

# 7 TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD IN GERMANY

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## 7.1 | Introduction

The Cold War led to the formation of two states in Germany in 1949. Their political constitutions were radically different. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was created as a liberal, pluralistic and democratic state after the pattern of western democracies. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was a socialistic state based on the autocratic rule of one party. In 1989 the Iron Curtain finally opened and in November of that year the Wall came down. GDR citizens regained their freedom by means of a peaceful revolution. On the 1st of July 1990, Germany's separation ended with the creation of one currency area. The German Mark was introduced as the sole means of payment in the former GDR. The Unification Treaty was signed on the 31st of August 1990 and went into effect on the 3rd of October 1990.

Recalling these unforeseen historic events should remind us that the circumstances surrounding the transition to adulthood in both parts of Germany have been rather different. Children and youngsters in the western and eastern parts of Germany grew up in educational systems that were coined by a joint history but that have been developing in separate ways, except perhaps for the primary schools. The latter offered in both the West and the East an education course of four years which was nearly undifferentiated. The secondary school in West Germany was in general divided into courses of four to six years which led to different certificates giving access to vocational training or further academic education. In contrast, the secondary

**In this way, after nine to ten years of school enrolment, most juveniles began vocational training courses, which were given in schools as well as in private firms (apprenticeships) and which, after two to four years, made them skilled workers. The certificates of vocational training were a prerequisite to further vocational training, and in the past decades they also gave more and more access to further academic education. At the age of about 16 years, a growing number of youngsters did not enter the labour market but stayed at school to reach the so-called Abitur, the permission to study. In West Germany this comes after thirteen years of school enrolment, in East Germany mostly after twelve years.**

In the western part the number of juveniles with Abitur who went on to study had risen enormously. As a consequence, the time that young people spent at schools and at universities lengthened. Sociologists spoke of an 'educational moratorium' on the transition to the labour market. During the first decades of its existence, the GDR was successful in offering better educational chances. Especially the percentage of pupils who attended school for eight years only, or who had no vocational training, decreased. Since 1971, however, access to universities was not longer widened and possibilities to take part in special correspondence or evening courses were radically reduced. Skilled workers had less chances to study in the 1980s than before. The goal to give vocational training was combined with the principle of 'no more education than economically needed' (Waterkamp 1987, p. 61).

Especially universities and colleges in the GDR had to take into account problems of female students who had already children. In case the mother did not get a place in the kindergarten for her child, she could claim financial support. Further facilities were offered by accommodation nearby the university, child care institutions or by special seminar groups. Thus, the time of studying became for many women the phase to marry and found a family (HIS 1995, p. 24).

Equal rights for men and women as well as the protection of marriage and the family are anchored in the Constitution of the FRG. This has been also the case in the former GDR. However, due to the different systems, these norms took on different legal and political forms. At first it appeared that the GDR wanted to break free of the shared past. The 1950s and 60s in that country were characterised by the integration of as many women as possible

**duction process actually became - for lack of workers - an economic necessity. Improved public and company childcare facilities and an expanded service network were supposed to eliminate undesired compromises, such as a possible temporary concentration on family obligations. The 1966 Family Code of the GDR instructed married couples to form their relationship in such a way 'that the woman may combine her professional and social activities with motherhood'. During the same period, the opposite development could be seen to take place in the FRG. Large families and women's role as 'mother and housewife' were propagated.**

Over the next two decades a reorientation of policies concerning women and the family could be observed in both German states. In the GDR it became obvious that the gap between political ideals and actual reality grew larger and larger. Up to this time the government had primarily tried to achieve its political aim of full female employment by steadily expanding its childcare facilities. A continuing trend towards part-time employment and declining fertility made it obvious that further measures were necessary. As a consequence, between 1972 and 1986 support for women and family matters steadily increased. The measures included a reduction in the time of employment, additional holidays for full-time employed mothers with at least two children under 16 years of age, paid leave to care for sick children, an increase in the capacity of public childcare centres, extended maternity protection, financial aid at the birth of a child, a paid year's leave if the mother returned to work for the same company, interest-free family formation loans, an increase in child allowances, education grants for all students in extended secondary schools and scholarships for students enrolled at technical colleges and universities. Family support in the GDR therefore achieved a considerable standard.

