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# **Young People's Lives: a map of Europe**

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*Maria Iacovou*  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

'Youth' is a relatively recent phenomenon. Four or five decades ago, a person's early life could be conceptualised as consisting of well-defined phases: 'childhood' (when one would be in education, single, and living with one's parents); an intermediate stage (spent living with one's parents while starting out in the labour market); and a fairly rapid transition to 'adulthood' (when one would be living away from home, married and very likely a parent, and either in gainful employment or married to someone in work).

In Europe, that has all changed; the transition to adulthood has become a long-drawn-out and unpredictable process, consisting of transitions in and out of the parental home; an increasing tendency to live alone or in non-marital partnerships; and with the relationship between partnership and parenthood increasingly blurred. A changing youth labour market has led to young people spending longer in education, more likely to be unemployed, and increasingly likely to have an insecure contract rather than one of the 'jobs for life' which were the norm for their parents' generation.

Although childhood and adulthood are still recognisable states in individuals younger than their mid-teens or older than their mid-twenties, the years in between are years where the life course is increasingly diverse; where transitions in the sphere of the family and the labour market are multiple and reversible, and less likely to occur in an orderly fashion. This is called 'youth'.

This paper is not concerned with theories of youth, or the reasons for the emergence of youth as a state. These issues have been dealt with at length elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. Rather, the purpose

of this paper is to provide, as its name suggests, a 'map of Europe': to describe the lives of Europe's young people, and how they vary across countries. Box 1 gives a flavour of just how diverse young Europeans' lives can be.

Mapping young people's lives in this way has become possible through the European Community Household Panel survey. All 15 member countries of the European Union have collaborated in a survey in which the same questions are asked of a large sample of households representative of each country, making possible structured and meaningful comparisons between countries. Of course, the ECHP is not the first survey to provide EU-wide information on young people. The Young Europeans surveys and the Labour Force surveys have provided valuable insights into young people's lives; and aspects such as teenage motherhood or youth unemployment, may be compared using the basic statistics collected by every country. However, the ECHP is the first survey to collect such a wide range of information on such a large number of young people, in such an easily comparable form.

Whenever interesting differences are discovered between countries, the researcher's immediate impulse is to try and explain them, to ask where these differences come from, and why they arise. However, the purpose of this paper is very clearly to *record* differences over a large range of indicators, rather than to *explain* them. Explaining even a single axis of inter-country difference would involve a lengthy process of research, and attempting to explain all the differences uncovered here

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<sup>1</sup> A list of books and articles for further reading is provided at the end of this report.

**Box 1**

73% of Danish men aged 21-25 have left the family home... but only 7% of Italian men in the same age group have left home.

28% of women aged 21-25 are mothers in Sweden and the UK.... but less than 12% are mothers in the Netherlands and Italy.

Almost 18% of young women aged 17-25 in the UK report their main activity as family care .... but in Denmark, only 1% of women in this age group are engaged in family care.

In the UK, half of all young people are in work by age 19 years and 1 month. But in Spain and Italy, entry into the labour market often comes a full five years later: in these countries, half of young people do not have a job until 24 years and 4 months.

In Germany, only 5% of those who turned 20 during the 1980s were unemployed before taking their first job, compared with 68% in Italy.

Young men in the UK are more likely than anywhere else to work long hours: 31% of those with a job work long hours in the UK, compared with only 12% in Ireland and only 8% in Sweden.

Young people with a university degree earn 77% more than young people with the minimum level of qualifications in Portugal. But in Finland, young people with a degree earn only 3% more than those with minimum qualifications.

Women are now leaving education with more qualifications than men in nearly all European countries. But in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, men are still gaining more qualifications than women.

The great majority (86%) of young home-leavers rent their accommodation in Germany, but only a minority (31%) in Portugal.

A combined analysis of employment, family position and income shows that Dutch young people are 20 times more likely to be both socially excluded and in poverty, than their equivalents in Portugal.

would multiply the process many times over. There is a large body of comparative research waiting to be undertaken; we hope this paper will do its part to motivate and underpin future research on young people, and to provide a cross-European frame of reference to help readers interpret the large number of single-country research projects.

The chapters which follow cover the main areas of young people's lives: education, early experience in the labour market, family formation, and standards of living. One limitation of a paper based on a single data set is that it is restricted to topics covered by that data set (here, the ECHP). Most single-country source books, such as *Social Focus on Young People* (ONS 2000) and *Key Data on Adolescence* (Coleman 1999) in the UK, will usually be wider in scope than this one, but will generally be much more difficult to compare between countries.

### **The European Community Household Panel**

The European Community Household Panel (ECHP) is a harmonised survey organised and largely funded by Eurostat, covering all 15 member countries of the European Union. In each country, an initial sample of households was selected. All adults (aged 17 plus) in each selected household were interviewed (and data was also collected about children up to 16 who lived with them). Each of the adults in the sample has then been re-interviewed every subsequent year – thus making it a 'panel' survey, from which it is possible to study the changes affecting individuals, and their families, from year to year.

In most of the countries covered, the sample was selected, and interviews first took place, in 1994. In some countries, data from existing household panel surveys were transcribed into the common ECHP format, so that they

could be analysed in parallel with the new surveys. Three countries – Austria, Finland and Sweden – started their fieldwork in 1995, 1996 and 1997 respectively, having only recently joined the Union.

Although data are available for four waves, and provide the potential for longitudinal analysis, we have not made use of the linked panel data on this occasion. This paper is based on a single annual data set, providing information at one point in time about members of a representative cross-section of households in each of the countries concerned. The first wave available in each country has been analysed in this paper – not the most recent wave. The first wave has been chosen because it provides the most representative sample of young people in each country. In any panel survey, respondents interviewed in the first wave may drop out in subsequent waves – a problem known as 'attrition'. This is potentially a serious problem for young people, who are often at risk of getting lost from panel surveys as they leave home. Using the first wave minimises (though it does not eliminate) biases caused by non-response.

The number of households in the national samples is given in Table 1.1. More immediately relevant for our analysis is the young people who are in the age range 17 to 25 at the time of their interview, given in the centre column. The accuracy of survey data depends mainly on the absolute number of households included, rather than on the proportion of the whole population that has been covered. It should be noted that sample sizes vary between countries, so the analysis will not be as accurate in countries with small samples as in those with larger numbers.

Luxembourg's sample is particularly small, with only 284 young people in the defined age-range. Moreover, migration in and out of so small a country is so common that one third

**Table 1.1 ECHP first-wave sample sizes**

	Number of households	Number of young people aged 17 to 25	Analysis weight
Austria	3377	1164	0.48
Belgium	3490	942	0.62
Denmark	3481	814	0.37
Finland	4139	1236	0.26
France	7334	2473	1.60
Germany	4968	1200	3.64
Greece	5523	1887	0.35
Ireland	4048	2300	0.13
Italy	7115	3345	1.36
Luxembourg	1011	284	0.08
Netherlands	5187	1282	0.68
Portugal	4880	1995	0.35
Spain	7206	3301	0.91
Sweden	5814	1124	0.38
United Kingdom	5757	1324	2.21

of the 284 were citizens of other EU countries. These factors mean that conclusions about young Luxembourgishers cannot be drawn with any confidence. Because of this, we have decided not to analyse the sample for Luxembourg any further.

‘All Europe’ therefore means, in the context of this analysis, 14 countries excluding Luxembourg. A number of ECHP variables are not included in the Swedish survey, and for some of the analysis (especially in the chapter on family structure) it is necessary to concentrate on the remaining 13 countries. Where Sweden has been excluded, this has been made clear in the notes to the tables.

