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*Research Article*

## **Unpacking intentions to leave the parental home in Europe using the Generations and Gender Survey**

**Katrin Schwanitz**

**Francesco Rampazzo**

**Agnese Vitali**

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# **Unpacking intentions to leave the parental home in Europe using the Generations and Gender Survey**

**Katrin Schwanitz<sup>1</sup>**

**Francesco Rampazzo<sup>2</sup>**

**Agnese Vitali<sup>3</sup>**

## **Abstract**

### **BACKGROUND**

Comparative research has shown considerable cross-national differences in the age at leaving the parental home across Europe. Intentions to leave home might help to shed light on such marked heterogeneity in patterns of home-leaving.

### **OBJECTIVE**

We address to what extent personal preferences (measured by attitudes), normative pressure (measured by subjective norms), and structural barriers (measured by perceived behavioural control) are linked to leaving-home intentions. We also address whether such associations vary by country, gender, and age.

### **METHODS**

We use data for 12 European countries from the first wave of the Generations and Gender Survey. The sample is composed of young adults (aged 18 to 34) who had never left the parental home for at least three months after age 16 (N = 10,457). We employ multi-group factor analysis and binary logistic regression models to (1) compare the distribution of estimated means, variances, and correlations of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control towards leaving home and to (2) analyse the interactions between these three latent factors and country, sex, and age.

### **RESULTS**

The analyses show a North–West/South–East divide in leaving-home intentions among young adults and a large variation in the estimated means of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control across the 12 countries. Our analyses also overall confirm the relevance of these three factors as drivers for young adults' leaving-home

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<sup>1</sup> School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Estonia. Email: [katrin.schwanitz@tlu.ee](mailto:katrin.schwanitz@tlu.ee).

<sup>2</sup> Saïd Business School, Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science, and Nuffield College, University of Oxford, UK.

<sup>3</sup> Università degli Studi di Trento, Italy.

intentions – even when controlled for sociodemographic variables and interactions with country, sex, and age.

## **CONTRIBUTION**

The paper contributes to the literature by providing a cross-national comparison of leaving-home intentions.

## **1. Introduction**

The share of young adults living with their parents varies greatly across Europe, being highest in Southern European countries and lowest in Scandinavia (Billari and Liefbroer 2010; Aassve, Cottini, and Vitali 2013). Cross-national differences in patterns of coresidence between young adults and their parents have been explained in terms of structural and cultural factors, which can help or impede young adults to leave the parental home (Furstenberg 2010; Buchmann and Kriesi 2011). Structural factors include labour and housing markets, educational systems, welfare provision, tax systems, and access to credit. Cultural factors have historical roots and are linked to the strength of family ties and intergenerational relations, prevailing social norms, and stage of ideational change (Billari 2004). Previous studies have evaluated the association between structural and/or cultural factors and the living arrangements of young adults in multi-country (see, e.g., Aassve et al. 2002; Mandic 2008; Iacovou 2010) and single-country studies (see e.g., Vitali 2010; Stone, Berrington, and Falkingham 2011).

Less is known about the decision-making process leading young adults to leave the parental home for the first time. Following Gauthier (2007), we adopt a conceptual framework which extends research on the transition to adulthood to include the cross-national study of young adults' underlying motivations about home-leaving. Short-term intentions are considered to be the best predictors of behaviours (Ajzen 1991) and have been widely investigated in family demography to gain insights into various demographic processes. The study of intentions as precursors of actual behaviours is particularly widespread in fertility research, partly due to the availability of questions on fertility intentions in a variety of social surveys such as the Generations and Gender Survey, European Social Survey, and the Eurobarometer. Instead, intentions are understudied in the literature on the transition to adulthood. And yet, by studying intentions to leave the parental home, we can unravel the mechanisms at play at the time when the intention is formed, and we can unpack its drivers. This exercise can help us to shed new light on why patterns of home-leaving differ so markedly across Europe. So far, only a few contributions have attempted to study the home-leaving decision-making process focusing on the drivers of behaviours, all with a single-country focus (Billari and

Liefbroer 2007; Ferrari, Rosina, and Sironi 2014; Tosi 2017) except for Billari, Hiekel, and Liefbroer (2019), who use the Generations and Gender Survey for three countries (Austria, Bulgaria, and France).

We start filling this research gap with a wide-ranging multi-country study on leaving-home intentions and their determinants. This is made possible by understudied data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS). Studying leaving-home intentions in comparative perspective offers a unique opportunity to unravel the mechanisms behind the well-known and striking differences in the age at leaving the parental home and in patterns of coresidence with parents across Europe.

Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Ajzen 1991) and using rich information on factors shaping the home-leaving decision-making process from the GGS (Gauthier, Cabaço, and Emery 2018) for 12 countries, we formulate hypotheses regarding young adults' intentions to live independently from parents and on the drivers leading to the formation of such intentions. We focus on three sets of factors which TPB assumes are responsible for the formation of intentions regarding a particular behaviour, in our case leaving the parental home: (1) attitudes towards the behaviour (i.e., an evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages linked to the behaviour); (2) subjective norms (i.e., the perceived approval/disapproval of significant others regarding the specific behaviour); and (3) perceived behavioural control (i.e., the perceived presence of obstacles and opportunities impeding or facilitating the specific behaviour). We ask the following research questions:

- 1) How do intentions to leave the parental home vary across European countries?
- 2) Do young adults report different levels of (1) attitudes, (2) subjective norms, and (3) perceived behavioural control towards leaving the parental home across countries? And if so, in which countries is each factor most/least important?
- 3) Are there country, sex, and age differences in terms of how (1) attitudes, (2) subjective norms, and (3) perceived behavioural control are related to the formation of intentions to leave the parental home?

## **2. Background and hypotheses**

We rely on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Ajzen 1991) as a theoretical framework to gain insight into the formation of leaving-home intentions. We then discuss the linkages between the TPB framework and the classical literature on the factors associated with home-leaving behaviour.

## 2.1 TPB and leaving-home intentions at the individual level

TPB describes individuals' decision-making as a two-stage process composed of intention formation followed by subsequent realisation. Importantly, TPB explains how individuals become motivated (i.e., form an intention) and develop a plan to engage in a specific behaviour. Regarding intention formation, TPB specifically posits that the intention to engage in a specific behaviour depends on three main factors, also termed "proximate determinants" (Ajzen 1991):

- 1) Attitudes towards the behaviour (i.e., an evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages linked to taking up the specific behaviour);
- 2) Subjective norms (i.e., the perceived approval/disapproval of significant others regarding the specific behaviour);
- 3) Perceived behavioural control (i.e., the perceived presence of exogenous obstacles and opportunities impeding or facilitating the specific behaviour and the extent to which a behaviour can then be performed successfully).

Other influences, termed "background factors" within the TPB model (Ajzen 1991), are assumed to be indirectly linked to intentions through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Background factors in applied research often are demographic, socioeconomic, or gender-related variables (e.g., Ajzen and Klobas 2013; Mencarini, Vignoli, and Gottard 2015; Billari, Philipov, and Testa 2009; Dommermuth, Klobas, and Lappegård 2011); specific examples in the context of home-leaving are age, sex, education, employment status, partnership status, or parental background (e.g., Ferrari, Rosina, and Sironi 2014; Billari, Hiekel, and Liefbroer 2019).

It is noteworthy that while TPB points to background factors as being important for intention formation, it does not theorise about how proximate determinants themselves originate (Ajzen 2011: 1123). We can envisage two ways in which background factors give rise to the proximate determinants of home-leaving. First, background factors establish a set of opportunities and constraints within which young adults (can) act (i.e., leave the parental home). Background factors likely are a key component in young adults' evaluations about the advantages and disadvantages, as well as the feasibility of leaving home. This ties in with the longstanding argument in the empirical literature that economic resources are a critical determinant of home-leaving (e.g., Avery, Goldscheider, and Speare 1992; Kerckhoff and Macrae 1992; Mulder, Clark, and Wagner 2002; Aassve et al. 2002; Billari 2004; Iacovou 2010; Aassve, Cottini, and Vitali 2013; Schwanitz, Mulder, and Toulemon 2017). Resources – such as income, educational attainment, housing, but also socioeconomic family background – directly capture young adults' agency (i.e., the ability to pursue leaving-home plans effectively); agency, in turn, is also related to the perceived ability to achieve a specific behavioural goal (Ajzen 1991).

Second, background factors are indicative of normative expectations and frames of reference to which young adults have been exposed during socialisation, or have picked up via social modelling (Keijer, Liefbroer, and Nagel 2018), and which also guide young adults' reasoning about anticipated consequences of leaving home versus staying. Again, this argument ties in with prior research showing that demographic choices in young adulthood are influenced by cultural norms and value orientations (Liefbroer and Billari 2010). Particularly leaving the parental home has been shown to be a subject of moral evaluations and a sense of the 'right time' (Billari and Liefbroer 2007). It is useful to note that what is framed as cultural norms and value orientations in studies of home-leaving clearly overlaps with the TPB concepts of attitudes and subjective norms. Finally, as Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) and other authors (Iacovou and Tavares 2011; Liefbroer 2009) point out, changes in opportunities, constraints, or personal or structural circumstances – hence in some background factors – can trigger changes in proximate determinants and, in turn, intentions.

