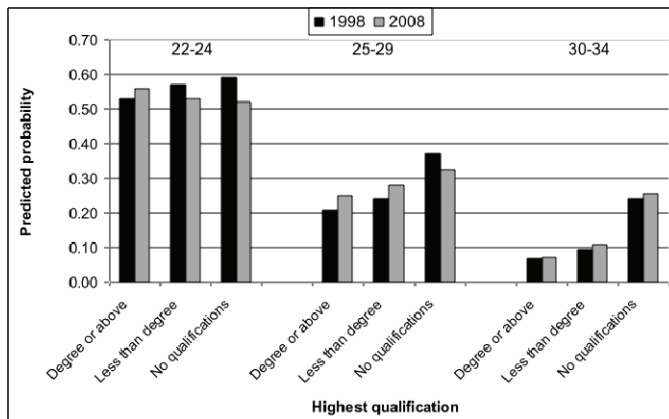
Note: Probabilities refer to degree educated individuals in permanent full-time work.
Source: LFS.

Figure 2.2: Predicted living arrangements for women by age and country of birth in 2008



Note: Probabilities refer to degree educated individuals in permanent full-time work.
Source: LFS.

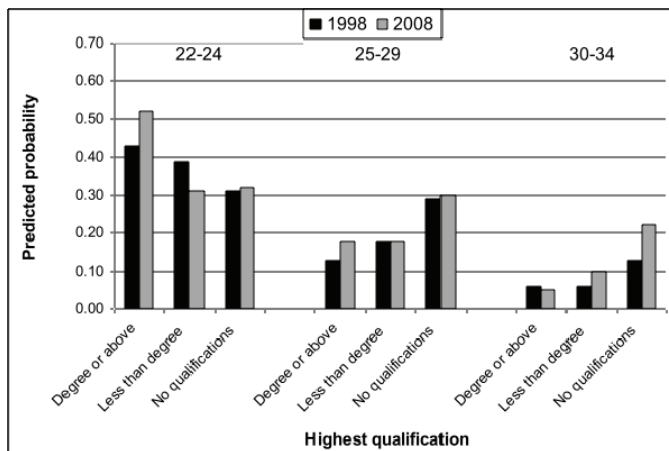
Figure 3.1: Predicted probability of living with a parent for men by age and highest educational qualification, 1998 and 2008



Note: Probabilities refer to UK born individuals in permanent full-time work.

Source: LFS.

Figure 3.2: Predicted probability of living with a parent for women by age and highest educational qualification, 1998 and 2008



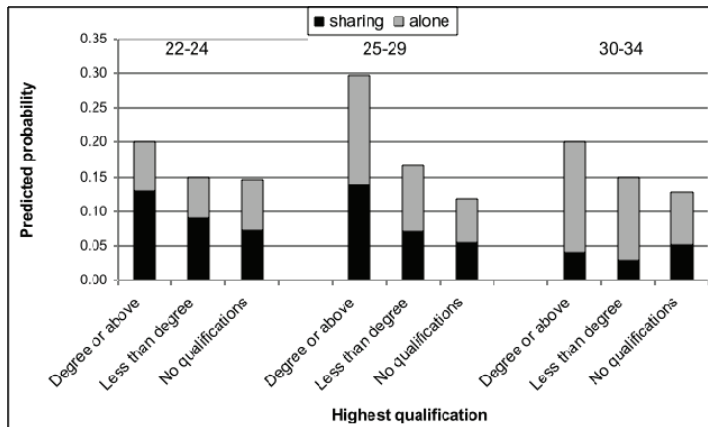
Note: Probabilities refer to UK born individuals in permanent full-time work.

Source: LFS.

Between 1998 and 2008 there has been an increase in the percentage of young adults born in the UK who are living with their parents, and this is especially notable for graduates in their twenties, as well as men and women with no qualifications in their thirties. For graduates, this probably reflects a period of living in the parental home following higher education prior to a subsequent departure for job or family reasons. Among men and women in their late twenties and early thirties, experience of higher education is associated with living outside of a family. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 present the predicted probabilities of either sharing with others or living alone according to education in 2008. Sharing with others (the lower dark segment of each bar) is more common among those in their twenties, whilst living alone (the lighter dotted segment) is more common among those in their thirties. In all age groups shared living is more prevalent among those with experience of higher education, especially among men and women aged 25-29. However, shared accommodation is by no means limited to those with experience of higher education. Living alone is also not confined to any specific educational group and at the youngest ages is found equally among the employed who have degrees and those with no qualifications. At older ages a higher proportion of those who are employed with degrees are living on their own. (This is especially the case for men – the gradient is much weaker for women).