A comprehensive reform of the laws governing marriage and the family in the FRG went into effect on the 1st of July 1977. At the recommendation of the Federal Constitutional Court, the model of the 'housewife marriage' was abandoned. From July 1979 onward, female employees were granted maternity and education leave during which the Federal Government paid them substitution wages. The economic situation of families improved considerably through allowances for dependent children as well as through supplements to child allowances. The especially difficult situation of single parents was alleviated by making the costs of child-minding tax deductible,

## 7.2 | Data and methods

The data base of this study is the German Fertility and Family Survey (FFS) of 1992 in which 10,000 persons took part. It deals with partnerships, children, employment, intentions to have children and attitudes towards parenthood and family policies. The FFS offers an extraordinary and distinguished basis for the research of partnership and family formation in East and West Germany over the last four decades. It is possible to compare regions and cohorts as well as the different systems in the East and West. Moreover, the effects of different periods can be analysed, and even the effect of the reunification on demographic behaviour in East Germany can be clarified. A full description of the German FFS has been given by Pohl (1995). An FFS Standard Country Report is forthcoming, to be published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Hullen (1998) already published results of a longitudinal analysis of life courses in West and East Germany on the basis of FFS data, whereas Roloff and Dorbritz (1999) edited a volume on family formation.

The following analysis is restricted to the birth cohorts from 1956 to 1970 to make sure that the results are comparable with those of the other analyses in this volume. This sub-sample consists of about 1,400 men and 2,100 women aged 22 to 36 years in each of the two parts of Germany, for a total of about 7,000 persons.

## 7.3 | Timing of the transition to adulthood

### 7.3.1 Timing of the transition to adulthood

The timing of the transition to adulthood in West and East Germany is summarised in Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1. Young people in West Germany were increasingly older when *they finished their education*. A look across the cohorts shows that this moment as measured by the median age was postponed from 20 to 22 years. In East Germany people finished their education at a median age of about 19 years, and this value remained fairly constant across the cohorts. An explanation for this might be that the GDR was the only European country to stop the educational expansion by national

In West Germany the age at which people left their parental home increased. There is a remarkable difference of three years between the two sexes: younger women left on average at the age of 22, men at 25. This difference can be explained by the fact that the main reason for moving out is to begin a partnership, with women in general being younger than men when they do so. In East Germany women left the parental home earlier, too. But closer inspection of their cohorts shows that the age at which they as well as men moved out remained constant over the time. This could be caused by the housing conditions in East Germany. Given the lack of flats, young people married and gave birth to a child comparatively early in order to take advantage of the preferential treatment accorded to young families and mothers.

The results in Table 7.1 on the entry into the labour market only refer to full-time employment. Part- or short-time jobs are not taken into account. Men and women in West Germany started to work at the age of 19 to 21 years on average, with a clear trend to postpone this. In the eastern part they both started about one year earlier. This is probably the result of their shorter educational enrolment.

Partnerships and families were founded earlier in the East than in the West. Women in the former GDR started a non-marital relationship at age 21 or 22, and married at the age of 22 or 23, irrespective of birth cohort. In West Germany, on the other hand, these ages increased from 23 to 25 years, respectively. Similar differences can be observed among men who in West Germany started a partnership two years after their eastern counterparts and who married three or more years later.

Men of the oldest cohort in the West were 32 years old on average (26 in the Eastern part) at the birth of the first child. Women of this cohort in West Germany were on average 28 years old, those in the East 22 (see also Hullen, 1998). In East Germany the age at first birth has remained nearly unchanged. Until 1989, no postponement occurred in either the education / occupation or family career.

The inter-quartile ranges Q3-Q1 of all events were greater in West than in East Germany. This indicates less age-relatedness and more diversity of individual biographies in the West, i.e. more possibilities for as well as less security in the transition to adulthood.

	Females			
	cohort		cohort	
	1956-60	1961-65	1966-70	1966-70
End of educational enrolment				
Q1*	19	19	19	19
Q2	20	21	22	20
Q3	27	28	-	27
Q3-Q1	8	9	-	9
% not at age 25	31	31	35	30
Entry into labour market				
Q1	16	16	17	16
Q2	19	19	20	19
Q3	29	27	-	27
Q3-Q1	7	11	-	10
% not at age 25	32	28	34	33
Leaving the parental home				
Q1	20	20	22	19
Q2	23	23	25	21
Q3	27	27	-	24
Q3-Q1	7	7	-	5
% not at age 30	18	18	-	9
First union				
Q1	22	22	24	20
Q2	25	26	-	23
Q3	-	-	-	28
Q3-Q1	-	-	-	8
% not at age 30	33	36	-	22
First marriage				
Q1	24	25	-	21
Q2	28	30	-	24
Q3	-	-	-	34
Q3-Q1	-	-	-	13
% not at age 30	43	50	-	29
First child birth				
Q1	27	28	-	23
Q2	32	-	-	28
Q3	-	-	-	29
Q3-Q1	-	-	-	-
% not at age 30	59	68	-	41