Empirical support for TPB has been established in studies of fertility (see, e.g., Schoen et al. 1999; Billari, Philipov, and Testa 2009; Ajzen and Klobas 2013; Dommermuth, Klobas, and Lappegård 2011; Mencarini, Vignoli, and Gottard 2015), partnership formation (e.g., Wiik and Bernhardt 2019), employment (Gauthier, Emery, and Bartova 2016), and migration (e.g., Dommermuth and Klüsener 2018). For what concerns leaving the parental home, Billari and Liefbroer (2007) theorise in a seminal article that subjective norms, attitudes, and perceived behavioural control are associated with the probability to leave the parental home, and they find empirical confirmation in their study of Dutch youth. Similar results are obtained by Ferrari, Rosina, and Sironi (2014) and Tosi (2017) on Italian data. Ferrari, Rosina, and Sironi (2014) and Billari, Hiekel, and Liefbroer (2019) also document an association between leaving-home intentions and subsequent realisation.

Generally, however, cross-national research on leaving-home intentions is scant. To the best of our knowledge, Billari, Hiekel, and Liefbroer (2019) is the only study to date that adopts a comparative approach in their analysis of intentions (and their subsequent realisation) about key events in the transition to adulthood (i.e., leaving the parental home; starting a coresidential union; getting married; having a child). They also find evidence that the intention realisation is stratified by parental socioeconomic status. This important piece of research nevertheless leaves out two unsolved questions which we aim at addressing: First, the findings in Billari, Hiekel, and Liefbroer (2019) are based on a small and selected group of countries, which limits its generalisation to broader societal and structural contexts. Second, how leaving-home intentions are specifically formed (across different country contexts) is yet to be analysed.

## **2.2 TPB and leaving-home intentions at the country level**

When comparing attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control between young adults in different countries, we expect to find differences in the order of importance of each proximate determinant, depending on the country of residence. As such, we are conceptualising country of residence as a background factor within the TPB framework. Of course, a central tenet of cross-national demographic research has long been that structural and cultural factors located at the country level are main drivers of observed differences in intergenerational coresidence and the transition to adulthood (e.g., Schwanitz, Mulder, and Toulemon 2017; for a detailed review see Buchmann and Kriesi 2011). If intentions are indeed key determinants of behaviour, cross-national differences in intention formation are much more useful for understanding variation in patterns of coresidence between young adults and their parents. As Manning et al. (2014) note, intentions tap perceived desirability of a behaviour much better than the behaviour itself because the behaviour may not get realised due to constraints, whereas intentions may stay the same.

Importantly, TPB originally does not discuss the country context. We thus draw on the comparative leaving-home literature to distinguish two different reasons why differences in leaving-home intentions also likely exist between countries: opportunity structures and cultural norms (Reher 1998; Aassve et al. 2002; Billari 2004; Mandic 2008; Iacovou 2010; Liefbroer and Billari 2010; Vitali 2010; Schwanitz, Mulder, and Toulemon 2017). We argue that intention formation is not only situated within a personal context – as defined by gender, age, education, and employment, for example – but also within a broader national socioeconomic and cultural context. Our argument here reflects the clear finding from prior research that the role of young adults' individual characteristics for the decision-making process depends on the national context (e.g., Iacovou 2010; Schwanitz, Mulder, and Toulemon 2017). It is worth noting that while we consider these two factors conceptually separate, there is likely a complex interplay between opportunity structures and cultural norms, and their effects can hardly be disentangled from each other.

Opportunity structures at the country level create a scope for action (i.e., leaving the parental home) via welfare-state and policy environments; labour, housing, and credit markets; and educational systems (e.g., Aassve et al. 2002; Billari 2004; Mandic 2008; Vitali 2010). High levels of youth unemployment and precarious labour markets, for example, tend to make leaving home more difficult for young adults. Flexible and affordable housing markets, conversely, tend to make leaving home easier for young adults. Therefore, national opportunity structures might either support or constrain young adults' residential independence; intention formation likely reflects such contextual realities.



Cultural norms at the country level provide cultural scripts for action (i.e., leaving the parental home) via age deadlines and strength of ties with the family of origin (Reher 1998; Billari 2004; Liefbroer and Billari 2010). Cultural norms and scripts shape young adults' aspirations and expectations vis-à-vis the why, when, and in what order the home-leaving (and other demographic events) shall occur; they are historically rooted, intergenerationally transmitted, and vary across European regions. In countries with weak family ties, for example, traditional family views are weaker, individual autonomy is favoured, and age deadlines for leaving home are oriented towards younger ages. In such contexts, residential independence may be more relevant for young adults' life plans, which in turn may make forming an intention to leave home more likely. The usefulness of these arguments is confirmed by research on cultural norms, kinship networks, and family ties (Nauck, Gröpler, and Yi 2017; Aassve, Arpino, and Billari 2013). For example, Aassve, Arpino, and Billari (2013) find that cultural norms, measured by what individuals consider an acceptable age limit for still living with parents, vary greatly across Europe and that differences across countries are explained by opportunity structures, while cultural factors are more important for explaining differences within countries.

### **2.3 The present study**

In our study we include 12 Generations and Gender Survey (GGG) countries for which questions on leaving-home intentions were asked in wave 1 and for which we have information on at least two proximate determinants linked to the leaving-home decision: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, and Russia.<sup>4</sup> Young adults in such countries differ considerably in their age at leaving the parental home: A 'latest-late' exit from the parental home is a peculiarity of Southern Europe, followed by Eastern and Western European countries, whereas we observe an 'earliest-early' residential independence in Northern Europe (Billari and Liefbroer 2010).

We expect that young adults in Italy and in the Eastern European countries, where difficulties in entering the labour, housing, or credit market are more pronounced than elsewhere in Europe, will report lower values of perceived behavioural control compared to peers in other countries. In other words, we expect young Italians and Eastern Europeans to perceive that structural barriers beyond their control impede them to achieve economic independence from the family or to find affordable housing. We also

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<sup>4</sup> Data for wave 1 was collected around 2005 and 2006 in most countries, although it was also collected slightly earlier in Italy (2003–2004) and Russia (2004) or slightly later in Austria, Belgium, and Norway (2007–2010) (Fokkema et al. 2016).

expect young Italians and Eastern Europeans to report high values of subjective norms (i.e., to be more susceptible about the opinion of significant others regarding whether and when they shall leave the parental home) compared to young adults in Norway or Western Europe. This is because such societies are still more traditional. Indeed, to use Billari and Liefbroer's words (2007: 184–185), “in a traditional society in which social control and authority are still very important, one would expect a very strong impact of norms and networks on behaviour. In a modern, individualising society, in contrast, one would expect an increasing importance attached to individual beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages of leaving home and a reduction in the importance attached to norms.” Instead, we expect young adults in Norway followed by Western Europe to report high values of attitudes towards leaving home (i.e., to put more weight on their own evaluation of advantages and disadvantages regarding whether and when to leave the parental home) because independence and freedom are valued more in contexts which are at an advanced stage of ideational change according to the second demographic transition (Billari 2004).

To sum up, we expect leaving-home intentions of young adults from Italy and Eastern Europe to be mostly influenced by (low) perceived behavioural control and subjective norms and less by attitudes. For young adults in Norway and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe, we expect leaving-home intentions to be mostly influenced by attitudes and by (high) perceived behavioural control, whereas we expect subjective norms to have less influence here than in other countries.

### **3. Data and methods**

#### **3.1 Sample**

Our analyses are based on data from the first wave of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) (Generations and Gender Programme 2019; Gauthier, Cabaço, and Emery 2018) for 12 countries, to which we add data for Italy from the original Italian GGS component *Famiglia e Soggetti Sociali*.<sup>5</sup> We selected respondents aged 18 to 34 currently living with at least one parent, without missing values on the dependent variable (i.e., intention to live separately from parents in the next three years), and who have never lived separately from their parents for at least three months after age 16. Thus, we also retain respondents with missing values on any of the three proximate determinants (i.e., attitudes (= 1.7%), subjective norms (= 7.7%), and perceived behavioural control (= 9.4%)), but we account for these missing observations by means of full information maximum likelihood estimation in the following analyses. We exclude Estonia, Hungary, the Netherlands, and

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<sup>5</sup> We use the Italian component because it contains more information on the measures of proximate determinants compared to the latest available harmonised Italian GGS data (V.4.3).

Sweden from the sample because the variable measuring intentions to leave home was not included. We exclude Poland because only one TPB measure was included. This leaves us with a final sample size of 10,457 individuals.

### 3.2 Measurement

The dependent variable is the intention to leave home, which was measured by the question “Do you intend to start living separately from your parents within the next 3 years?” Respondents could answer on a four-point scale (definitely not, probably not, probably yes, and definitely yes) – except for Norway, where respondents could either answer yes or no. We thus create an overall binary measure of the leaving-home intention in which the answers probably not, definitely not, and no were coded as no (= 0), and the answers probably yes, definitely yes, and yes were coded as yes (= 1).

To measure the proximate determinants (i.e., attitudes towards living separately from the parents, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control), we select a subset of items from the original battery of questions in the GGS (see also section ‘4.2. Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control’). Table A–1 in the Appendix reports the original battery of questions and their respective availability across all countries included in the first wave of GGS and the Italian GGS component *Famiglia e Soggetti Sociali*.