The variation in sample sizes is not pro rata to the population of the countries concerned. Many of the results in this report are based on all Europe (ie all 13 or 14 countries together), or on more limited combinations of countries. Where countries are combined, the data are weighted so that each is represented in the results in due proportion to its population. The

weights used are shown in the right hand column of Table 1.1<sup>2</sup>.

### Analysis and presentation

For the most part, the results which follow are based on an analysis of young people aged 17 to 25 at the time of their survey interview, or on some sub-group of these: those remaining in education, those who have left home, teenagers, and so on. Additionally, results for the 17 to 25 age group are sometimes compared with those for older men and women, for two reasons: either to examine how young people’s lives have changed over the course of the past century, or to assess the extent to which young people’s lives differ from the lives of older people currently living in the same country.

With analysis involving many countries, it is always difficult to present results in a way which is both meaningful and digestible. (The risk is that 14 sets of results may overload the

<sup>2</sup> The weights were initially calculated to gross up to national adult populations; they were then scaled down to be relative weights, with an average of 1.



reader with information, and blur the key messages.) We have tried to strike a balance between presenting results in as concise a way as possible and highlighting key relationships between variables on a Europe-wide basis on the one hand; and providing country-by-country details on the other.

We have also looked for patterns between groups of countries, and reported them where they exist. Many of our results do seem to fall into a broad pattern. The four southern 'Mediterranean' countries are often quite distinct from the three 'Scandinavian' countries; and the Netherlands, though not ethnically Scandinavian, often has much in common with its near neighbours to the north. Within the remaining six countries which form a middle band, it is not uncommon for Ireland and Austria to show patterns which are rather similar to those of their fellow Catholics in the Mediterranean, while the remainder – the UK, Belgium, France and Germany – are sometimes closer to the Scandinavian group.

This regular north/south geographical variation does not apply all the time. In some cases, countries which are neighbours, both culturally and geographically, lie poles apart on aspects of their young people's behaviour. For example, in many ways, young people's lives are similar across all the Mediterranean countries, but whereas Italy and Spain have some of the lowest fertility rates in Europe among women in their early twenties, Portugal has one of the highest. It is important, therefore, not to focus so intently on regional patterns that one risks losing a great deal of interesting detail. Our analysis is therefore structured along the following lines.

- Results are initially presented for Europe (EU14) as a whole.
- Summary statistics are then provided for each country. For ease of reference, countries are always presented in the same

order in tables and graphs. This ordering is broadly from north to south, emphasising the four broad groupings discussed above. The main deviation from a simple geographical ordering is that Ireland appears further down the list than its true geographical position would imply.

- Where a clear group pattern is evident, summary statistics are used to compare the different groups of countries; but this is not done if no clear pattern emerges.
- Country by country results are often presented so as to highlight countries with particularly high or low values of the variables in question.
- Figures and tables are numbered consecutively: so, for example, chapter 2 contains Table 2.1, Figure 2.2, Table 2.3, Figure 2.4, and so on.

The numbers on which graphs are based are shown as tables in the Appendix. For example, the numbers which form the basis for the graph in Figure 2.2 are to be found in Table 2.2 in the Appendix.

## 2. EDUCATION

**Table 2.1** *Proportion of young people in education or training, by selected single years of age*

	17	20	23	26
All Europe	84	50	25	11
Finland	97	41	34	17
Sweden	85	28	21	8
Denmark	84	55	42	18
Netherlands	97	75	42	9
UK	65	15	3	2
Belgium	99	75	39	3
France	95	65	24	6
Germany	94	50	31	19
Austria	86	33	25	16
Ireland	83	37	10	2
Portugal	71	46	21	4
Spain	84	57	30	12
Italy	81	53	32	13
Greece	79	45	14	3

Note: The proportion of young people in full-time education will be under-estimated to the extent that students live in halls and colleges which are not covered by household surveys – see Box 2. Boxed figures denote the highest proportion in education or training; figures in bold type denote the lowest proportion.

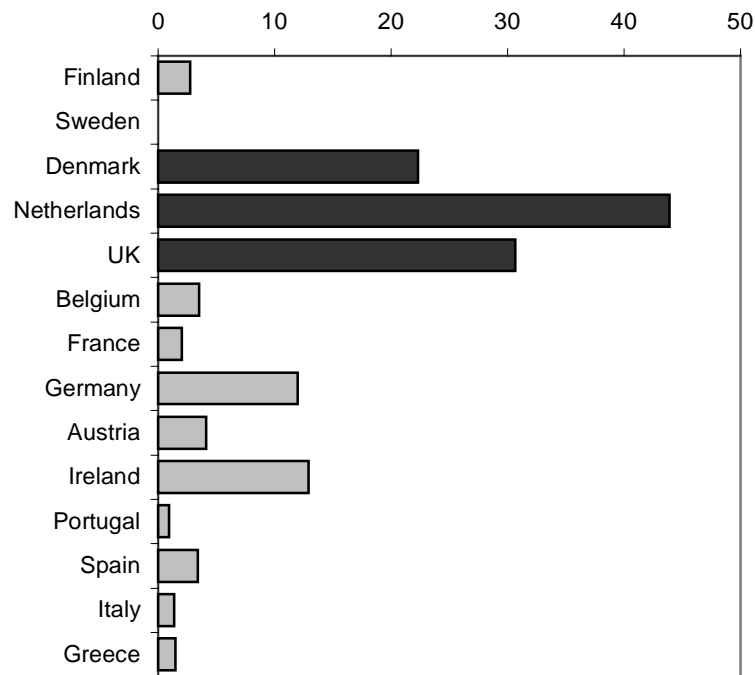
Since spending time in educational institutions constitutes a major part of young people's lives, it is appropriate to begin with a discussion of education. It is not intended that this chapter should describe European education systems in any great detail: they vary so enormously between countries that to do so would require a book in itself<sup>3</sup>. Rather, this chapter takes a broad look at young people's participation in education, and the qualifications they gain along the way. To a certain extent, young people's educational experiences have a great deal in common across Europe: virtually everyone in Europe remains in education at least until their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and the great majority have completed their studies by the age of 25. In spite of the increased interest in adult

education and 'life-long learning', most people in most countries obtain their main qualifications in their late teens or early twenties. However, as well as these similarities, there are also large and significant differences between countries.

### Staying on in education

Since 16-year-olds are not interviewed directly for the ECHP, the records we present start at age 17. Six out of seven European 17-year-olds are in education or full-time training, and this proportion drops steadily with increasing years of age. Attrition from education is illustrated in Table 2.1, which shows that the proportion in education falls to half at age 20, a quarter at age 23, and a tenth at age 26.

<sup>3</sup> The reader is referred to OECD (1995) or Brock and Tulasiewicz (1995).

**Figure 2.2 Proportion of students aged 17 to 25 who have part-time employment**

The number of young people remaining in education or training declines with age in all countries, but the range of variation is very wide, and it does not appear to follow a regional pattern – some of the highest staying-on rates are in countries neighbouring some of the lowest. Staying-on rates are lowest in the UK and Portugal, where by the age of 17 only about two-thirds of young people are still studying. At the other extreme, Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany still have about 95 per cent of their 17-year-olds in education.

At the latter end of the age-range, some countries (UK and Belgium) have only 2 or 3 per cent of their 26-year-olds in education, while others (Finland, Denmark, Germany and Austria) have more than 15 per cent<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> A degree of inaccuracy is inherent in these figures, due to the fact that the ECHP does not sample anyone living in large-scale student accommodation.