Source: Fertility and Family Survey in Germany (1992), BIB Wiesbaden.  
\*Q1, Q2 and Q3 are quartiles

	Males				Females			
	cohort		cohort		cohort		cohort	
	1956-60	1961-65	1966-70	1966-70	1956-60	1961-65	1966-70	1966-70
End of educational enrolment								
Q1*	19	18	18	18	18	18	18	19
Q2	20	19	19	21	19	19	19	19
Q3	25	22	21	27	22	22	22	22
Q3-Q1	6	4	3	9	4	4	4	3
% not at age 25	26	17	14	14	11	14	14	16
Entry into labour market								
Q1	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Q2	18	18	18	18	18	19	19	19
Q3	23	20	23	27	22	22	22	24
% not at age 25	6	3	6	6	5	5	5	7
Leaving the parental home								
Q1	20	20	21	20	20	19	19	19
Q2	23	23	23	23	21	21	21	21
Q3	26	26	27	24	24	24	23	23
Q3-Q1	6	6	6	4	4	4	4	4
% not at age 30	13	12	-	9	9	8	8	-
First union								
Q1	22	22	22	20	20	20	20	20
Q2	24	24	24	22	22	21	22	22
Q3	27	26	-	24	24	24	24	24
Q3-Q1	5	4	-	4	4	4	4	4
% not at age 30	15	16	-	10	10	11	11	-
First marriage								
Q1	22	23	23	20	20	20	20	20
Q2	25	25	-	22	22	22	22	23
Q3	30	-	-	25	25	26	26	-
Q3-Q1	8	-	-	5	5	6	6	-
% not at age 30	24	30	-	15	15	17	17	-
First child birth								
Q1	23	23	24	21	21	20	20	21
Q2	26	26	-	22	22	22	22	23
Q3	-	-	-	26	26	25	25	-
Q3-Q1	-	-	-	5	5	5	5	-
% not at age 30	32	35	-	13	13	14	14	-

Source: Fertility and Family Survey in Germany (1992), BIB Wiesbaden.  
\*Q1, Q2 and Q3 are quartiles

departure from the parental home, the delay in marriage and the postponement of the first child. For instance, only 50 per cent of West German men born in 1961-65 got married before their 30th birthday. It can be safely assumed that this development is still going on and that younger cohorts are even to a lesser extent married. In East Germany where until 1992, the time of the survey, 70 per cent of the men from the same birth cohort got married before age 30, a sharp decrease of this proportion can also be expected. Among western women, 55 per cent had given birth to a first child by the age of 30. Noteworthy, the corresponding figure for the eastern part was 86 per cent.

### 7.3.2 Sequences and coincidences of biographic events

Table 7.2 presents the order in which various events in the transition to adulthood have taken place in West and East Germany, respectively. The popular belief that gainful employment always follows after the end of education is not particularly confirmed for the researched generations. Many of them – some 40 per cent – have been full-time employed before reaching their current highest educational degree. Furthermore, one may not ignore the possibility that some respondents will continue their education after the time of interview. In West Germany the pursuit of higher qualifications, worsened chances on the labour market and insufficient university grants forced a growing share of students to look for a job. In the former German Democratic Republic relations between working life and studying were extremely close. Many students were sent to the university by their company. Practical job experiences were to a high extent acquired before reaching the highest level of education. Many respondents had also not yet finished their education when they entered their first non-marital long-term relationship. Approximately 17 to 23 per cent of the women and men in the oldest cohort reported that they reached their highest educational degree after having such a relationship. In East Germany about 20 per cent of the respondents of this cohort had already a child when getting their degree. In the western part the corresponding figure is some 4 times lower.

Positively phrased, longer educational enrolment is the result of the promotion of 'life-long learning', which is seen as the best way to match individual needs with those of society. Early work experiences are important for the personal development. In the future, the education and employment careers are expected to become longer, and closer linked up with each other.