### 3.3 Methods

We use multi-group factor analysis to obtain factor scores and to compare the distribution of estimated means, variances, and correlations of the three proximate determinants (i.e., attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control) between the 12 countries (Asparouhov and Muthén 2014). Differently from the standard (single-group) factor analysis, multi-group factor analysis allows us to estimate and compare means, variances, and covariances of the three latent factors between countries rather than obtaining a single mean for the pooled sample of countries. With this tool we can thus compare whether and how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control related to living separately from parents differ across the population of young adults in different countries.

The model with three factors  $\eta_1$ ,  $\eta_2$ , and  $\eta_3$  which are jointly normally distributed among individuals in each country  $g = 1, \dots, G$  is formulated as follows: with means

$$E(\eta_1) = \kappa_1^{(g)}, E(\eta_2) = \kappa_2^{(g)}, \text{ and } E(\eta_3) = \kappa_3^{(g)}, \quad (1)$$

variances

$$\text{var}(\eta_1) = \varphi_1^{(g)}, \text{var}(\eta_2) = \varphi_2^{(g)}, \text{and } \text{var}(\eta_3) = \varphi_3^{(g)}, \quad (2)$$

and covariances

$$\text{cov}(\eta_1, \eta_2) = \varphi_{12}^{(g)}, \text{cov}(\eta_1, \eta_3) = \varphi_{13}^{(g)}, \text{and } \text{cov}(\eta_2, \eta_3) = \varphi_{23}^{(g)}. \quad (3)$$

The full invariance measurement model was chosen for practical purposes and builds on the GGS' cross-nationally comparable, theory-driven questionnaire (i.e., variables are measured in the same way and on the same scale across countries). It allows us to benchmark the estimated means of the three latent factors between the countries. For the results presented in Figure 1, Bulgaria (1) is the reference group with fixed factor means  $\kappa_1^{(1)}$ ,  $\kappa_2^{(1)}$ , and  $\kappa_3^{(1)}$  set equal to 0 and factor variances  $\varphi_1^{(1)}$ ,  $\varphi_2^{(1)}$ , and  $\varphi_3^{(1)}$  set equal to 1. The factor covariances  $\varphi_{12}^{(g)}$ ,  $\varphi_{13}^{(g)}$ , and  $\varphi_{23}^{(g)}$  are freely estimated in all countries.<sup>6</sup> We used full information maximum likelihood estimation to handle missing data on the three proximate determinants (i.e., attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control). Table A–2 additionally shows the standardised factor loadings for the pooled sample.

In a second step of analysis, we run logistic regression models to analyse how the three proximate determinants influence leaving-home intentions, in interaction with three key background factors (i.e., country, sex, and age).<sup>7</sup> We thus assume more formally that  $Y_i$  has a binomial distribution

$$Y_i \sim B(n_i, \pi_i), \quad (4)$$

with binomial denominator  $n_i$  and probability  $\pi_i$ . Given individual data,  $n_i = 1$  for all  $i$ . The logit of the underlying probability  $\pi_i$  then is a linear function of the predictors

$$\text{logit}(\pi_i) = x_i \beta, \quad (5)$$

where  $x_i$  is a vector of covariates and  $\beta$  is a vector of regression coefficients.

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<sup>6</sup> When performing the multi-group factor analysis, we choose Bulgaria as the reference country because its scores on the three latent factors are fairly close to the overall mean. We made comparisons between different benchmark countries (i.e., Austria, Norway, and Italy) by re-estimating the model with different reference categories. The results are, overall, similar to those presented in Figure 1 and available from the authors upon request.

<sup>7</sup> This is because the two-step approach is computationally less demanding and also circumvents misspecification of the latent factors by the inclusion of the additional control variables.

As control variables in logistic regressions we include country of residence (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria (ref.), Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Russia), sex (1 = male), age, age squared, whether respondent has own children (= 1), partnership status (single (ref.), non-cohabiting partner, cohabiting partner, married), level of education (low, medium (ref.), high), employment status (employed/self-employed (ref.), student/in training, unemployed, inactive), whether respondent or his/her parents are limited in everyday activity (= 1), number of siblings alive (0 (ref.), 1, 2 or more), and whether at least one parent has high educational attainment (= 1). All these variables have a bearing on the home-leaving decision-making process (Aassve et al. 2002; Mulder, Clark, and Wagner 2002; Billari 2004; Billari and Liefbroer 2007; Iacovou 2010; Vitali 2010; Tosi 2017; Schwanitz, Mulder, and Toulemon 2017). We use the GGS' sample weights to adjust for sampling design in our analyses (Fokkema et al. 2016).

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 A cross-national comparison of intentions to leave the parental home**

Table 1 reports a description of our sample by country, confirming cross-national differences in intergenerational coresidence highlighted by the previous literature on the transition to adulthood in Europe (see, e.g., Billari and Liefbroer 2010). The proportion of young adults aged 18 to 34 living with their parents ranges from 12.8% in Germany to over 40% in Italy, Bulgaria, and Georgia. The proportion of young adults intending to leave home is highest in Norway (85.3%), followed by Western European countries (France, Germany, Austria, and Belgium), and it is lowest in Italy (43.6%) and in Eastern European countries, in particular the Czech Republic (37%) and Georgia (34.8%). The cross-national differences in intentions to leave the parental home thus seem to follow a North–West/South–East gradient. Across countries, young adults living with parents tend to be single with no children, with the exception of Eastern European countries, where the shares of those already married or with at least one child are considerably higher than in the rest of the sample. Regarding employment status, in Bulgaria, Georgia, France, and Italy, higher shares of coresiding young adults are unemployed. For cross-country differences between those employed and those still studying or in training, there are less clear patterns. There are no other obvious socioeconomic or social background patterns at the country level.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the sample (12 countries)**

	All countries	NO	AT	BE	DE	FR	BG	CZ	GE	LT	RO	RU	IT
Young adults living with parents (N.)	10,457	349	671	585	255	374	1,754	1,204	1,392	763	965	692	1,453
% of overall sample	36.3	12.9	34.9	34.6	12.8	24.2	43.5	38.5	56.2	28.2	39.0	35.1	55.8
% Intending to leave home †	46.8	85.3	55.8	55.6	64.6	64.9	40.7	37.0	34.8	48.6	44.0	45.6	43.6
Male	58.5	58.6	61.8	60.3	59.6	56.3	59.0	58.8	59.5	50.5	66.4	49.7	57.7
1 or more children	9.2	2.1	3.5	1.4	3.3	1.2	14.7	5.7	18.6	10.1	12.2	23.4	0.1
Single	65.6	60.4	52.8	52.7	67.6	60.4	68.3	68.3	76.6	75.7	67.5	50.5	67.2
Non-cohabiting partner	24.1	36.9	42.5	44.8	30.5	36.8	15.7	25.0	1.8	13.9	17.7	27.2	32.8
Cohabiting partner	3.2	0.8	1.9	1.9	0.5	1.1	5.7	3.1	8.4	2.6	2.3	5.2	0.0
Married	7.1	1.9	2.8	0.6	1.4	1.7	10.2	3.6	13.2	7.8	12.5	17.2	0.0
Median age	22	20	21	22	20	20	23	21	23	20	23	22	24
Education: Low	26.8	72.8	20.3	17.4	10.4	20.9	27.7	38.1	11.3	29.4	26.9	15.2	34.9
Education: Medium	59.2	23.9	71.4	56.5	69.9	62.9	60.9	55.9	63.7	62.7	64.3	51.1	56.3
Education: High	14.0	3.2	8.3	26.2	19.6	16.3	11.4	6.0	25.0	7.9	8.7	33.7	8.8
Employed/self-employed	42.9	48.5	64.9	41.0	32.8	24.2	47.8	37.2	29.7	29.0	54.3	51.7	43.8
Unemployed	15.4	3.2	4.9	11.3	6.1	19.9	23.3	8.7	36.7	6.0	11.0	11.2	16.7
Student/in training	37.9	43.5	27.8	47.2	59.9	53.2	25.5	52.5	27.5	63.5	27.9	31.2	36.3
Inactive	3.8	4.8	2.5	0.5	1.3	2.7	3.3	1.6	6.2	1.5	6.8	5.9	3.2
Limited in everyday activity	2.5	4.5	1.6	4.0	0.6	5.7	2.7	3.7	2.7	0.4	2.1	1.5	1.7
Number of siblings: 0	16.6	4.9	11.7	13.4	21.9	8.0	18.0	21.4	10.8	32.4	20.1	19.2	13.2
Number of siblings: 1	50.0	38.0	42.5	40.0	47.8	35.2	63.4	57.0	47.1	49.0	44.0	55.2	55.2
Number of siblings: 2 or more	33.4	57.1	45.8	46.7	30.3	56.8	18.6	21.6	42.1	18.5	35.9	25.7	31.6
Parents have high education	44.2	54.4	45.0	71.5	30.4	43.8	47.4	58.2	50.9	57.6	36.6	56.5	11.2
Parents limited in everyday activity	6.0	4.3	1.7	8.4	0.8	3.1	5.9	8.1	4.7	2.5	20.2	4.4	0.1

Notes: Unweighted N and weighted %, mean, or median. † We collapsed the GGS' response categories definitely yes, probably yes, and yes, and definitely not, probably not, and no, respectively. NO = Austria, BE = Belgium, DE = Germany, FR = France, BG = Bulgaria, CZ = Czech Republic, GE = Georgia, LT = Lithuania, RO = Romania, RU = Russia, IT = Italy.  
Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