The above analysis of educational participation is based on young people who report education as their primary economic activity. Of course it is possible for students also to work for pay. It turns out that in most countries, hardly any students (in the age range 17 to 25) also have a part-time job. But, as Figure 2.2 shows, over 20 per cent of Danish students, over 30 per cent of British students, and over 40 per cent of Dutch students in the survey, also have part-time work. The only other countries with significant numbers of young people combining education with part-time work are Germany and Ireland.

Why do these large inter-country variations occur? Students in higher education may work part-time because of economic hardship; however, the fact that part-time jobs are at least as common at the age of 17 as they are among students in their 20s, means that inter-country differences in economic hardship are unlikely to be driving the differences in part-

***Box 2 Problems with making comparisons of educational attainment between countries***

One problem with making international comparisons of educational attainment is that the typical age at which students gain qualifications varies between countries. In Greece one can finish secondary school at 17, while in Germany secondary school is typically not completed until age 19. Many university students graduate at the age of 21 in the UK, while many students in Germany or Italy do not complete their undergraduate degrees until the age of 25 or later. This means that comparing completed qualifications among young cohorts will lead to an over-estimate of qualifications in countries where they are typically obtained at a young age, relative to countries where they are typically obtained at an older age.

To correct for this, we have assumed that students still in education will go on to finish the course for which they are registered (for example, we assume that all 21-year-old students will get a degree). This has pitfalls of its own, and will lead to an over-estimate of final qualifications in all countries where some of the sample are still in education, particularly in countries where the typical age on completion is high, and also in countries with high drop-out rates relative to graduation rates.

A second problem is that it is difficult to say which qualifications are equivalent across different countries. Is a secondary school leaving qualification gained at the age of 18 (typical in the UK or France, for example) equivalent to a similar qualification gained at the age of 19 (typical in Italy and Germany)? Is the three-year university degree (UK) equivalent to the four-year degree in Italy or the five-year degree typical in Germany? Moreover, our data set does not distinguish between different classes of attainment within each education level (for example, the number and grade of 'A' levels in the UK).

A further difficulty arises from trying to compare academic and vocational qualifications. Germany and Austria have comprehensive systems of apprenticeships which run in parallel with the academic systems. In countries with such well-developed systems of vocational education, measures of academic achievement which exclude these qualifications will appear lower than they would if vocational qualifications were included.

Finally, problems arise because of the sampling and following rules in the survey design. Students living in multi-occupancy university accommodation, such as halls of residence, are not generally interviewed in large-scale household surveys, and the ECHP is no exception to this. As students' living arrangements vary between countries (far more students live in halls of residence in the UK than in Spain, for example), the proportion of students missed out by this feature of sampling will vary between countries.

**Table 2.3 Educational qualifications achieved (or expected) by 21 to 25-year-olds, by country**

	<i>Row percentages</i>	
	Higher	Upper secondary
All Europe	34	39
Finland	42	49
Sweden	39	54
Denmark	33	49
Netherlands	36	43
UK	23	47
Belgium	58	28
France	46	37
Germany	27	52
Austria	25	63
Ireland	32	45
Portugal	24	14
Spain	44	18
Italy	29	38
Greece	37	36

Note: Qualifications have been coded according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). 'Upper secondary' (ISCED level 3) is the qualification obtained at the stage of transferring from school to university at about the age of 18. As in Table 2.1, the figures for higher education may be under-estimated to the extent that students living in institutions are not covered by the survey sample.

time working. As the countries where large numbers of students work part-time are the same countries where part-time work among women is relatively common, it seems plausible that to a large extent these differences are driven by the availability of part-time jobs.

### **Educational qualifications**

Educational qualifications are perhaps the most difficult aspect of young people's lives to compare between countries, owing to enormous variations between education systems. Some of the issues involved in comparing educational qualifications are summarised in Box 2. Precise comparisons between countries are unlikely to be meaningful, but large and consistent differences may be interpreted with more confidence. The ECHP does not provide much information about the current educational experiences of sample members who are still at school or

college, so the analysis here focuses on the main outcomes – the proportion of young men and women who complete their secondary schooling or obtain degrees.

Table 2.3 shows the educational qualifications attained by men and women who were aged 21 to 25 at the time of their ECHP interview. The younger group, 17 to 20, have not been analysed because of the difficulty of disentangling qualifications achieved from the process of obtaining them. It is assumed that by the age of 21, those who have not completed secondary school will never do so; on the other hand, those who are still in education will probably go on to obtain a degree or similar higher qualification. The 'higher education' group has been adjusted to include those still in full-time education as well as those who have finished university degrees; this may lead to an over-estimate of final

qualifications, but gives a measure which is easier to compare between countries.

One third of all young Europeans have (or expect to obtain) a degree or other higher educational qualification; additional to this, more than one third have attained upper secondary qualifications, so that nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) have reached *at least* the upper secondary level. Finns, Swedes, Belgians and French are the most highly educated groups: on average over these four countries, 85 per cent of young people have upper secondary qualifications, and half have or are studying for higher qualifications. At the other end of the scale are the British, Portuguese and Italians. Here only two thirds reach the upper secondary level, with just a quarter going on to higher education.

### **Increasing educational attainment among younger cohorts**

The analysis of educational attainment in the previous section was confined to the most recent cohort of young people to have reached or approached the end of their periods of study – those aged 21 to 25 at the time they were interviewed for the ECHP. This gives the best indication of the output of the current educational system. However, it is also interesting to examine how educational attainment has changed over time, by analysing the attainment of older participants in the survey.

The steady and substantial rise in the number of people obtaining upper secondary and higher qualifications is clearly shown in Figure 2.4. In this figure, men and women have been divided into groups according to the date at which they turned 20 years old (the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday has been used since this is approximately the age at which most qualifications were gained). Age groups have

been defined in five-yearly bands: those who turned 20 in 1930-35, in 1939-39, and so on<sup>5</sup>.

Of those who turned 20 in the early 1930s (now aged about 80), only 18 per cent of Europeans obtained upper secondary qualifications, and just 5 per cent a degree or other higher level certificates. There was an exceptional peak in secondary education in the early 1940s (perhaps associated with the training available in the armed forces or perhaps associated with different rates of wartime casualty among different educational groups<sup>6</sup>), but apart from that, there was a steady increase to the end of the 1980s, when 71 per cent obtained upper secondary qualifications and 28 per cent higher qualifications.

This increase in educational attainment can be observed in every single country in western Europe. Four groups of countries, may be defined, within which education has evolved similarly; these form the basis for Figure 2.5. For this summary, an 'education score' has been calculated for each cohort, in which upper secondary education (on its own) has been counted as 1, while a degree or other higher-level qualification has been counted as 2. This allows a single average score to be assigned to each cohort in each country.

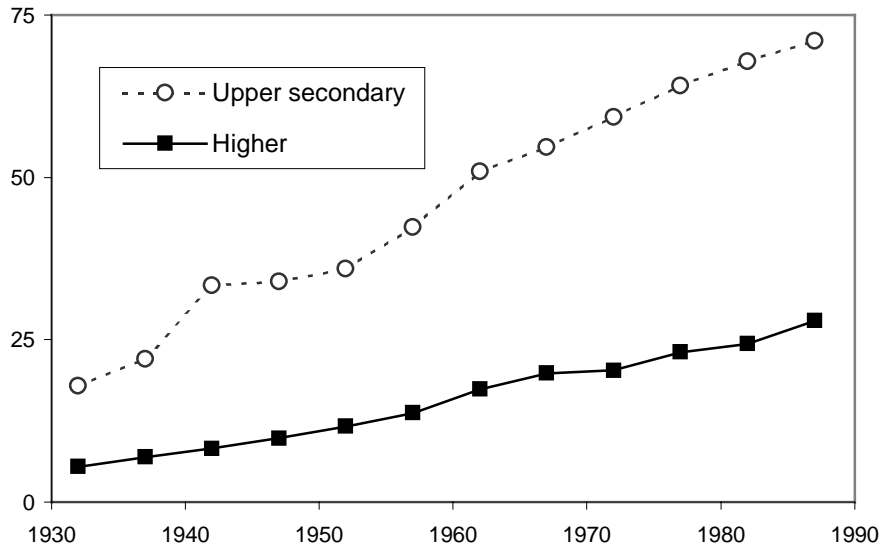
In the Scandinavian and other Northern countries, there was a sharp rise in educational attainments through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which then tailed off slightly after the

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<sup>5</sup> Note that the group of young people aged 21-25 analysed in the previous section passed their 20<sup>th</sup> birthdays between 1989 and 1993 (if they were interviewed in 1994), and were therefore slightly later through the system than the 1985-89 group shown as the latest cohort in the analysis over time.