	Males				Females			
	1956-60 cohort	1961-65 cohort	1966-70 cohort	1956-60 cohort	1961-65 cohort	1966-70 cohort		
End of educational enrolment and entry labour market	11	11	10	11	11	11	9	
>	43	46	41	40	42	35		
first union	1	2	0	3	3	3	3	
>	15	12	6	16	12	8		
first child	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	
>	6	4	2	4	4	4	2	
Leaving the parental home and first union	35	33	17	46	47	29		
>	3	3	3	3	3	2		
entry labour market	4	3	2	4	3	2		
>	56	56	33	59	60	42		
Marriage and first (non-marital) union	25	18	8	37	27	14		
>	34	27	5	28	34	16		
First child and first (non-marital) union	1	1	0	1	1	0		
>	7	4	1	7	9	3		
first marriage	2	2	1	3	3	1		
>	43	20	3	49	37	14		

Source: Fertility and Family Survey (1992), BiB Wiesbaden

= means occurrence within 5 months,

> means one event follows other at least 3 months after other event

\* based on all respondents

	Males			Females		
	1956-60 cohort	1961-65 cohort	1966-70 cohort	1956-60 cohort	1961-65 cohort	1966-70 cohort
End of educational enrolment and entry labour market						
=	3	14	12	14	13	13
>	53	50	47	48	47	40
first union						
=	1	2	2	4	4	4
>	23	15	5	17	20	11
first child						
=	2	1	1	4	4	6
>	19	13	5	20	21	10
Leaving the parental home and first union						
=	47	42	34	52	51	49
>	4	7	3	7	6	4
entry labour market						
=	4	7	4	6	7	5
>	67	66	52	67	63	59
Marriage and first (non- marital) union						
=	31	24	12	30	30	21
>	28	30	13	25	29	22
First child and first (non- marital) union						
=	4	2	2	3	5	2
>	15	13	8	18	16	15
first marriage						
=	2	3	0	2	4	2
>	40	28	12	42	36	23

Source: *Fertility and Family Survey (1992)*, BIB Wiesbaden

= means occurrence within 5 months,

> means one event follows other at least 3 months after other event

\* based on all respondents

long-term relationship; roughly 30 per cent did so later. Conspicuous is the fact that in the eastern part quite a number of first births occurred within 5 months of the beginning of a non-marital union. Between 16 and 18 per cent of eastern women, born in the period from 1956 to 1965, gave birth to their first child in a non-marital long-term relationship. The corresponding figure for women of the same birth cohorts in West Germany varies between 7 and 9 per cent.

This means that in both parts of Germany, most babies were born in marital relationships. Up to 4 per cent of the couples got married and had a baby within five months (see Blossfeld et al., 1996, for a differential analysis of the effects of pre-marital pregnancies on the tendency to get married). A much greater part became parents at the earliest three months after marrying. Within the oldest cohort this part accounts for 40 to 50 per cent. Within the younger cohorts, childlessness has become more prevalent. Consequently, the percentage of those who became parents within the research period decreased.

#### 7.4 | Determinants of the transition to adulthood

A qualification that gives access to continuous gainful employment is a basic condition for leaving the status of a teenager. But whether this qualification is sufficient depends strongly on the labour market. Even if one manages to enter the labour market, further education may be necessary. The risk to lose one's job has increased over time, and a relapse into economic dependence in younger years happens nowadays more often. Therefore, it is more and more plausible that the foundation of a family is put off until the educational career is finished and some measure of material security from employment has been acquired. Following this theoretical approach, gender differences are unavoidable. In general, the birth of a child determines more the female than the male biography. Having a baby, women are put at risk to loose money, qualifications and prospects of promotion. Female earning chances and high qualifications correlate positively: the higher the education, the higher the profit. Consequently, higher educated women tend to work instead of having a baby.

Caring about the older generation and the transfer of goods and cultural traditions to the next generation are some of the motives that may inspire cou-

this. As long as Germany was divided, there were - in spite of claims for extra family care in both parts - remarkable differences. In the former GDR more women were employed than in the FRG, mothers were ensured of more rights at the workplace, they were privileged in getting a flat, and there was an extensive supply of day care nurseries and kindergartens. All in all, the protection of expectant and nursing mothers was more comprehensive (Wendt, 1997).