## 4.2 Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control

Attitudes are measured by an index of three items related to the freedom one gains when living separately from parents with respect to the ‘possibility to do what you want,’ ‘sexual life,’ and ‘joy and satisfaction you get from life.’<sup>8</sup> Hence, effectively, our measure of attitudes is focused on the potential advantages related to self-realisation that one would expect from leaving the parental home (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.72$ ). Subjective norms are measured by an index of three items focusing on whether or not significant others (friends, parents, and other relatives) think the young adult should start living separately from their parents (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.89$ ). We exclude the item ‘your children think that you should live separately from your parents,’ which is inappropriate for our analyses given the age range of our sample (18 to 34; Table 1). Perceived behavioural control is measured by an index of three items focusing on structural factors impeding the transition out of the parental home, that is, the financial situation, work, and housing conditions (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.79$ ).<sup>9</sup>

Before running the multi-group factor analysis, for each of the three proximate determinants, the underlying items are recoded (and in the case of Norway rescaled<sup>10</sup>) so that higher scores indicate potential reasons for living separately from parents, in particular they indicate:

- 1) More positive attitudes towards leaving home (ranging from 1 to 5). Respondents who score high on the items measuring attitudes agree that living separately from parents gives them the possibility to do what they want, to have a sexual life, and to get joy and satisfaction from life. In other words, they expect to be better off if they were to leave the parental home and that living separately from parents would improve their freedom.
- 2) Stronger norms to live separately from parents (ranging from 1 to 5). Respondents who score high on the items measuring social norms agree that

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<sup>8</sup> In the original TPB framework, the measure of attitudes also includes the items ‘your employment opportunities,’ ‘your financial situation,’ and ‘what people around you think of you’ (Table A–1). We find that two items intended to measure attitudes (‘your employment opportunities’ and ‘your financial situation’) overlap (i.e., share a small amount of variance) with items relating to perceived behavioural control. This indicates that the items representing socioeconomic advantages and disadvantages are rather weakly related to the other items in the measure of attitudes; at the same time, they do not form a separate factor among the countries in the sample. Also, the communalities of these items (i.e., the amount of variance in common with the other items) are both relatively low overall and separately by country. Results from a factor analysis run on the original six items reported in Table A–1 confirm the existence of only one clear latent factor measuring attitudes towards independence linked to leaving the parental home (not shown but available from the authors).

<sup>9</sup> Again, results from a factor analysis run on the original six items (including also ‘your health,’ ‘your parent’s health,’ and ‘you having a partner’) confirm the existence of only one clear latent factor measuring structural barriers (not shown but available from the authors).

<sup>10</sup> Scales for Norway originally ranged from 0 to 10 for all items and were rescaled accordingly.

friends, parents, and most other relatives think they should live separately from parents. In other words, they perceive pressure from others to leave the parental home.

- 3) More perceived behavioural control over the decision to live separately from parents (ranging from 1 to 4). Respondents who score high on the items measuring perceived behavioural control agree that the decision to leave the parental home does not depend (much) on their financial situation, work, or housing conditions. In other words, they do not perceive that the decision to leave the parental home depends on structural barriers.

Estimated means of the three factors from the multi-group factor analysis for each country are shown in Figure 1 (Table A–3 provides estimated variances and covariances of the three latent factors). In the figure, countries are color-coded into four groups: Northern, Western, Eastern, and Southern European. There is a fairly large variation in the estimated means of the three proximate determinants across the different countries in the sample, especially for subjective norms. Here, the difference between the highest and the lowest means is around 1.3 units. Overall, and as expected, there are also fairly clear geographical patterns in the means.

Attitudes towards living separately from parents are strongest in the Czech Republic, Romania, Russia, and Norway. In these countries, respondents are most likely to report that they expect positive benefits when leaving the parental home. At the other extreme we find Georgia, where attitudes are weaker than in any other country: In Georgia, respondents are least likely to report positive benefits associated with leaving the parental home. Belgium, Austria, and Bulgaria also score low in terms of attitudes towards living separately from parents. Attitudes represent the factor with the lowest variation across countries, where the difference between the highest and the lowest means is less than one unit, or less than one individual-level standard deviation of the factor.

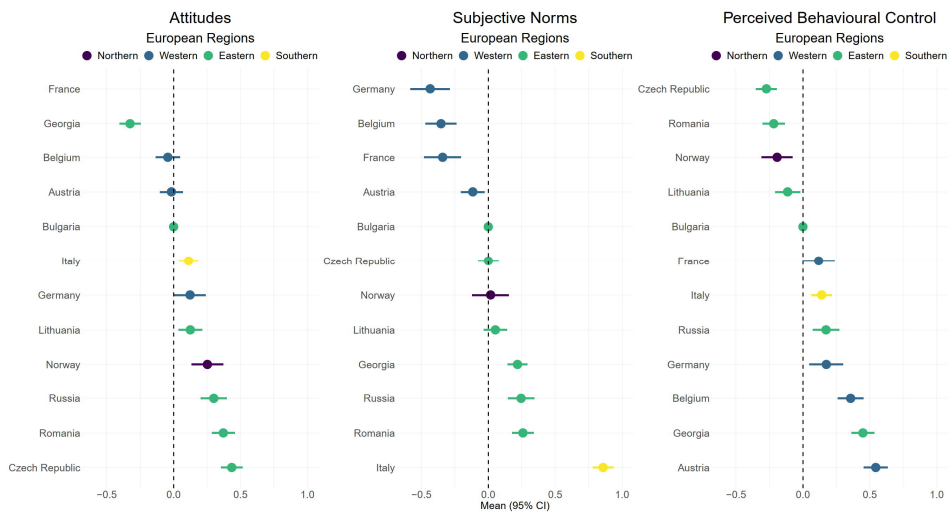
Levels of subjective norms towards living independently from parents are low in all Western European countries; intermediate in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Norway, and Lithuania; and high in Georgia, Russia, Romania, and Italy. Italy clearly stands out from all other countries, with young Italians being more likely to report that they experience more pressure to leave the parental home than their counterparts in all other countries.

Finally, levels of perceived behavioural control over the decision to live independently from parents are highest in Austria (i.e., young adults perceive to have most control over structural barriers to leaving home), a country in the sample with a stable institutional context for youth education and employment, and lowest in the Czech Republic (i.e., young adults perceive to have least control), a country in the sample characterised by low levels of public spending on youth education and employment and social assistance (Thévenon 2015). The cross-country pattern in the estimated means of



perceived behavioural control does not support our expectation that young adults in the Eastern European countries and Italy tend to express lower levels of perceived behavioural control than young adults in Norway and Western Europe. This unexpected result might be due to the composition of young adults still living with parents across countries, and we further tackle this point in a robustness check, re-running the multi-group factor analysis on subsamples of younger adults (see section ‘4.4. Robustness checks’). The observed country patterns hold when different age restrictions are applied, hence suggesting that the age composition of our sample does not bias the results.

**Figure 1: Estimated means of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, multi-group factor analysis**



Notes: 95% confidence intervals indicated by the coloured bars. TPB items for attitudes were not included in the French GGS. Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

### 4.3 Proximate determinants of leaving-home intentions

Logistic regression models are used to examine the association between the intention to leave home and its three proximate determinants (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control). In a first step, we run separate models for each factor (Tables 2, 3, and 4), controlling for basic socioeconomic variables and interactions with country (Model 1), sex (Model 2), and age (Model 3).

**Table 2: Logistic regressions predicting intentions to leave home, attitudes**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI
Attitudes	1.34	[1.16,1.52]	1.32	[1.20,1.44]	0.73	[0.27,1.18]
Country (ref. Bulgaria)						
Norway	2.18	[1.82,2.54]	2.18	[1.83,2.53]	2.15	[1.80,2.50]
Austria	0.53	[0.30,0.77]	0.50	[0.28,0.72]	0.49	[0.27,0.71]
Belgium	0.54	[0.29,0.80]	0.40	[0.18,0.62]	0.37	[0.16,0.59]
Germany	1.17	[0.78,1.56]	1.13	[0.78,1.48]	1.11	[0.76,1.46]
Czech Republic	-0.70	[-0.91,-0.49]	-0.76	[-0.95,-0.57]	-0.75	[-0.94,-0.56]
Georgia	0.14	[-0.04,0.32]	0.13	[-0.05,0.32]	0.13	[-0.05,0.32]
Lithuania	0.48	[0.27,0.70]	0.49	[0.28,0.71]	0.49	[0.28,0.70]
Romania	-0.30	[-0.51,-0.09]	-0.30	[-0.49,-0.10]	-0.30	[-0.50,-0.11]
Russia	-0.22	[-0.45,0.01]	-0.35	[-0.59,-0.12]	-0.36	[-0.60,-0.13]
Italy	-0.13	[-0.33,0.07]	-0.16	[-0.36,0.04]	-0.17	[-0.37,0.03]
Male	-0.52	[-0.62,-0.41]	-0.53	[-0.63,-0.42]	-0.50	[-0.61,-0.40]
Age	0.61	[0.46,0.76]	0.63	[0.48,0.78]	0.61	[0.46,0.76]
<i>Interactions</i>						
Country * Attitudes						
Norway	0.15	[-0.49,0.78]				
Austria	0.71	[0.23,1.18]				
Belgium	1.34	[0.72,1.96]				
Germany	1.16	[0.16,2.16]				
Czech Republic	-0.06	[-0.34,0.22]				
Georgia	0.14	[-0.12,0.40]				
Lithuania	0.13	[-0.22,0.47]				
Romania	0.07	[-0.23,0.36]				
Russia	-0.33	[-0.66,-0.00]				
Italy	-0.18	[-0.51,0.14]				
Sex * Attitudes			0.14	[-0.63,-0.42]		
Age * Attitudes					0.03	[0.01,0.05]
Constant	-8.19	[-10.07,-6.31]	-8.38	[-10.26,-6.51]	-8.17	[-10.07,-6.27]
F (df)	46.45 (38)		58.65 (29)		58.55 (29)	
N	10,083		10,083		10,083	

Notes: 95% confidence interval in brackets [lower bound, upper bound]. TPB items for attitudes were not included in the French GGS. Models control for age squared, whether respondent has own children, partnership status, education, employment status, whether respondent or his/her parents are limited in everyday activity, number of siblings, and whether at least one parent has high educational attainment.

Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

**Table 3: Logistic regressions predicting intentions to leave home, subjective norms**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI
Subjective norms	0.81	[0.68,0.94]	0.93	[0.83,1.01]	0.23	[-0.11,0.57]
Country (ref. Bulgaria)						
Norway	2.28	[1.89,2.66]	2.36	[1.99,2.72]	2.30	[1.95,2.66]
Austria	0.43	[0.22,0.65]	0.48	[0.25,0.70]	0.46	[0.24,0.69]
Belgium	0.67	[0.40,0.95]	0.62	[0.39,0.86]	0.58	[0.35,0.81]
Germany	1.53	[0.96,2.09]	1.51	[1.14,1.88]	1.45	[1.09,1.81]
France	1.01	[0.71,1.30]	1.26	[0.95,1.58]	1.19	[0.88,1.50]
Czech Republic	-0.35	[-0.53,-0.17]	-0.31	[-0.49,-0.13]	-0.32	[-0.50,-0.14]
Georgia	-0.62	[-0.81,-0.43]	-0.48	[-0.65,-0.31]	-0.49	[-0.66,-0.31]
Lithuania	0.39	[0.19,0.59]	0.41	[0.20,0.61]	0.40	[0.19,0.60]
Romania	-0.17	[-0.37,0.04]	-0.06	[-0.24,0.12]	-0.07	[-0.26,0.11]
Russia	-0.20	[-0.42,0.02]	-0.25	[-0.47,-0.03]	-0.27	[-0.50,-0.05]
Italy	-1.00	[-1.27,-0.72]	-0.92	[-1.12,-0.71]	-0.95	[-1.16,-0.74]
Male	-0.44	[-0.54,-0.34]	-0.47	[-0.57,-0.37]	-0.45	[-0.55,-0.35]
Age	0.42	[0.27,0.56]	0.41	[0.26,0.55]	0.47	[0.32,0.62]
<i>Interactions</i>						
Country * Subjective norms						
Norway	0.07	[-0.30,0.43]				
Austria	-0.01	[-0.29,0.26]				
Belgium	0.26	[0.01,0.52]				
Germany	0.21	[-0.34,0.76]				
France	-0.22	[-0.48,0.04]				
Czech Republic	0.37	[0.13,0.61]				
Georgia	0.49	[0.27,0.71]				
Lithuania	0.09	[-0.16,0.33]				
Romania	0.46	[0.20,0.72]				
Russia	-0.02	[-0.26,0.22]				
Italy	0.24	[-0.00,0.49]				
Sex * Subjective norms			0.10	[-0.01,0.21]		
Age * Subjective norms					0.03	[0.02,0.05]
Constant	-5.37	[-7.21,-3.54]	-5.29	[-7.12,-3.46]	-5.90	[-7.78,-4.04]
F (df)	43.47 (40)		54.04 (30)		53.66 (30)	
N	10,457		10,457		10,457	

Note: 95% confidence interval in brackets [lower bound, upper bound]. Models control for age squared, whether respondent has own children, partnership status, education, employment status, whether respondent or his/her parents are limited in everyday activity, number of siblings, and whether at least one parent has high educational attainment.

Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

**Table 4: Logistic regressions predicting intentions to leave home, perceived behavioural control**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI
Perceived behavioural control	-0.20	[-0.31,-0.09]	0.00	[-0.08,0.08]	0.53	[0.25,0.81]
Country (ref. Bulgaria)						
Norway	2.23	[1.87,2.60]	2.12	[1.78,2.46]	2.12	[1.78,2.46]
Austria	0.49	[0.24,0.74]	0.37	[0.16,0.58]	0.35	[0.15,0.56]
Belgium	0.09	[-0.13,0.32]	0.18	[-0.02,0.40]	0.17	[-0.04,0.38]
Germany	1.09	[0.72,1.45]	1.06	[0.70,1.41]	1.03	[0.68,1.38]
France	0.88	[0.61,1.15]	0.89	[0.62,1.16]	0.87	[0.60,1.14]
Czech Republic	-0.15	[-0.32,0.03]	-0.23	[-0.39,-0.06]	-0.21	[-0.38,-0.04]
Georgia	-0.15	[-0.31,0.02]	-0.21	[-0.37,-0.04]	-0.19	[-0.35,-0.03]
Lithuania	0.58	[0.38,0.78]	0.56	[0.37,0.76]	0.57	[0.38,0.77]
Romania	0.12	[-0.05,0.30]	0.14	[-0.03,0.32]	0.15	[-0.03,0.32]
Russia	0.06	[-0.14,0.27]	0.08	[-0.13,0.28]	0.07	[-0.13,0.28]
Italy	-0.11	[-0.29,0.08]	-0.11	[-0.29,0.08]	-0.12	[-0.31,0.06]
Male	-0.51	[-0.61,-0.42]	-0.49	[-0.59,-0.40]	-0.50	[-0.60,-0.41]
Age	0.61	[0.47,0.75]	0.61	[0.48,0.75]	0.60	[0.47,0.74]
<i>Interactions</i>						
Country * Perceived behavioural control						
Norway	0.59	[0.14,1.04]				
Austria	-0.12	[-0.40,0.16]				
Belgium	0.35	[0.10,0.61]				
Germany	-0.05	[-0.54,0.46]				
France	0.15	[-0.17,0.46]				
Czech Republic	0.43	[0.22,0.65]				
Georgia	-0.01	[-0.16,0.15]				
Lithuania	0.30	[0.08,0.52]				
Romania	-0.03	[-0.23,0.17]				
Russia	0.20	[-0.02,0.43]				
Italy	0.04	[-0.16,0.24]				
Sex * Perceived behavioural control			-0.17	[-0.27,-0.06]		
Age * Perceived behavioural control					-0.03	[-0.04,-0.02]
Constant	-8.05	[-9.77,-6.35]	-8.13	[-9.84,-6.43]	-8.02	[-9.73,-6.31]
F (df)	27.75 (40)		36.17 (30)		36.59 (30)	
N	10,457		10,457		10,457	

Notes: 95% confidence interval in brackets [lower bound, upper bound]. Models control for age squared, whether respondent has own children, partnership status, education, employment status, whether respondent or his/her parents are limited in everyday activity, number of siblings, and whether at least one parent has high educational attainment.

Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

Results from these separate models indicate that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are in and of themselves relevant in explaining young adults' intentions to leave the parental home. Attitudes and subjective norms matter in the expected direction. There is a positive association between the perception that living separately from parents would improve freedom and the intention to leave the parental home (Table 2). Also, there is a positive association between perceived pressure from others and the intention to leave the parental home (Table 3). For perceived behavioural control, the results are overall more mixed: The main effect is negative, which means that the higher the perceived behavioural control, the lower leaving-home intentions are (Table 4, Model 1). This result might seem at odds with our expectations (i.e., that young adults who perceive to have control over their financial situation, work, and housing conditions would be more likely to intend to leave the parental home). Rather than being driven by objective measures of perceived behavioural control, which are included among the control variables in all models, our result seems to be due to the specified interactions. And indeed, if we include an interaction between perceived behavioural control and age (Table 4, Model 3), the main effect turns positive ( $b = 0.53$ , 95% CI = 0.25 to 0.81). Furthermore, the results for all three proximate determinants indicate that the association with the intention to leave home is different by country and stratified by age.

In a second step, we run pooled models for all factors (Table 5). Results from the pooled models indicate that when included simultaneously, all three proximate determinants result positive in explaining leaving-home intentions, also when control variables are included (Table 5, Models 1 and 2). Once interactions with country, sex, and age are included, the confidence intervals for subjective norms and perceived behavioural control intersect with 0 (Table 5, Model 3). Interpretation and comparison of logistic regression coefficients is not straightforward, however, for evaluating the change in probability that would occur for young adults upon a change in any of the proximate determinants. Figure 2 therefore reports the average predicted probabilities from Model 3 in Table 5, showing that the probability to intend to leave home increases with all three proximate determinants. Put differently, young adults have significantly lower probabilities of intending to leave home at low levels of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control and significantly higher probabilities of intending to leave home at high levels of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. At below-average scores, perceived behavioural control results in a higher probability to intend to leave home, whereas attitudes and subjective norms are relatively more important for intention formation at above-average scores. However, overall the association between perceived behavioural control and intentions is rather flat.