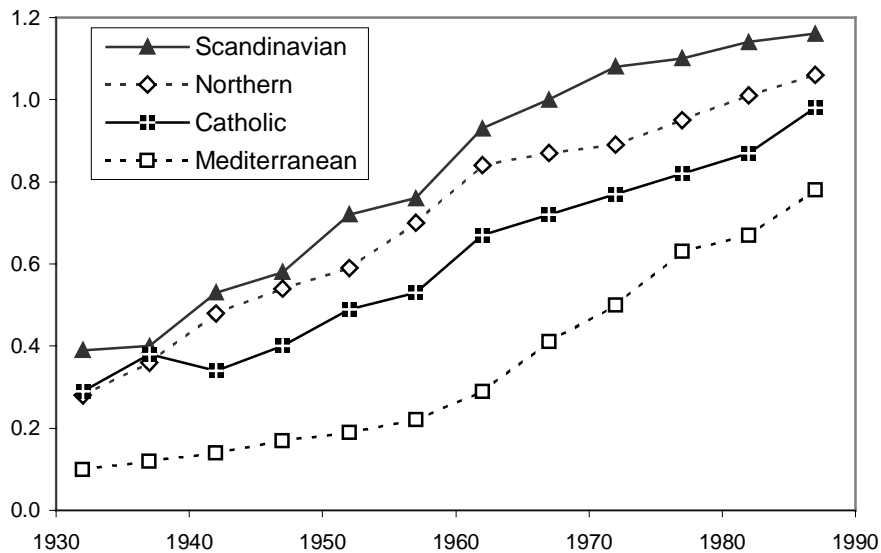
<sup>6</sup> As Figure 2.7 shows, most of the peak in the early 1940s affected men.

**Figure 2.4 Educational attainments of all adults, by date at which they reached the age of 20**



Note: All Europe, weighted. Dates are grouped in five-year ranges: 1930-34 is plotted at 1932, and so on.

**Figure 2.5 Educational attainment score of all adults, by date at which they reached the age of 20: four groups of countries compared**



Note: Educational attainment score is based on one point for upper secondary qualifications and two points for higher qualifications. Country groupings as follows: Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands are 'Scandinavian'; the UK, Belgium, France and Germany are 'Northern'; Austria and Ireland are 'Catholic'; and Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy are 'Mediterranean'.

**Table 2.6 Educational qualifications attained by adults who reached their 20<sup>th</sup> birthdays in the 1960s and 1980s, by country**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>			
	1960s		1980s	
	Higher	Upper secondary	Higher	Upper secondary
Finland	29	62	43	89
Sweden	26	71	32	86
Denmark	<b>36</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>81</b>
Netherlands	<b>20</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>85</b>
UK	22	54	27	66
Belgium	31	58	40	72
France	20	57	27	73
Germany	<b>23</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>81</b>
Austria	5	70	13	84
Ireland	12	41	19	65
Portugal	5	9	8	23
Spain	12	20	30	51
Italy	7	31	15	56
Greece	16	34	34	67

Note: Boxed figures denote the largest percentage (not absolute) increases in educational scores; figures in bold type denote the smallest increases.

1960s. In contrast, the four Mediterranean countries, which already recorded relatively low levels of education early in the period, increased their outputs relatively slowly up to the 1960s, and then accelerated. Thus the Mediterranean countries fell behind the rest of Europe during and after the Second World War, but have since been catching up.

For each country, educational attainment is compared between the 1960s and 1980s generations of 20-year-olds in Table 2.6. The striking features are the very low level of qualifications reported by the 1960s cohort of men and women from Mediterranean countries (aged around 50 at the time of the ECHP interviews); and the rapid increase observed in those countries since that period. The Mediterranean countries are on a trend to catch up with their northern neighbours, though as Table 2.1 showed, they have not

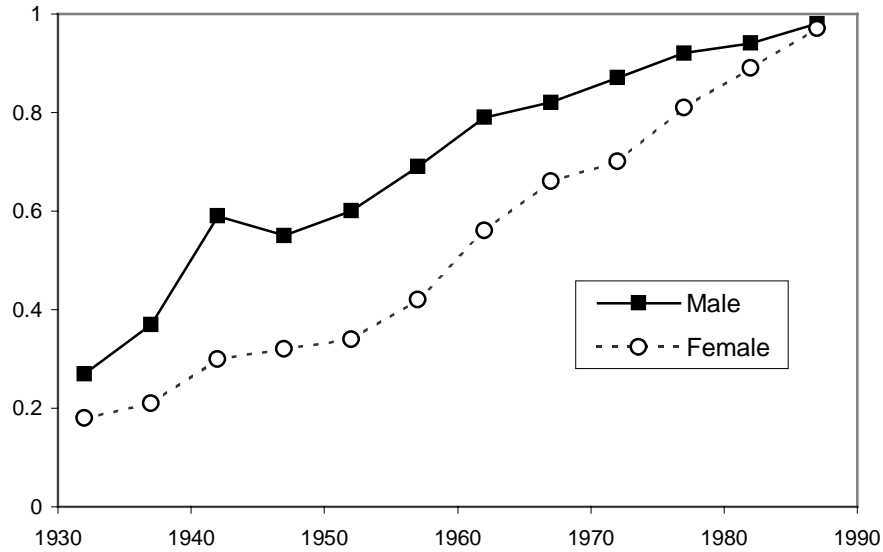
done so yet, and Portugal, in particular, remains well behind.

### Comparisons by gender

Another feature of the recent historical period has been a change in the relative educational positions of men and women. Table 2.7 shows that the group of men who passed through the education system in the 1930s are significantly more likely to have qualifications than women in the same cohort. Men's advantage actually increased during (and perhaps because of) the war, and peaked in the 1950s. At that point, men were getting almost twice as many educational qualifications as women. Since the 1950s, though, women have consistently increased their qualification levels more rapidly than men, to the point of achieving parity by the late 1980s. Indeed, women's qualifications outrank those of men in the group of young people aged 21 to 25 at the time of the survey.