The following analyses refer to the events of leaving the parental home, first union, first marriage, and first childbirth. They were carried out separately for men and women in East and West Germany. The features taken into consideration are: living in the eastern or western part, gender, education and employment status. Education was subdivided into four levels: secondary school level I, secondary school level II, (vocational) tertiary school level and university studies. Assuming that it remained relatively unchanged over the individual biography, the highest educational level obtained can be said to represent the respondent's 'educational aspiration'. The variable 'education ended' captures whether the respondent was still - or again - at an educational institution whenever a special event took place. The variable 'employed' checks if someone had a full-time job during the spell under consideration.

Core variables could be included in the analyses but their explanatory power was found to be low; they are therefore left out. For instance, religious affiliation seemed to be only important for respondents grown up in small municipalities (for a more extended analysis, see Hullen, 1998).

Table 7.3 contains the relative risks of the pertinent variables ('educational aspiration', 'education ended', 'employed') as well as the constant. These relative risks represent the proportional increase or decrease in the propensity that a person will undergo an event. For example, the relative risk for western women to leave the parental home given their 'educational aspiration' is 0.93. This means that their propensity to leave the parental home decreases by 7 per cent for each increment in education. At the bottom of the table there is information about the number of events, the number of cases and the total person-years until the event or the time of interview, whichever came first. Finally, the difference in the values of the log-likelihood function ('start model' without covariates, 'final model' with covariates) tells us something about the extent to which the covariates contribute to explaining the event in question. An exponential (constant) hazard

Table 7.3 Determinants of the transition to adulthood in Germany: relative risks

independent variables	males							first child birth
	leaving parental home		first union		first marriage		first child birth	
	West	East	West	East	West	East	West	
Constant	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.0
Educational aspiration	0.99	1.27***	0.98	1.25***	1.01	1.27***	0.94	1.2
Education ended	8.94***	10.68***	10.16***	14.50***	13.48***	13.69***	14.96***	13.4
Employed	2.78***	1.36	2.42***	2.44***	2.61***	2.49***	1.68*	2.2
Number of events	973	1113	734	1083	563	856	561	8
Number of cases	1351	1355	1366	1405	1377	1403	1457	14
Person Years	6659	7304	7424	8155	8020	8674	8789	90
LL-Start	-6802	-7600	-5394	-7502	-4319	-6176	-4353	-63
LL-final	-6265	-6885	-4926	-6597	-3869	-5491	-3896	-56

Table 7.3 Determinants of the transition to adulthood: relative risks in Germany (cont.)

independent variables	Females						
	Leaving parental home		first union		first marriage		first ch
	West	East	West	East	West	East	West
Constant	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
Educational aspiration	0.93***	1.08**	0.90***	0.97	0.85***	0.98	0.81***
Education ended	9.20***	13.41***	10.69***	15.45***	13.19***	14.30***	13.33***
Employed	0.61	2.09***	2.69***	1.18	2.74***	1.06	1.61
Number of events	1773	1868	1482	1837	1231	1615	1297
Number of cases	2070	2090	2105	2132	2113	2108	2225
Person Years	9071	10294	10345	13439	11479	11842	13397
LL-Start	-11944	-12477	-10379	-12386	-8924	-11138	-9440
LL-final	-11063	-11038	-9458	-10814	-8012	-9830	-8503

Source: Fertility and Family Survey in Germany (1992), BiB Wiesbaden.

\* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

As we have already seen in table 7.1, most respondents left the parental home after having finished their education, apparently a precondition for the foundation of an own household for both men and women in the East and in the West. But the educational level has quite different effects: in the western part it increases the age at moving out, in the eastern part the opposite is true. The effect of a full-time job was not uniform either. Results from an in-depth analysis which can not be discussed here, showed that the kind of employment has also an influence on this age (Hullen, 1998, pp. 65-75; Nave-Hertz, 1997).

The educational attainment increases the propensity of young people to establish a first non-marital long-term relationship. Whereas this is a fairly common phenomenon, some gender and regional differences are evident. For instance, it did not play a significant role in union building among western men and eastern women. But, as expected, western women with higher levels established their first unions later, while - surprisingly - eastern men earlier. Gainful employment is apparently still a precondition for the foundation of an own household in West Germany, and in East Germany for men but not for women. We will discuss this later.

In the two regions, the end of the educational career and the start of gainful employment were the most important preconditions for marriage. A similar pattern was already noticed for the first union. Women in East Germany form again an exception: being employed or not did not influence their tendency to marry. The educational level lowered the female propensity in West Germany by 15 per cent (on a five-point scale) but increased the male propensity in East Germany by 27 per cent. The latter was presumably caused by extra support for students who had their own family.