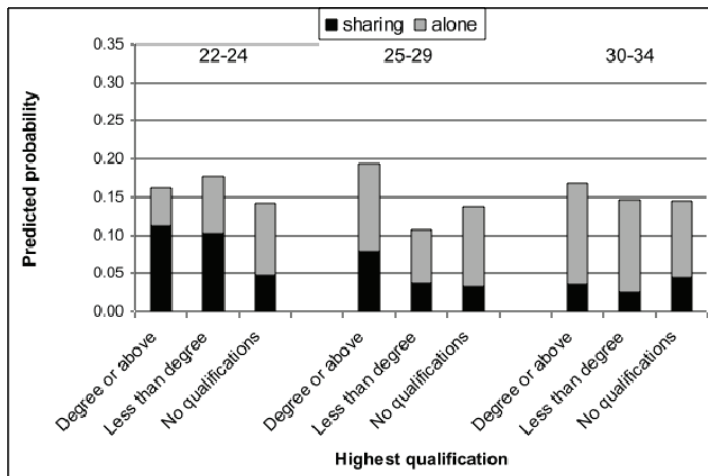
We conclude that the expansion in the UK in the numbers of young adults entering higher education is likely to have acted to i) delay partnership and family formation to older ages, ii) increase the proportion returning to the parental home and iii) increase the number of young adults living outside of the parental home who are sharing accommodation or living alone. However, over the past decade there has been a trend for more degree-educated men and women to either remain in or return to the parental home into their mid-twenties. In the next section we focus on the impact of economic uncertainty.

Figure 4.1: Predicted probability of living outside a family by age and highest educational qualification, Men in 2008



Note: Probabilities refer to UK born individuals in permanent full-time work.
 Source: LFS.

Figure 4.2: Predicted probability of living outside a family by age and highest educational qualification, Women in 2008



Note: Probabilities refer to UK born individuals in permanent full-time work.
 Source: LFS.

4.4 The role of economic uncertainty

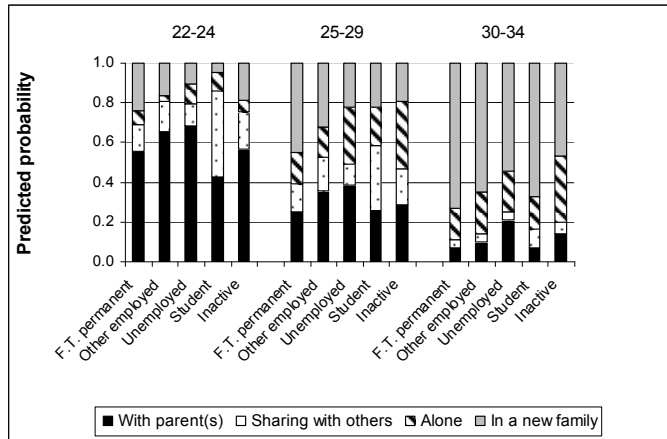
Living arrangements are significantly associated with economic activity among both men and women, as reflected in the large coefficients in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. There are also significant interactions between economic activity and survey year, suggesting that the relationship between living arrangements and economic activity has changed over the past decade. For women especially the demands of child-care mean that there is a two-way direction of causality in the relationship between living arrangements and economic activity. Women who have left the parental home and are living in a new family are far more likely to be economically inactive (due to undertaking family care) or to be working on a permanent part-time basis, whilst the unemployed are more likely to be living in the parental home. Given the difficulties in identifying the direction of causality in these relationships for women we focus our attention on the role of economic uncertainty on the living arrangements of men.

Figure 5 presents the predicted probability of being in the different living arrangements according to economic activity for men in the three age groups. The probabilities refer to UK born men with degree level qualifications. At all ages economic insecurity, as defined by unemployment, working on temporary contracts or in part-time work, or being economically inactive, is associated with an increased risk of living in the parental home. This is particularly the case for men in their early thirties where men in full-time employment are far more likely to be living in a new family. At all ages students are far more likely to be sharing, but this is especially the case among those in their early twenties. Living alone is most prevalent among the unemployed and those who are economically inactive who are less likely to be living in a new family.

To help interpret the interactions between economic activity and historical time, in Figure 6 we plot the predicted probability of living with a parent in 1998 and 2008, according to economic activity. Almost all groups have seen an increase in living with a parent but this increase is much larger for those in insecure positions. For example, in the 25-29 age group the probability of an unemployed man living with a parent increased from 0.28 to 0.39, whereas for a similar man in full-time permanent employment the increase was from 0.21 to 0.25.