**Figure 2.7 Educational attainment scores of men and women, by date at which they reached the age of 20**

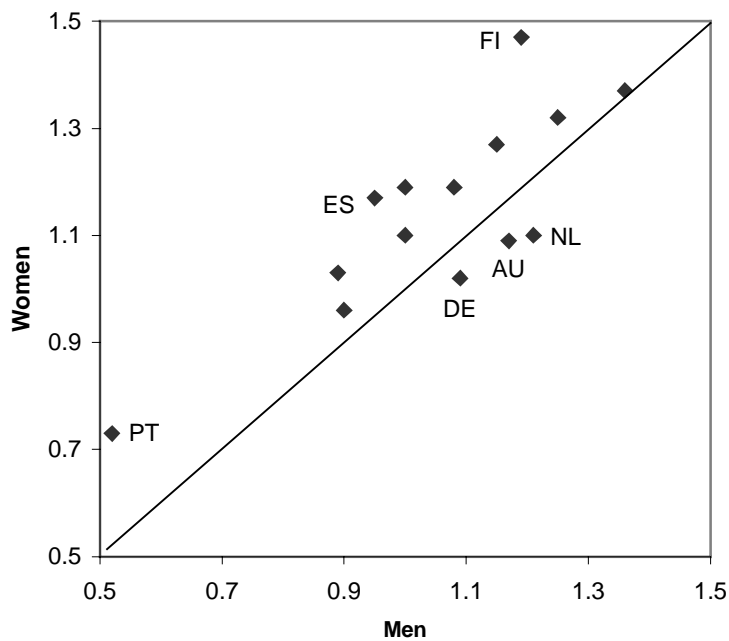


Note: Educational attainment score is based on one point for upper secondary qualifications and two points for higher qualifications.

The gender balance in each country is shown in Figure 2.8. In the Netherlands, Germany and Austria men still seem to have slightly higher levels of qualifications than women.

But in most countries (and in countries as geographically disparate as Finland and Portugal) women are by now well ahead of men on these measures.

**Figure 2.8 Relative education scores of women and men aged 21 to 25, by country**



### 3. EARLY EXPERIENCE IN THE LABOUR MARKET

In this chapter we investigate how young people fare in the labour market in different countries in Europe. We look at levels of employment and unemployment among young people and compare the incidence of insecure and marginal employment across countries. For those in work, we compare hours of work and earnings across countries. Finally, we assess the relationship between educational qualifications and employment status.

#### The transition from education to work

We begin by placing the experiences of the group of interest (17 to 25-year-olds) within the context of a wider age range and a wider set of potential primary activities. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of activities across the age-range 17 to 30<sup>7</sup>. It can be interpreted as illustrating a number of potential stages: education and training, unemployment, employment, and family care. Of course, not all young people move systematically through all of these stages. However, the concept of stages has some validity: all young people start out in education and almost all (men) end up in a job; training as a full time activity tends to take place relatively early in the sequence; and young school-leavers are much more likely to be unemployed than people in their late twenties. For women, the proportion reporting family care as their main activity increases with age throughout the twenties, and can therefore also be interpreted as a 'stage', often following a period in the labour market.

Following the 50 per cent line horizontally across Figure 3.1 shows that half of all young men in Europe are no longer in education by the age of 19 years and 5 months. The 'typical' young man then spends 11 months in full-time training, followed by 22 months in unemployment, and the 'median' age by which half of all men are in employment is 22 years and 2 months. For women, the median age of finishing their studies is slightly later at 19 years and 7 months; but the typical woman spends rather less time on training (7 months) or in unemployment (19 months), so she reaches a job slightly earlier than the typical man, at 21 years and 9 months.

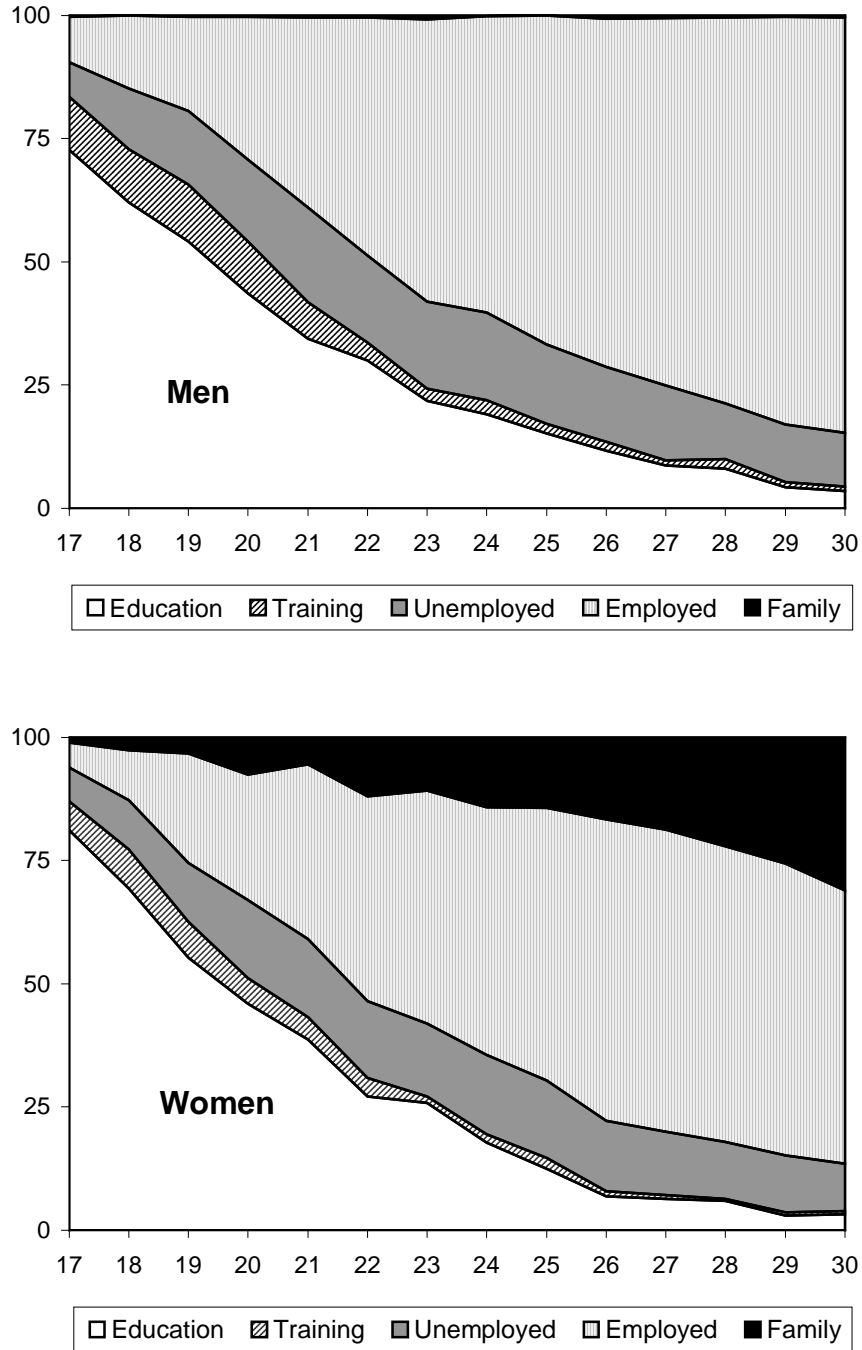
While young people in all countries have the same mix of primary activities, the distribution and timing of the transitions varies substantially. Over Europe as a whole, the 'median' age by which half of all men and women are in jobs is just under 22. However (Figure 3.2), it ranges from only 19 years and 1 month in the UK, to as much as 24 years and 4 months in Spain and Italy – that is, Spanish and Italian young people are more than five years later into employment than the British.

The different experiences of young people in countries where transitions are early and late, are illustrated in more detail using the UK and Italy as examples, in Figure 3.3. It can be seen how Italian young people spend a longer time in the education system, but it is also clear that on average they spend substantially longer in unemployment than their British counterparts.