After the above, the results on the birth of the first child will not come as a surprise. For all respondents, a completed educational career was the most important requirement for family foundation. If employed, the propensity to become a father was about twice as high in both the eastern and western part. The educational level has again a differential influence: West German women with a higher level gave birth to their first child later, East German men earlier. The reproductive behaviour of East German women did not seem to be influenced by either their educational level or employment status.



the transition to adulthood in Germany was analysed using the data of the Fertility and Family Survey. Events that mark this transition generally happened earlier for women than for men. This is true for leaving the parental home, starting a relationship, marriage as well as parenthood. Comparing West and East Germany, first marriages and births can be seen to take place earlier in the East. Obviously, this behaviour is connected to welfare state regulations which supported young families and gave them more chances to a flat of their own, to continue studies and to have an agreeable workplace. This assumption is sustained by the turnaround in demographic behaviour after the reunification (and the end of the pronatalistic policy), when the number of marriages and births dropped sharply.

Another reason for earlier marriages and births in East Germany is to be found in the young adult biographies. Especially the educational trajectories had developed quite differently, to the effect that in East Germany secondary school and higher education were finished earlier. In West Germany, however, these careers became ever longer.

The results of the event history analyses have shown that the educational biography has been of great importance for the transition to adulthood. Reaching a specific level of education apparently enlarged the opportunities and the propensity to move out, to have a partner, or to found a family. The educational level itself, here defined as the educational aspiration, has had little or a positive effect - with the exception that western women with a higher level left the parental home later and postponed first unions, marriages, and births. For all respondents except eastern women, it was important to be employed: moving out, starting a relationship, getting married and having a baby all happened to them earlier if they were employed.

It is very important to add a note to the results on the educational biography. It was disregarded whether the dependent events themselves had an effect on the end of the education biography. Still, it is not inconceivable that marriage or the birth of a child force women to leave school or to break off their studies. So, it can not be generalised that the observed sequence of events concerning the educational biography was voluntarily chosen by the individuals.

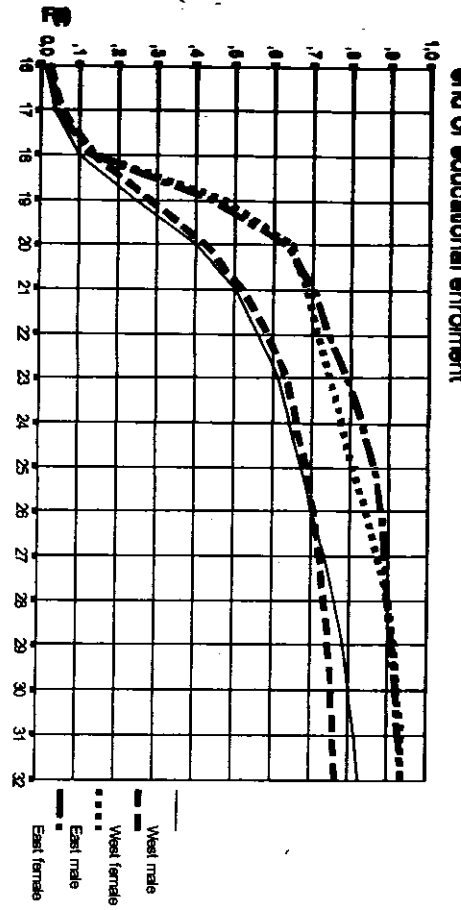
In general, the lifetime periods of education on the one hand, which for the greater part had taken place whilst the young people were living in the parental household, and the period of family formation on the other, are mutu-

own family and household. The importance of specific events of the educational biography for the beginning of adult life has been diminishing across the cohorts investigated. In a growing number of cases the 'end of educational enrolment' no longer preceded, but followed the entry into the labour market, and even the formation of partnerships and families. It is more and more difficult nowadays to draw a clear demarcation line between educational and occupational trajectories. One reason for this is the vocational training system in Germany. The boundary became even less distinct when persons already engaged in economic activity attended educational institutions again, a phenomenon quite frequent in the GDR. Another reason both for the extension of educational periods and for the disappearing boundary between the education and employment system lies in the increasing requirements of further education and training.