**Table 5: Logistic regression predicting intentions to leave home, all factors included simultaneously**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI
Attitudes	1.12	[1.03,1.20]	1.12	[1.02,1.21]	1.05	[0.50,1.60]
Subjective norms	0.48	[0.42,0.54]	0.68	[0.61,0.75]	-0.27	[-0.69,0.14]
Perceived behavioural control	0.23	[0.18,0.29]	0.15	[0.09,0.22]	0.32	[-0.07,0.71]
Country (ref. Bulgaria)						
Norway			2.34	[1.98,2.70]	2.49	[2.04,2.94]
Austria			0.51	[0.28,0.75]	0.33	[0.04,0.63]
Belgium			0.66	[0.43,0.90]	0.57	[0.25,0.89]
Germany			1.41	[1.04,1.77]	1.33	[0.74,1.92]
Czech Republic			-0.68	[-0.87,-0.48]	-0.68	[-0.90,-0.45]
Georgia			-0.19	[-0.38,0.01]	-0.25	[-0.46,-0.03]
Lithuania			0.42	[0.20,0.64]	0.38	[0.16,0.59]
Romania			-0.31	[-0.51,-0.12]	-0.43	[-0.66,-0.21]
Russia			-0.51	[-0.75,-0.26]	-0.38	[-0.63,-0.13]
Italy			-0.71	[-0.93,-0.50]	-0.84	[-1.12,-0.57]
Male			-0.45	[-0.56,-0.34]	-0.51	[-0.62,-0.39]
Age			0.48	[0.32,0.64]	0.52	[0.35,0.68]
<i>Interactions</i>						
Country * Attitudes						
Norway					0.34	[-0.38,1.05]
Austria					0.91	[0.36,1.47]
Belgium					1.14	[0.46,1.81]
Germany					0.84	[-0.22,1.90]
Czech Republic					-0.07	[-0.39,0.25]
Georgia					-0.11	[-0.40,0.19]
Lithuania					0.13	[-0.26,0.51]
Romania					-0.03	[-0.37,0.30]
Russia					-0.35	[-0.70,0.01]
Italy					-0.23	[-0.62,0.15]
Country * Subjective norms						
Norway					0.34	[-0.08,0.75]
Austria					-0.18	[-0.50,0.15]
Belgium					0.17	[-0.12,0.47]
Germany					0.25	[-0.35,0.85]
Czech Republic					0.51	[0.25,0.77]
Georgia					0.56	[0.31,0.79]
Lithuania					0.08	[-0.20,0.37]
Romania					0.54	[0.27,0.82]
Russia					0.18	[-0.08,0.43]
Italy					0.43	[0.17,0.68]

**Table 5: (Continued)**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	95% CI	B	95% CI	B	95% CI
Country * Perceived behavioural control						
Norway					0.67	[0.13,1.20]
Austria					0.25	[-0.09,0.59]
Belgium					0.38	[0.06,0.70]
Germany					0.01	[-0.58,0.61]
Czech Republic					0.14	[-0.11,0.40]
Georgia					-0.10	[-0.29,0.09]
Lithuania					0.11	[-0.14,0.37]
Romania					-0.06	[-0.31,0.20]
Russia					0.09	[-0.17,0.35]
Italy					0.08	[-0.17,0.33]
Sex * Attitudes					0.02	[-0.16,0.20]
Sex * Subjective norms					0.15	[0.02,0.28]
Sex * Perceived behavioural control					-0.02	[-0.15,0.10]
Age * Attitudes					0.00	[-0.02,0.03]
Age * Subjective norms					0.02	[0.01,0.04]
Age * Perceived behavioural control					-0.01	[-0.02,0.01]
Constant	-0.44	[-0.49,-0.39]	-6.45	[-8.39,-4.50]	-6.67	[-8.65,-4.68]
F (df)	449.32 (3)		60.78 (30)		29.23 (66)	
N	10,083		10,083		10,083	

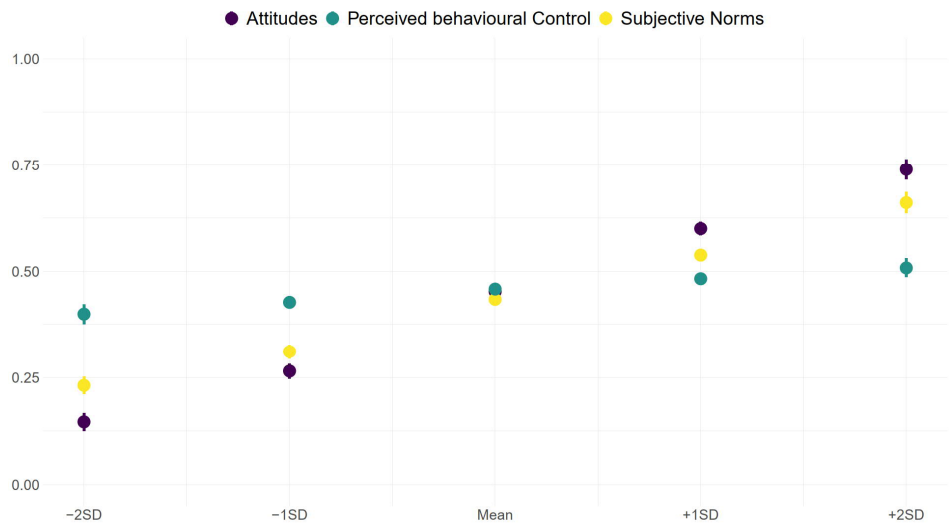
Notes: 95% confidence interval in brackets [lower bound, upper bound]. TPB items for attitudes were not included in the French GGS. Models 2 and 3 control for age squared, whether respondent has own children, partnership status, education, employment status, whether respondent or his/her parents are limited in everyday activity, number of siblings, and whether at least one parent has high educational attainment.

Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

Figures 3, 4, and 5 show the average predicted probabilities taking into account the interaction effects between each proximate determinant and country, sex, and age (Model 3 in Table 5). Again, perceived behavioural control appears to be a less important proximate determinant of leaving-home intentions: The line showing its association with leaving-home intentions is almost flat in all countries. Thus, respondents who score higher on this factor are only marginally more likely to intend to leave home. The relative importance of the other two proximate determinants depends on the country context. For Italy and most of Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Georgia, Romania, and Russia), our results suggest that subjective norms are as important as attitudes in forming leaving-home intentions (Figure 3). Conversely, in the three Western European countries (Austria, Belgium, and Germany) but also Bulgaria and Lithuania, attitudes appear more important than subjective norms in determining leaving-home intentions: Above-average scores on attitudes result in a higher probability of intending to leave home relative to

above-average subjective norms. In general, the effect of the three proximate determinants is smaller in Italy and all Eastern European countries compared to the other countries in the sample. Norway appears quite different from all other countries. Here, attitudes and perceived behavioural control have a strong and remarkably similar association on leaving-home intentions, and subjective norms matter too, for those who score high on this factor.

**Figure 2: Predicted probability of intending to leave the parental home by score on each proximate determinant**

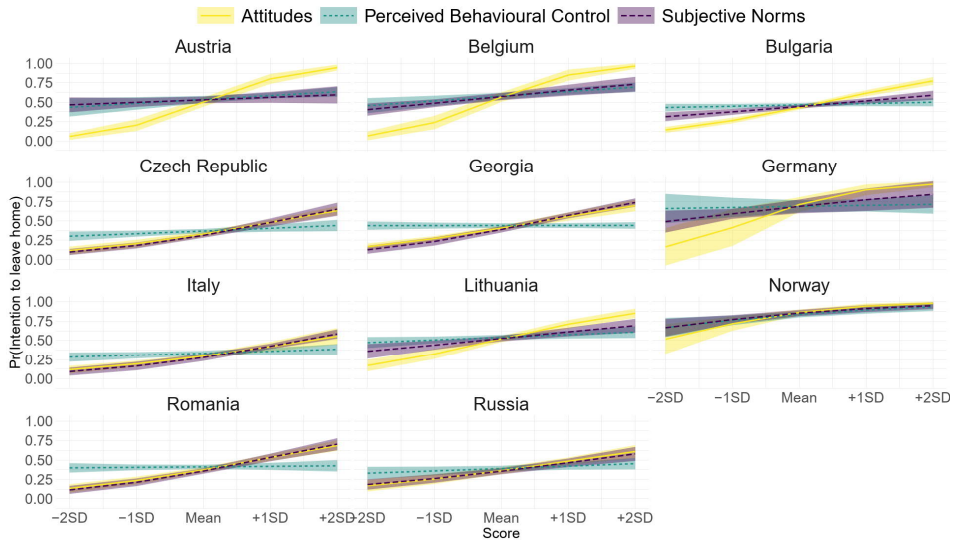


Notes: 95% confidence intervals indicated by the coloured bars. Results based on Model 3 in Table 5. Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

For most countries, intentions appear not very strongly related to the individual score on perceived behavioural control, although the predicted probability of intending to leave home increases with the factor score (Figure 3). Similarly, we did not find evidence for any particular interaction between perceived behavioural control and sex (Figure 4) nor age (Figure 5).