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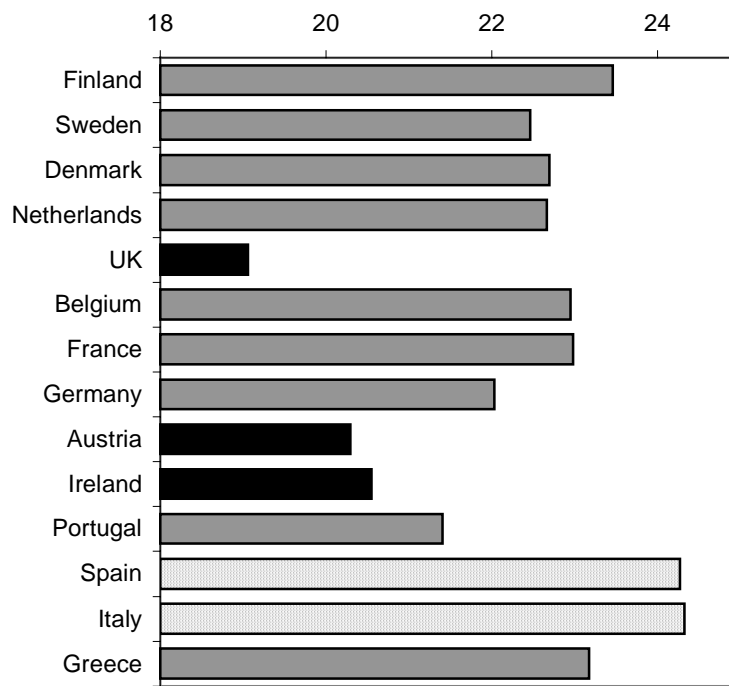
<sup>7</sup> Respondents were not analysed if they are engaged in military or community service; classify themselves as retired or 'otherwise inactive'; or do not provide information about their labour market status or hours of work. These represent 4 per cent of the 17-25 'age-group'.

**Figure 3.1** *Distribution of activities across the age-range 17 to 30: men compared with women*



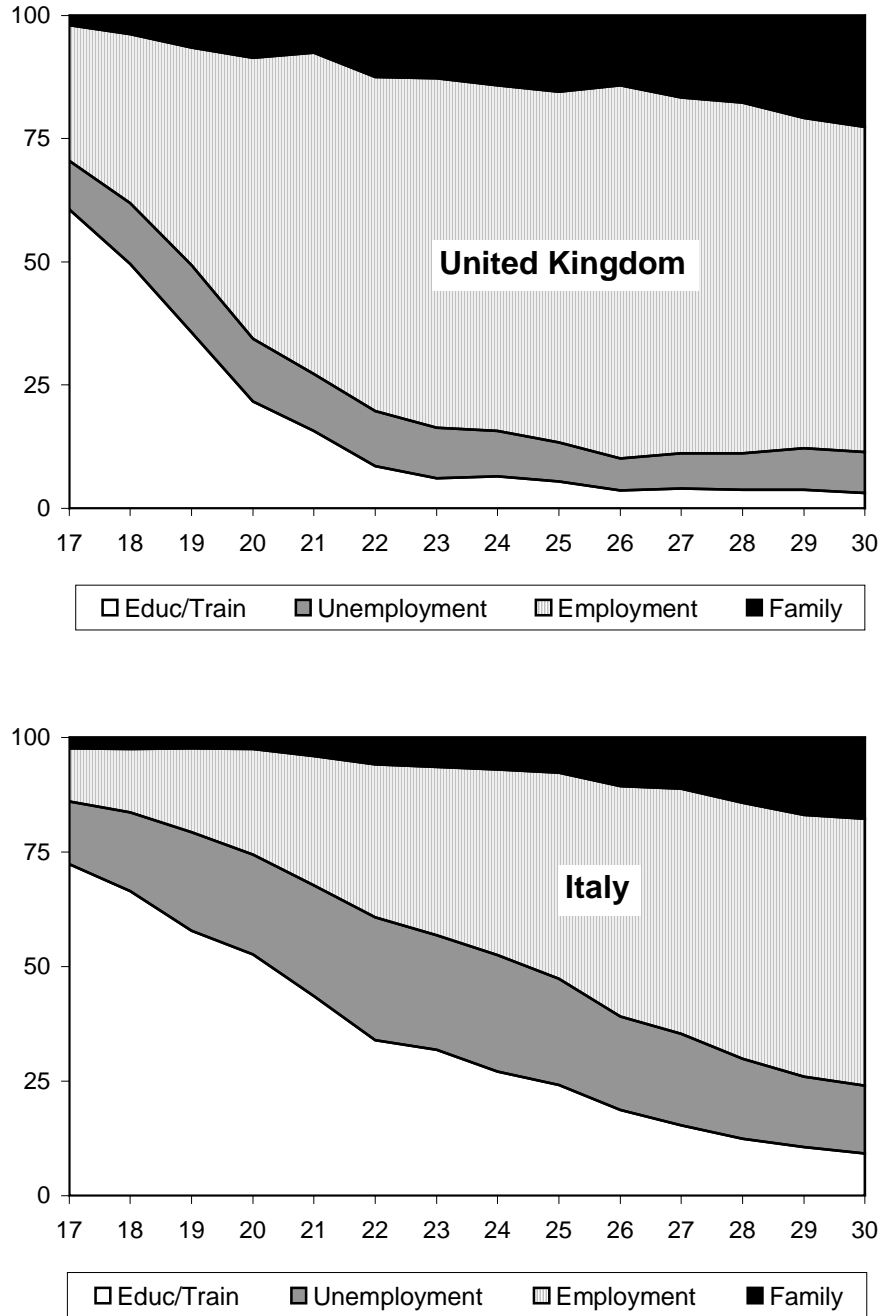
Note: All Europe, weighted.

**Figure 3.2** *Age by which half of young people are in employment, by country*

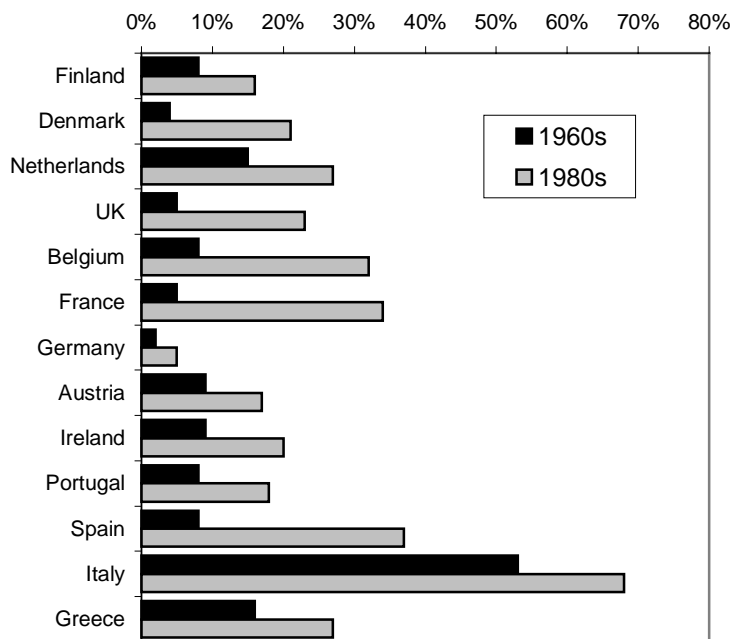


Note: Derived from a logistic regression equation analysing activity by age and square of age. The 'employment' category includes a small number of women engaged in family care; this has only a marginal effect on the results.