## 7.6 | References

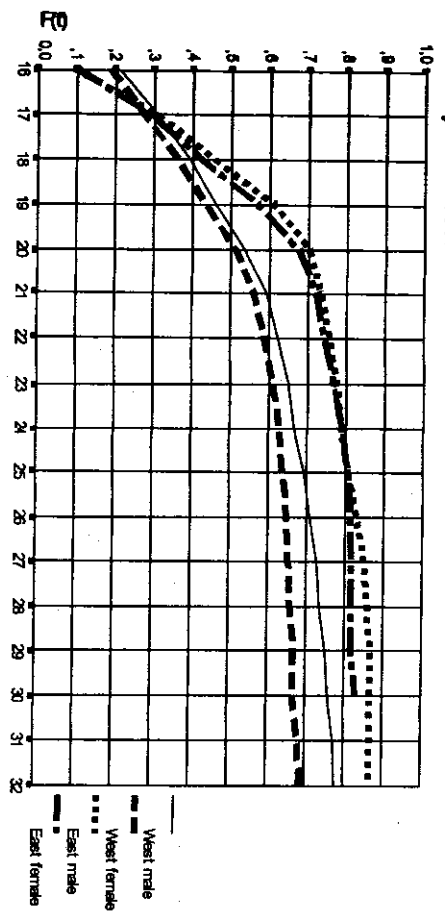
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end of educational enrolment