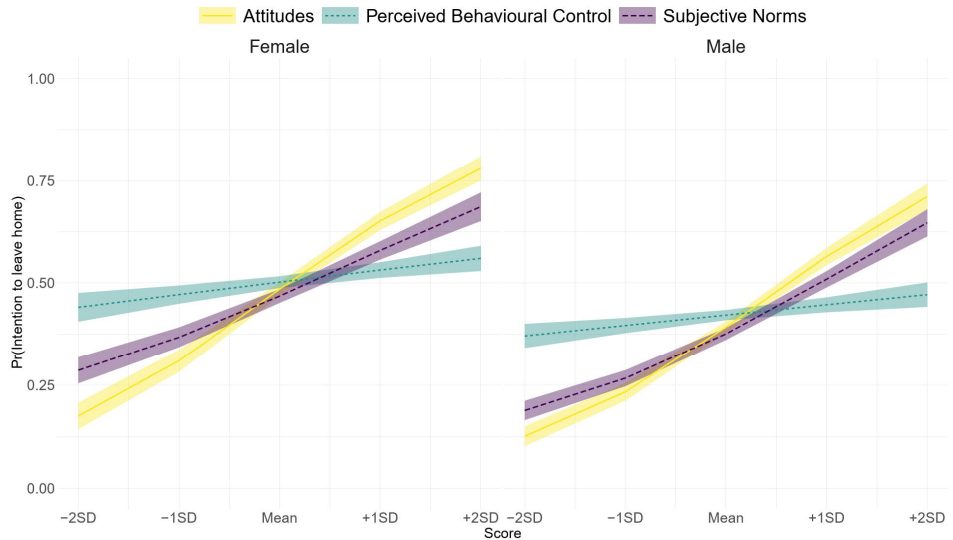


**Figure 3: Predicted probability of intending to leave the parental home by score on each proximate determinant and country**



Notes: 95% confidence interval indicated by the lightly coloured bands. +/- 1/2 SD stands for 1/2 standard deviations above/below the mean. Results based on Model 3 in Table 5.  
 Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

**Figure 4: Predicted probability of intending to leave the parental home by score on each proximate determinant and sex**



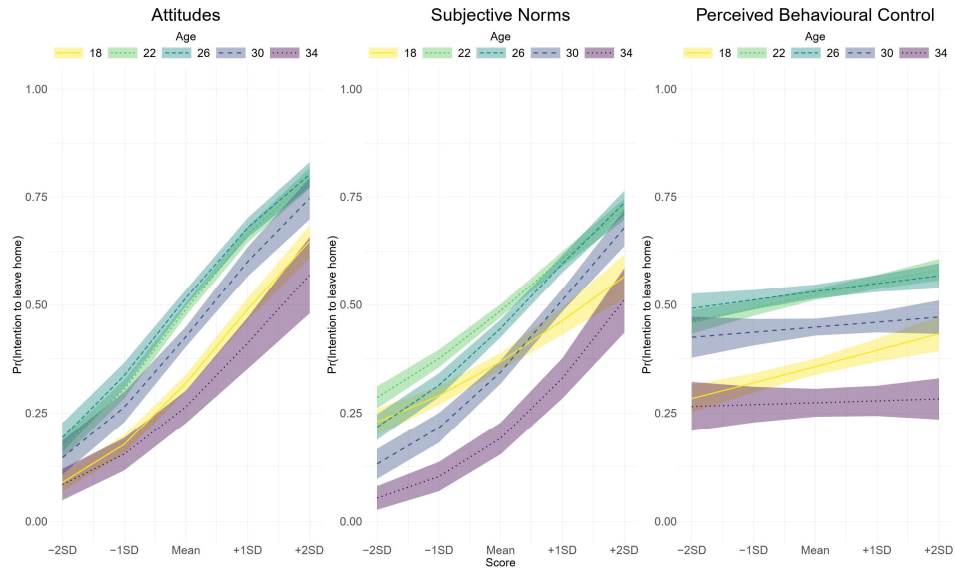
Notes: 95% confidence interval indicated by the lightly coloured bands. +/- 1/2 SD stands for 1/2 standard deviations above/below the mean. Results based on Model 3 in Table 5.  
Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

The analysis of sex differences suggests that for both men and women, attitudes are the most important proximate determinant of leaving-home intentions, followed by subjective norms. The differences between the two proximate determinants are slightly more pronounced for women than for men. Women also have a higher predicted probability of intending to leave home compared to men (Figure 4). The association between leaving-home intention and each proximate determinant are thus stronger than they are for men – recall that this is also implied by the positive coefficient for the interaction term for subjective norms and sex (if not for the respective interaction terms for attitudes and perceived behavioural control; Table 5).

The analysis of age differences suggests that the association between intentions and the three proximate determinants is age-graded. As Figure 5 illustrates, the relationship between leaving-home intention and the three proximate determinants initially increases with age, reaches a peak in the mid-twenties, and then decreases. In other words, for a given level of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, the intention to leave home is higher in the mid-twenties. However, differences across age groups are slightly larger for subjective norms than for attitudes and the differences across

age groups in attitudes and subjective norms play out on opposing sides of the factor spectrum.

**Figure 5: Predicted probability of intending to leave the parental home by score on each proximate determinant and age**



Notes: 95% confidence interval indicated by the lightly coloured bands. +/- 1/2 SD stands for 1/2 standard deviations above/below the mean. Results based on Model 3 in Table 5.

Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

#### 4.4 Robustness checks

We assess the robustness of our main results by re-estimating all models (i.e., multi-group factor models, as well as logistic regressions for the separate and pooled models) for three different age-restricted sub-samples: (1) respondents aged between 18 and the median age at leaving home (by country), (2) respondents aged 18 to 24, and (3) respondents aged 18 to 22. The results are robust to these checks. Specifically, the average marginal effects (AMEs) for attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control from the final model among the full sample and the different subsamples are very similar (Table 6).

**Table 6: Comparison of average marginal effects (AMEs) across age-restricted samples**

Sample	AME	95% CI
18–34 (N. 10,083)		
Attitudes	0.20	[0.19;0.22]
Subjective norms	0.11	[0.10;0.13]
Perceived behavioural control	0.03	[0.02;0.04]
18–Median age (N. 7,327)		
Attitudes	0.21	[0.19;0.23]
Subjective norms	0.11	[0.10;0.13]
Perceived behavioural control	0.04	[0.03;0.05]
18–24 (N. 6,832)		
Attitudes	0.20	[0.18;0.22]
Subjective norms	0.11	[0.09;0.12]
Perceived behavioural control	0.04	[0.02;0.05]
18–22 (N. 5,577)		
Attitudes	0.21	[0.19;0.23]
Subjective norms	0.11	[0.09;0.12]
Perceived behavioural control	0.05	[0.03;0.07]

Notes: 95% confidence interval in brackets [lower bound, upper bound]. AMEs based on Model 3 in Table 5.  
Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to comparatively examine young adults' intentions to leave home and the drivers behind them, using data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) in 12 European countries and drawing on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) as a theoretical framework. Our objective was to better understand the decision-making process preceding the first move out of the parental home. In particular, we were interested in cross-national patterns and differences because young adults' decision-making and intention formation are embedded in the wider sociocultural and institutional country context. Our analyses have shown that the formation of intentions to leave home appears to differ across national contexts.

First, leaving-home intentions vary across countries. The age–sex–country patterns emerging from our analysis indicate that young adults in the Western and Northern European countries more often express an intention to leave the parental home than their counterparts in Italy or Eastern European countries. Also, women more often than men express an intention to leave the parental home. The geography of leaving-home intentions hence maps the geography of actual behaviours established in previous research (see, e.g., Billari and Liefbroer 2010). We know from prior research that life course transitions, such as leaving the parental home, are typically made at certain ages

partly because of sociocultural norms but also because of age-graded institutional structures (e.g., Aassve, Cottini, and Vitali 2013; Billari and Liefbroer 2010).

Second, the results from our multi-group factor analyses indicate that young adults across different countries report different levels of proximate determinants (i.e., attitudes, subjective norms; and perceived behavioural control). For attitudes, cross-country variability is lowest, indicating that young adults are relatively similar in expecting to be better off once they leave the parental home – the exception being Georgia, a country characterised by high rates of coresidence with parents, even among young adults with children and coresiding partners (Gierveld, Dykstra, and Schenk 2012). For subjective norms, cross-country variability more clearly follows a North–West/South–East divide: In line with our expectations, young adults in Italy and most of the Eastern European countries experience more pressure to leave the parental home than peers in other countries. For perceived behavioural control, our expectation that young adults in the Eastern European countries and Italy tend to perceive more structural barriers is not met. Our robustness checks suggest that the reason for this unexpected finding is not the age selection of those young adults still living in the parental home across countries.

Third, the results from our regression analyses indicate that all three proximate determinants – both separately and jointly – play a role for leaving-home intention formation. However, subjective norms and attitudes result as more important than perceived behavioural control. In other words, leaving-home intentions are influenced by both the perception that living separately from parents would improve young adults' freedom and the perceived pressure from significant others to leave home. The influence of perceived behavioural control on leaving-home intentions is, by comparison, weaker: Young adults' perceptions of structural barriers exert a distinct but smaller influence on leaving-home intentions compared to measures of economic resources like employment status, educational attainment, or parental background. Taken together, our comparative analyses have presented new evidence – generally consistent with the theoretical predictions of the TPB and prior research literature on home-leaving – and added to the efficacy of the TPB for demographic research on the transition to adulthood.