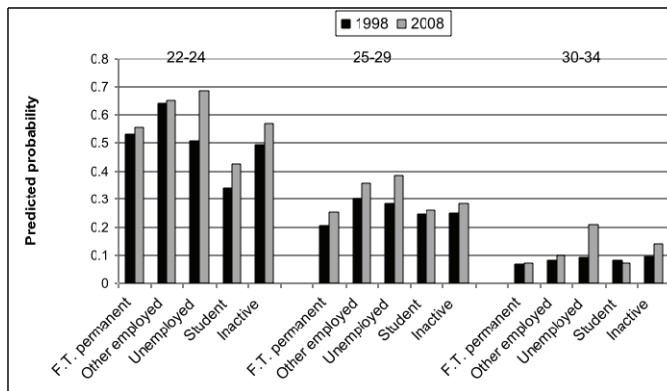
It is thus clear that economic insecurity is associated with remaining in the parental home and that this association has grown stronger over the past decade.

Figure 5: Predicted living arrangements of men by age and economic activity, 2008



Note: Probabilities refer to UK born individuals with degree level qualifications.
 Source: LFS.

Figure 6: Predicted probability of living with a parent in 1998 and 2008 by age and economic activity, Men



Note: Probabilities refer to UK born individuals with degree level qualifications..
 Source: LFS.

5. Discussion

In this paper we have brought together theoretical discussion of individualization, living arrangements, and the transition to adulthood, alongside empirical analysis of the UK population during the past decade. Our findings emphasize that the underlying reasons for changes in the nature and timing of transitions to adulthood are not uniform with respect to age, gender, and different social groups.

We find evidence of an increase in non-family living among young men in their twenties, together with an increase in the proportion of young women in their twenties who are living with their parents. Recent cohorts of women are now more likely to leave home to attend higher education rather than to form a partnership, and hence are more likely to return home in their early to mid twenties. In this regard, their behaviour has become more like that of young men.

Whilst increased co-residence with parents at younger ages has occurred among both degree-educated and less educated women, by age 30 the likelihood of remaining in the parental home has increased most among men and women who are unemployed and economically inactive. The greater concentration of the unemployed and economically inactive into an extended transition to adulthood, characterized by prolonged co-residence with parents into the early thirties, suggests that economic uncertainty is the key factor.

We have shown that much of the increase in non-family living among men can be explained by changes in the composition of the young adult population, arising from increased migration to the UK. After controlling for immigration we found that the higher prevalence of non-family living among young adults born outside the UK masked the increasing propensity for young adults born in the UK to live in the parental home.

As has been highlighted in recent literature (Robinson, Reeve, and Casey 2007), shared living is particularly prominent among migrants from Europe. We have shown that shared living is also common among young migrants from India, but that it is less common among men born in Bangladesh or Pakistan (who are more likely to live with their parents). In part, this is likely to reflect the higher proportion of the Bangladesh and Pakistani group who arrived as children and hence have a parent in the UK with whom to reside. It is also likely to relate to the underlying reason for migration. Recently there has been an increase of young Indian men migrating to the UK, either as students or workers under the Highly Skilled Migrant programme. Both of these reasons for migration are likely to result in delayed marriage and a propensity towards shared living (Raghuram 2008). In contrast, young adults of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin tend to marry at an earlier age than their Indian peers (Peach 2006), meaning that they are more likely to be living either with their parents or in a new family.

Non-family living, particularly sharing accommodation with non-relatives, is more common among those with previous experience of higher education. This is consistent with the suggestion that leaving home at a young age for higher education promotes a cultural expectation of experiencing a period of non-family living in young adulthood (Ford, Rugg, and Burrows 2002). For these young people an extended transition to adulthood might be seen as reflecting an opportunity for exploration. However, non-family living more generally (including solo living) is not experienced exclusively by those with experience of higher education. This could suggest that it is not just expansion of higher education per se that has led to changes in living arrangements, but also the changing expectations regarding the timing of transitions to co-residential partnerships and parenthood. Whilst these shifts in expectation may be greatest for those with higher education they are potentially influential across all educational groups. In addition, contextual factors with wide-reaching effects, in particular the increasing cost of housing, may partly explain why shared living is observed across the social spectrum of young adults.

The net impact of the recent expansion of higher education in the UK is multifaceted and differs by age. Among those in their early twenties an increase in the number of graduates has tended to amplify the numbers living with a parent, but has also raised the number of young adults living outside a family in shared accommodation. Among those in their late twenties and early thirties the expansion of higher education has fostered independence from the parental home.