**Figure 3.3** *Distribution of activities across the age-range 17 to 30: men and women in the UK compared with Italy*



**Figure 3.4** *Proportion who were unemployed before their first job: adults who reached their 20<sup>th</sup> birthdays in the 1960s and 1980s, by country*



The idea of unemployment as a stage in the transition process is investigated further in Figure 3.4, which shows the number of people who were unemployed before their first job. Across Europe as a whole, more than a quarter (28 per cent) of adults who reached their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday during the 1980s said that they had a spell of unemployment at the start of their careers<sup>8</sup>. Among those who had reached their twenties two decades earlier during the 1960s, the proportion is only one eighth (13 per cent). The comparison between cohorts should not be read too literally, since there is a chance that a member of the earlier generation may have forgotten whether he or she was unemployed briefly before starting work at the age of sixteen. But recall error should not affect comparisons between countries.

In both the cohorts shown, the highest proportion of people unemployed before their

first job is in Italy, where more than two-thirds of the younger group, and half of the older group, were unemployed before taking their first job. On the other hand, the rise in initial unemployment has been much steeper in countries such as France, Denmark, the UK and Spain: in each of those countries the rate of joblessness before people's first job is at least five times higher in the 1980s cohort than in the 1960s cohort.

### **Employment and unemployment among young men**

The previous graph looked at unemployment spells occurring before the first job; the next two tables show the incidence of unemployment among young men, regardless of whether it occurs before or after the first job, taking as a sample all those who have left

<sup>8</sup> The question was asked of those who had ever had a job. The analysis here also includes those who had never had a job, and were currently unemployed.

**Table 3.5 Economic activities of men who are not in full-time education**

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	17 to 20	21 to 25	26 to 30	31-35
In work	58	76	86	91
Unpaid family work	4	3	1	1
Unemployed	38	22	13	8

Note: All Europe, weighted.

full-time education<sup>9</sup>. Table 3.5 shows the range of activities across the whole of Europe. The probability of employment increases with age, and conversely, the probability of unemployment decreases. The variation across age groups will be partly an ageing effect (individuals increase their chances of a job as they gain experience with age); but it may also be a selection effect (young people who leave the education system early have poor job prospects). A more detailed analysis of the relationships between age, education and employment appears at the end of this chapter.

Before discussing unemployment rates in more detail, it is interesting to look at the small group of young men who are doing 'unpaid family work'. Typically, these would be people working on their parents' farm or for family businesses. Very few of these are found in the northern group of countries – unpaid family work is almost exclusively observed in the southern and/or Catholic countries<sup>10</sup>. As many as 17 per cent of all Greek men under the age of 26 (who have completed their education) are working for their families without pay; and an average of 5 per cent in Austria, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Italy. In Greece (and to a

lesser extent in the other countries) young men with relatively low levels of educational qualifications are most likely to work for their families. In all the countries considered, almost all of the male family-workers live at home with their parents. And in all the countries, even those where unpaid family work is fairly common among young men in their early twenties, it has virtually died out among men in their 30s. These characteristics do not necessarily apply to women family workers, but for men, this form of activity can be seen as another definable stage in the transition from education to employment – one might think of it as a type of family apprenticeship.

In the following analysis, we have added unpaid family workers to the group of unemployed men, since the numbers in this category in some sense reflect the inability of the labour market to provide paid jobs and economic independence for young people.

Table 3.6 shows the proportions of young men in three age groups who are not in employment. The age band 31 to 35 is shown to represent the underlying rate of male unemployment in each country. So it is possible to see both where youth unemployment rates are high, and also where they are exceptionally high in relation to the national economy. In all countries, unemployment rates are higher among the younger groups than in the 31-35 comparison group, and highest of all among teenagers.

<sup>9</sup> As before, men who are engaged in national service or out of the labour force were not analysed. For the analysis in this section, the small numbers of men who report their primary activity as housework were also excluded.

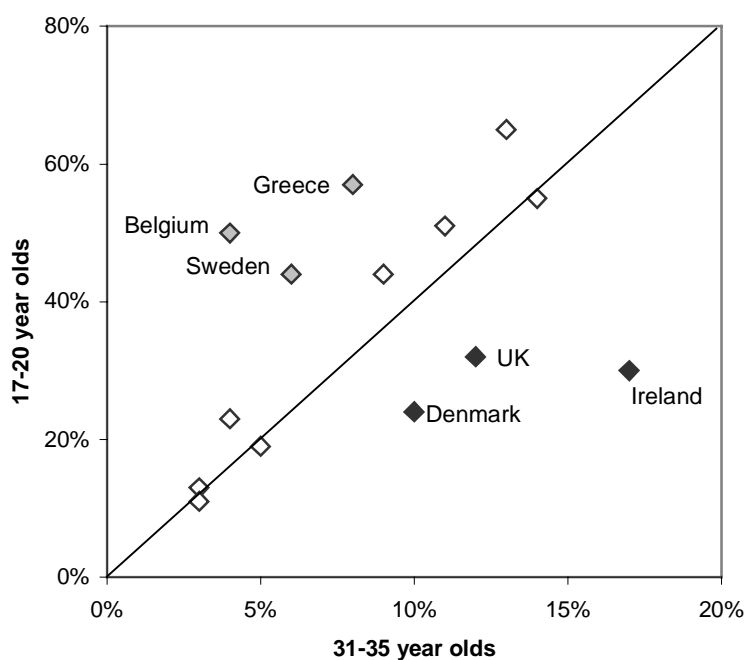
<sup>10</sup> An exception appeared to be Finland, where 2 per cent of men aged 17 to 25 are in unpaid family work, though the sample is small.

**Table 3.6 Unemployment (and unpaid family work) among young men, by country**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>			
	17 to 20 (A)	21 to 25 (B)	31 to 35 (C)	Excess (A – C)
Finland	44	33	9	35
Sweden	44	26	6	38
Denmark	24	12	10	14
Netherlands	<b>13</b>	13	<b>3</b>	10
UK	32	18	12	20
Belgium	50	20	4	46
France	51	24	11	40
Germany	19	<b>8</b>	5	14
Austria	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>
Ireland	30	29	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">17</span>	13
Portugal	23	19	4	19
Spain	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">55</span>	36	14	41
Italy	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">65</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">43</span>	13	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">52</span>
Greece	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">57</span>	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">39</span>	8	<span style="border: 1px solid black;">49</span>

Note: Analysis confined to men not in education. Boxed figures denote the highest rates of unemployment; figures in bold type denote the lowest.

**Figure 3.7 Unemployment among young men: 17 to 20-year-olds compared with 31 to 35-year-olds**





**Table 3.8 Economic activities of women who are not in full-time education**

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	17 to 20	21 to 25	26 to 30	31-35
In work	51	63	63	59
Unpaid family work	2	1	1	1
Unemployed	35	20	12	8
Family care	12	16	24	31

Note: All Europe, weighted.

Austria and the Netherlands have the lowest levels of youth unemployment; the countries with the highest levels are Italy, Greece and Spain, where over half of all young people in the 17-20 age group and over a third of all those aged 21-25 are not in paid work.

How far are these rates of youth unemployment related to being young, and how far are they related to generally higher rates of unemployment in certain countries? In general, countries with high levels of youth unemployment also have relatively high rates of unemployment in the older age group, as Figure 3.7 shows. But youth unemployment is much higher in Belgium than might have been expected from the position of men in their early 30s; Greece and Sweden also have higher than expected levels of unemployment among teenage men. On the other hand Ireland's youth unemployment rate is much lower than might have been expected, and the UK and Denmark also have lower than expected levels of youth unemployment.