Furthermore, we document interesting country and age differences in how important attitudes and subjective norms are for the intention formation vis-à-vis leaving home. On the one hand, our results point to cross-national variation in the importance of attitudes: They are crucial for young adults' intention to leave the parental home in general, but in Western European countries their role is paramount to that of subjective norms. By contrast, in most of the Eastern European countries (but not Bulgaria and Lithuania) and Italy subjective norms are much more on par with attitudes regarding intention formation. Again, this is in line with the notion of a historically stronger emphasis on autonomy and individualism in Western European countries (Reher 1998; Billari and Liefbroer 2010), but it also empirically supports the argument that social norms are still an important (if

context-specific) correlate of demographic decision-making and the organisation of the life course (Liefbroer and Billari 2010). Of course, ‘country’ subsumes a complex mix of structural, institutional, economic, and cultural settings, and we encourage future research to disentangle their impact on proximate determinants and subsequently intention formation. On the other hand, our results point to differences in the shape of the relationship between attitudes and subjective norms and the intention to leave home by age. Thus, the perception that living separately from parents would improve young adults’ freedom and the perceived pressure from significant others to leave home positively affects intention formation prior to only age 25. This could be due to either change over the life course or a discrepancy between people of different ages. We leave it to future research to examine whether these differences represent mostly age or cohort changes.

The results regarding perceived behavioural control were overall surprising, given the importance of young adults’ actual ability – in terms of socioeconomic resources and background (e.g., Avery, Goldscheider, and Speare 1992; Kerckhoff and Macrae 1992; Mulder, Clark, and Wagner 2002; Aassve et al. 2002; Billari 2004; Iacovou 2010; Aassve, Cottini, and Vitali 2013; Schwanitz, Mulder, and Toulemon 2017; Billari, Hiekel, and Liefbroer 2019) – for home-leaving and the correlation between actual and perceived ability to realise demographic intentions (Ajzen 1991). We cannot categorically exclude measurement error of this TPB component as the questions ask about how much the decision to leave home depends on a given factor and not if young adults have control over a factor (see for a similar argument Ajzen and Klobas 2013). And yet, compared to other key events in the transition to adulthood (i.e., getting married or having the first child), leaving the parental home may also generally be more subject to practices of intergenerational support and assistance. Parents routinely provide financial help and a “safety net” (Swartz 2009) during the transition to adulthood. If true, this could explain why perceived behavioural control is not important for leaving home for the first time, although it is for other demographic decision-making such as fertility (e.g., Dommermuth, Klobas, and Lappegård 2011; Mencarini, Vignoli, and Gottard 2015).

A limitation of our methodological approach could also be that omitted variables confound the relationship between proximate determinants and leaving-home intention. We included several well-established factors for the home-leaving decision-making process as control variables in our analyses but leave out others that are more difficult to measure with the GGS data, such as degree of urbanisation of the place of residence.

Our findings underscore the importance of cross-national comparative research on leaving-home intentions for understanding individuals’ first exit from the parental home. The distinction between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control is a promising strategy for future research. We therefore propose that demographic research on the transition to adulthood puts a stronger focus on young adults’ motivations

underlying the first exit from the parental home. GGS represents a unique source of data for studying the transition out of the parental home for young adults in Europe. Respondents who are still living with their parents are asked about their intentions to live separately from parents in the next three years, as well as about attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behaviour control related to the decision to live independently. At present, 12 countries allow to study whether intentions reported in the first wave are realised in a follow-up panel (see e.g., Ferrari, Rosina, and Sironi 2014; Billari, Hiekel, and Liefbroer 2019). With prospective new rounds of the GGS 2020 this approach can be generalised to even more countries and other types of demographic decisions. By widening the analytical focus, we could gain a more nuanced understanding of the transition to adulthood and its key markers.

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## Appendix

Table A–1: GGS TPB item availability by country

Variable	Details	Country																
		NO	SE	AT	BE	DE	FR	NL	BG	CZ	EE	GE	HU	LT	PL	RO	RU	IT
a5118	Intention to live separately from parents within the next 3 years in wave 1	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Effect living separately from parents (ranging from 1 = much better to 5 = much worse):</i>																		
a5119_a	Possibility do what you want	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
a5119_b	Employment opportunities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
a5119_c	Financial situation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
a5119_d	Sexual life	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
a5119_e	What people around you think of you	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
a5119_f	Joy and satisfaction you get from life	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
<i>Other's opinion (ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree):</i>																		
a5122_a	Most friends think R should live separately from parents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
a5122_b	Parents think R should live separately from parents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
a5122_b_1701	Mother thinks R should live separately from parents	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
a5122_b_1702	Father thinks R should live separately from parents	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
a5122_c	Most other relatives R should live separately from parents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
a5122_d	Children think R should live separately from parents	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓

**Table A-1: (Continued)**

Variable	Details	Country																
		NO	SE	AT	BE	DE	FR	NL	BG	CZ	EE	GE	HU	LT	PL	RO	RU	IT
<i>Decision living separately from parents depends on (ranging from 1 = not at all to 4 = a great deal):</i>																		
a5120_a	Financial situation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
a5120_b	Work	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
a5120_c	Housing conditions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
a5120_d	Health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
a5120_e	Parents' health	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
a5120_f	Having a partner	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). The data for Italy comes from the original Italian component 'Famiglia e Soggetti Sociali'.

Note: NO = Norway, SE = Sweden, AT = Austria, BE = Belgium, DE = Germany, FR = France, NL = Netherlands, BG = Bulgaria, CZ = Czech Republic, EE = Estonia, GE = Georgia, HU = Hungary, LT = Lithuania, PL = Poland, RO = Romania, RU = Russia, IT = Italy. ✓ available; ✗ not available.

**Table A–2: Standardised factor loadings for a 3-factor multi-group factor analysis (N = 10,457)**

Country	Attitudes: Living separately from parents improves your freedom		Subjective norms: Pressure from others to live separately from parents		Perceived behavioural control: to living separately from parents			
	— the possibility to do life what you want	— your sexual satisfaction you get from life	— Most of your friends ... think that it is about time for you to live separately from parents †	— Your parents ... <sup>a</sup>	— Most of your other relatives ...	— your financial situation	— your work	— your housing conditions
NO	0.62	0.64	0.82	0.87	0.94	0.82	0.68	0.62
AT	0.55	0.57	0.74	0.80	0.90	0.79	0.64	0.59
BE	0.55	0.58	0.83	0.88	0.94	0.82	0.68	0.63
DE	0.51	0.54	0.79	0.85	0.93	0.80	0.65	0.60
FR	--	--	0.83	0.88	0.94	0.84	0.71	0.66
BG	0.68	0.70	0.78	0.84	0.92	0.86	0.73	0.68
CZ	0.61	0.64	0.76	0.82	0.91	0.81	0.67	0.61
GE	0.64	0.67	0.76	0.82	0.91	0.88	0.78	0.73
LT	0.60	0.62	0.74	0.81	0.90	0.85	0.72	0.67
RO	0.63	0.65	0.74	0.80	0.90	0.82	0.68	0.63
RU	0.63	0.65	0.79	0.85	0.93	0.84	0.72	0.66
IT	0.53	0.55	0.72	0.79	0.89	0.85	0.72	0.67

Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010), Own calculations.

Notes: † The Italian 'Famiglia e Soggetti Sociali' omits the item 'other relatives' and asks about mothers' and fathers' opinions separately, which we used for the factor construction. For France only available factors are included. All standardised factor loadings had significant z-values ( $p < .001$ ). NO = Norway, AT = Austria, BE = Belgium, DE = Germany, FR = France, BG = Bulgaria, CZ = Czech Republic, GE = Georgia, LT = Lithuania, RO = Romania, RU = Russia, IT = Italy.

**Table A-3: Estimated distributions of the factors for a 3-factor multi-group factor analysis model for attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control fitted to data from 12 countries in the GGS**

Country	Means			Variances			corr ATT – SN	corr ATT – PBC	corr SN – PBC
	ATT	SN	PBC	ATT	SN	PBC			
NO	0.24	0.02	-0.20	0.72	1.31	0.72	0.35	-0.21	-0.02
AT	-0.01	-0.13	0.55	0.49	0.79	0.61	0.45	-0.28	-0.03
BE	-0.05	-0.35	0.37	0.51	1.47	0.74	0.51	-0.10	0.02
DE	0.11	-0.49	0.20	0.42	1.08	0.63	0.42	-0.22	-0.06
FR	--	-0.34	0.13	--	1.44	0.87	--	--	-0.07
BG	0	0	0	1	1	1	0.44	-0.20	-0.08
CZ	0.43	-0.01	-0.27	0.70	0.88	0.69	0.30	-0.14	0.26
GE	-0.33	0.21	0.45	0.82	0.89	1.29	0.45	-0.18	-0.08
LT	0.13	0.04	-0.11	0.65	0.80	0.92	0.41	-0.10	0.07
RO	0.36	0.25	-0.21	0.77	0.78	0.73	0.36	-0.20	0.04
RU	0.30	0.24	0.18	0.77	1.07	0.90	0.35	-0.15	0.02
IT	0.11	0.85	0.14	0.45	0.71	0.91	0.31	-0.36	-0.14

Source: GGS wave 1 (2003–2010). Own calculations.

Notes: Factor means are fixed at 0 and factor variances at 1 for Bulgaria. For France only available factors are included. ATT = Attitudes, SN = Subjective Norms, PBC = Perceived Behavioural Control; corr = standardised covariance between the respective factors. NO = Norway, AT = Austria, BE = Belgium, DE = Germany, FR = France, BG = Bulgaria, CZ = Czech Republic, GE = Georgia, LT = Lithuania, RO = Romania, RU = Russia, IT = Italy.