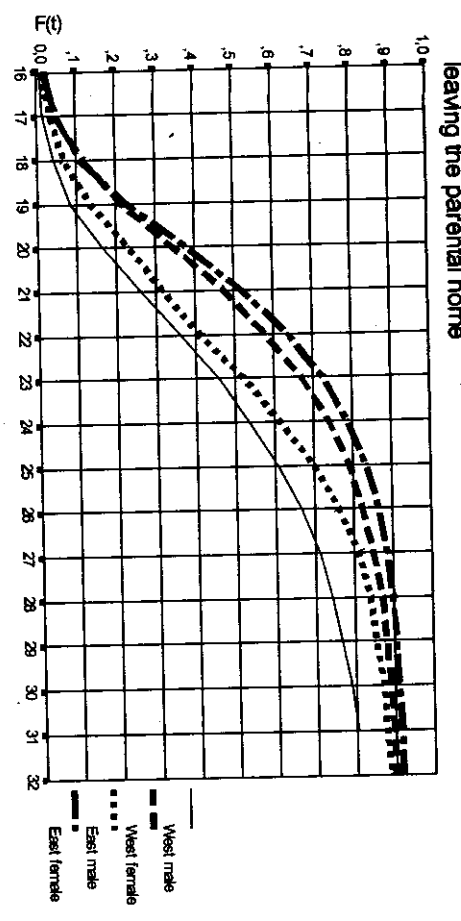
Source: FFS Germany, BB 115-2012-FFS-Bu

entry into labour



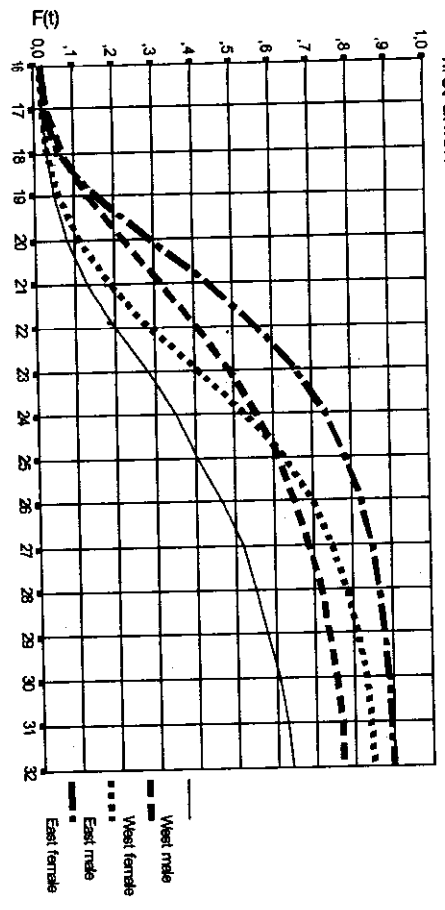
Source: FFS Germany, BB 115-2012-FFS-Bu

leaving the parental home

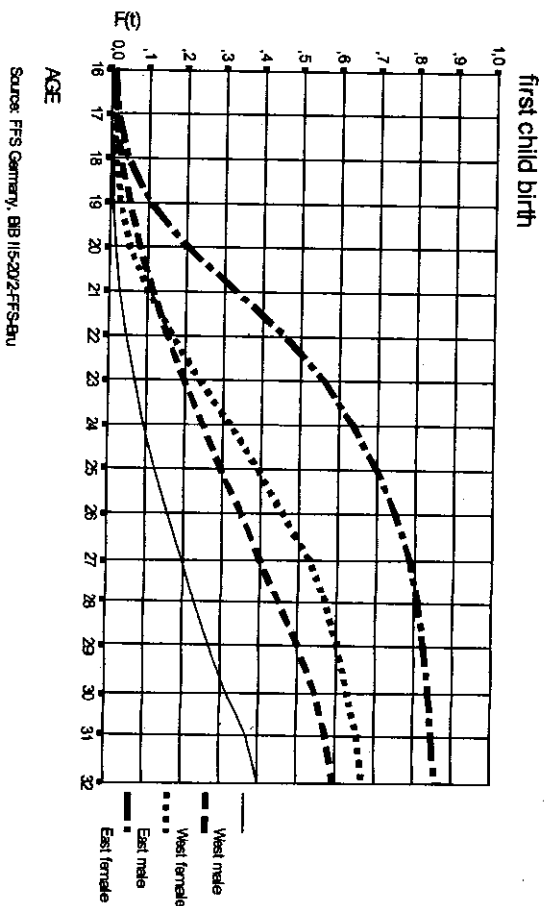
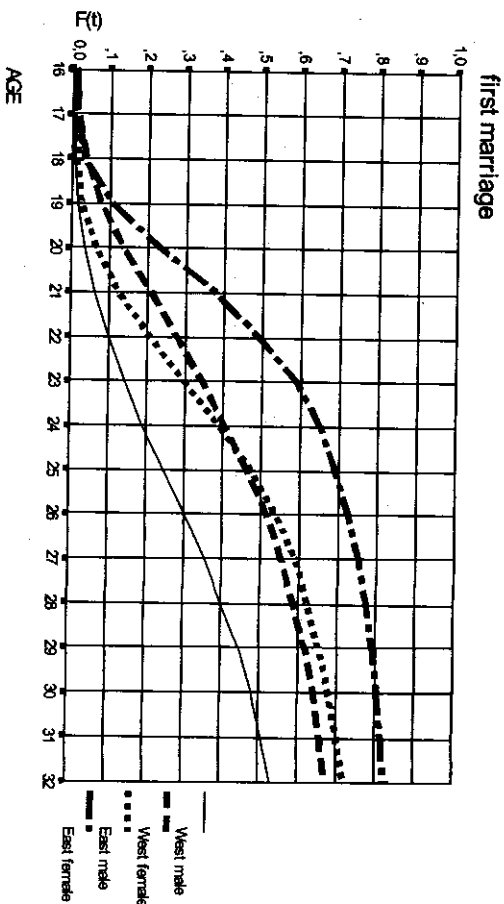


Source: FFS Germany, BB 115-2012-FFS-Bu

first union



Source: FFS Germany, BB 115-2012-FFS-Bu



## 8. TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD IN ITALY

FAUSTA ONGARO

### 8.1 | Introduction

Over the last forty years Italy has undergone major economic and social changes which have allowed it to quickly overcome its position as a backward country as held at the end of the Second World War. Agriculture, originally the basis of the economic activities (in 1951, 42 per cent of all active men worked in this sector), has gradually been replaced, firstly by industry, then by services (in 1991, 54 per cent of all active men worked in services, while only 8 per cent in agriculture). Living conditions of the population have improved greatly: mortality, particularly infant mortality, has declined to European levels; the proportion of family expenses required for alimentionation has been reduced; and building property has been modernised. This improvement in living conditions is partly due to the economic boom of the 1960s and a series of policy measures adopted in the same decade as well as in the 1970s benefiting mainly employed persons and their families. The education level of the population has also considerably improved. In 1962 the age of compulsory education was set at 14 years. In 1969 the criteria for university entrance were widened, and in the following decades the number of university centres multiplied. In 1951 only 5 per cent of men and 3 per cent of women aged over six years had a level of education higher than middle school; corresponding percentages in 1991 had reached 23 and 22 per cent, respectively. At the same time, the number of women in the labour market grew and, in general, their traditional role in society as wife and mother changed.