For men the link between labour market uncertainty and a delayed transition to adulthood has become even more pronounced over the past decade. This is especially important in the context of the recent recession, which is likely to have reduced opportunities for employment and residential independence even further. The unemployed are increasingly likely to be living in the parental home in their mid-to-late twenties and less likely to have entered into partnership and parenthood. Similarly, young men in their early thirties who are unemployed have become more likely to be living with their parents at the expense of the apparent ‘independence’ conferred by living outside a family, either alone or with others. This highlights the importance of considering work and family as concurrent and interlinked domains of the life course.

Among men living outside a family in their twenties, those who are unemployed or economically inactive are much more likely to be living alone than in shared accommodation. This ostensibly appears counterintuitive – it might be assumed that living alone would require greater financial resources than sharing with others and would, therefore, be an indicator of advantage. However, the type and quality of housing in which these young people are living may be extremely diverse, with experiences of living alone potentially ranging from, for example, people residing in low-quality bedsits to those in luxury city-centre apartments (Rugg and Rhodes 2008).

Disadvantaged groups may not necessarily take the 'fast track' to adulthood. Although younger men without experience of higher education are more likely to be living with a partner and/or children, by age 30 this trend begins to change. In this older age group experience of higher education has little impact on the prevalence of living with a partner and/or children. However, among those who have yet to form their own family, there is a clear distinction between those with a degree or equivalent (who are more likely to be living outside a family) and those without (who are more likely to be living with their parents). Moreover, constraints arising from labour market instability mean that an increasing proportion of disadvantaged young adults are remaining in or returning to the parental home, delaying or precluding partnership and parenthood.

An increase in the prevalence of non-family living among young men could be taken to support the rising prominence of a life course stage characterised by freedom from responsibilities, but the reality is often more complex, since a proportion of these young men are also non-resident fathers. Such multiple role occupancy needs to be recognized by policy makers. In this context a key policy consideration would be the way in which the single-room rent welfare benefit policy may restrict the type of accommodation that is affordable to young fathers, hence in practical terms limiting their ability to co-parent. Recently, the UK Government, as part of its review of spending, has announced that the age threshold will increase to 35 years¹⁶. This would have even further implications given that the prevalence of partnership dissolution is higher at these ages.

An advantage of using the LFS for analysis of changes in living arrangements is that it includes information about every member of the respondent's household and the relationships between them. However, a limitation of the data is that it does not provide any information on relationships with people outside the household. This meant that we could not, for example, examine the role of 'living apart together' (LAT) relationships during the transition to adulthood. Findings from the Omnibus survey (Haskey 2005) and the British Household Panel Survey (Ermisch and Siedler 2009) indicate that LAT relationships tend to involve young, never-married people aged under 25 years (particularly students), and are more common among the better educated regardless of age. Therefore, it is likely that a proportion of the young adults classified as living with their parents or outside a family was involved in LAT relationships. Furthermore, the LFS only identifies parenthood through co-residence with a natural child. Many of the men living either outside of a family or with their parents will in fact be a non-residential father (Ross et al. 2009), but we are unable to identify such relationships using the LFS.

¹⁶ According to the UK Government, "this will ensure that Housing Benefit rules reflect the housing expectations of people of a similar age not on benefits" p. 69 (HM Treasury 2010).

One other constraint relating to the nature of the data is its cross-sectional design, which allows neither explicit investigation of life-course trajectories relating to the transition to adulthood nor identification of direction of causality. Without longitudinal data we can only speculate about the extent to which the increase in the proportions of UK born young adults living with a parent has resulted from both a delay in the age at which some adults leave home and an increase in the numbers who return home. Since we do not know about the parental characteristics of those no longer living with a parent we are unable to explore how living arrangements relate to family structure and parental resources, including parental income, parental housing circumstances, or parental social capital (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1999).

However, our analyses take strength from the large sample size of the LFS and its consistency over time, permitting an in-depth study of socio-economic differentials in living arrangements and their change over time. By taking both age and gender into account as well as the different contextual forces that potentially shape key transitions, we have shown that delay in the transition to adulthood may occur in both advantaged and disadvantaged young adults – albeit for different reasons. In sum, the main distinction appears to be that for the often more privileged young adults who have experience of higher education, the postponement of family formation entails a period of non-family living. In contrast, when the transition to adulthood is constrained by labour market uncertainty, the result is an extended period of co-residence with parents.

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