### **Employment and unemployment among young women**

Interpreting the economic activities of young women is more difficult than for young men, because women who have left education may be employed, or unemployed and looking for work, or count themselves primarily as home-makers. Traditionally, unemployment figures are presented as the number of unemployed

people divided by the total number 'economically active' in the labour market, ie the sum of those employed and those who are unemployed and looking for work. This assumes that non-participation in the labour market (for example, looking after children) is independent of the probability of obtaining work. This is almost certainly a wrong assumption: women who would otherwise have liked jobs but who find themselves in depressed labour markets may declare themselves 'inactive' rather than unemployed, especially if the benefit system gives them no incentive to register as unemployed. Additionally, women who declare themselves to be home-makers may have different characteristics from other women, being less likely to find jobs at acceptable levels of pay, or any job at all.

Table 3.8 shows the range of activities reported by young women across Europe, and, as before, compares them with their slightly older counterparts. Unemployment rates fall with increasing age, but the number of women working full time on family care increases. The detailed analysis in this section considers first the variations between countries in the number of young women caring for their families; it then considers unemployment rates among the remainder who are directly active in the labour market.

As with men, there is a small group of young women who are 'unpaid family workers'. They

**Table 3.9** *Proportion of women aged 17 to 25 whose main activity is family care, by family structure and educational attainment*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>			
	Single	Partnered without children	Lone parent	Partnered with children
Total	5	10	49	50
Higher qualifications	0	5	55	14
Upper secondary	2	5	41	41
Lower or no qualifications	10	21	53	62

Note: All Europe, weighted. Analysis confined to women not in full time education.

represent 5 per cent of women under the age of 26 who have completed their education in Greece; and 3 per cent in the other southern/Catholic countries. As with men, it tends to be women with lower levels of education who report this role. But unlike men, unpaid family work is almost as common among young women who have left their parental home as it is among those who still live with their parents. And unlike men, the proportion of women in unpaid family work does not decline much with increasing age. Older women who have left home may be working, not for their father, but for their husband or father-in-law. The implication is that while unpaid family work may be a transitional stage for some young men, it is a longer-term occupation for a small group of women. We treated unpaid family work as a sub-group of unemployment for men. We will do the same for single women; but for women with partners we will treat it as a sub-group of family care.

As expected, the primary influence on women's decision to undertake family care as their primary activity is their family structure. Across Europe as a whole, only 5 per cent of young single and childless women report themselves as home-makers, compared with nearly half of women with children (first row of Table 3.9). Another strong influence is education – the second, third and fourth rows

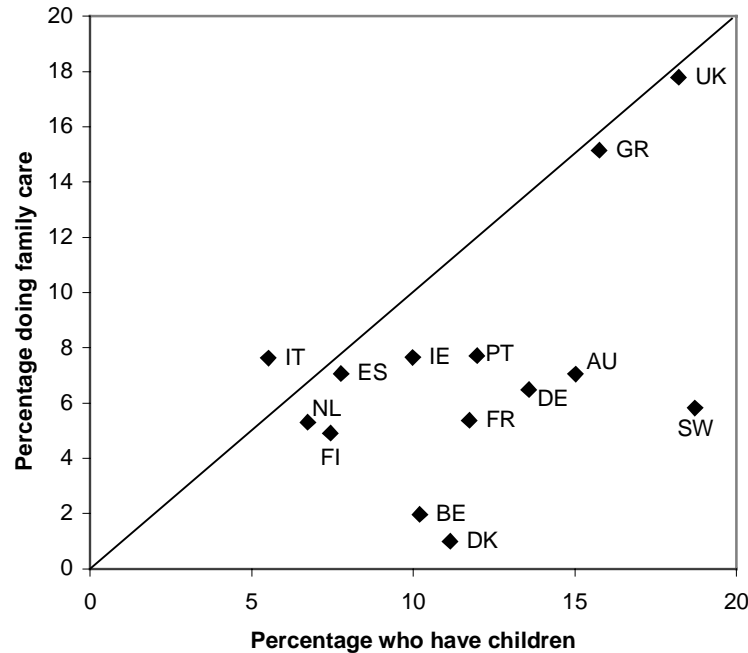
of the table show that women with lesser educational attainments are more likely to be full-time family carers than better qualified women. The exception is lone parents, whose economic activity is independent of their education.

The total proportion of young women concentrating on home-making in any country will depend on two things: the proportion who have children, and the economic and social conventions in each society which mediate the relationship between the family and the labour market. Figure 3.10 shows the proportion of women aged 17-25 whose main activity is family care, compared with the proportion who have become mothers.

The proportion of young women engaged in family care ranges from under 2 per cent in Denmark and Belgium, to over 15 per cent in Greece and the UK, with the proportion in all other countries being within the relatively tight range of 5 to 8 per cent.

Although Greece and the UK, which are the two countries with the most women in family care, also have some of the highest fertility rates in Europe among this age group, the relationship between fertility and family care is not very clear-cut between countries. The two countries with the lowest proportion of

**Figure 3.10** *Proportion of women under age 25 whose main activity is family care, compared with the proportion who are mothers*



young women engaged in family care (Denmark and Belgium) are not countries with particularly low fertility; and Sweden, where fertility is also high, has a only a moderate proportion of women engaged in family care.

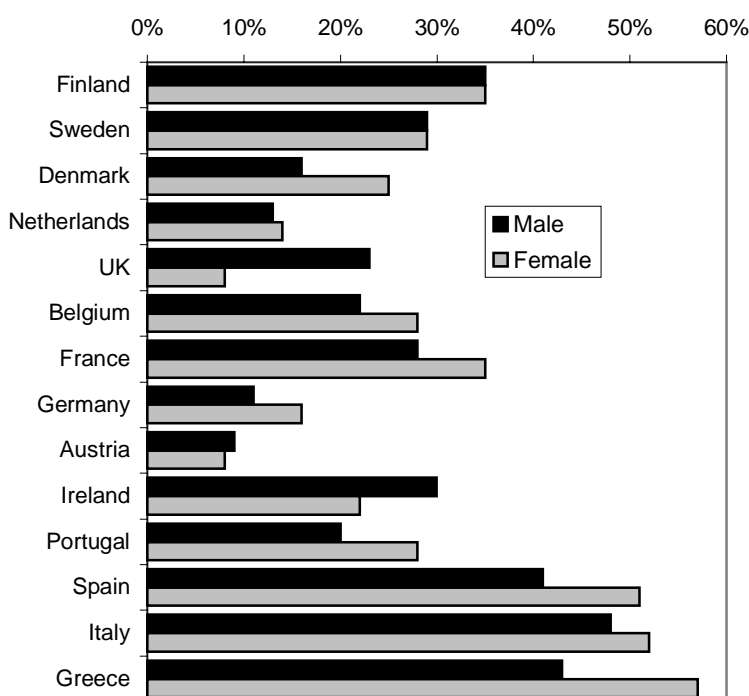
Having discussed family care, we now follow the normal convention of presenting unemployment as a proportion of all those employed or looking for work – that is, women looking after their families are assumed to be outside the labour market, not competing for jobs. In broad terms, young women have unemployment rates similar to those experienced by young men in the same country (Figure 3.11). In a number of countries, especially Denmark, the female rate is rather higher than the male rate. A departure from this pattern occurs in the UK and Ireland, where young women are much less likely to be unemployed than young men. This may be associated with the relatively high proportion of less-educated young women in those

countries who become single mothers (and thereby cease to be counted as ‘unemployed’).

### Employment contracts

Many commentators have expressed concern at the growing numbers of workers in Europe in ‘insecure’ employment: that is, on fixed-term contracts or in casual work. In Europe as a whole, half of employees aged 17 to 20 are on insecure contracts; a third of those aged 21 to 25; but only a tenth of those aged between 31 and 35. So young people are much more likely to experience these potential insecurities than their elders, but it is not clear how far this is associated with their youth, and how far it is associated with the fact that, unlike their elders, these young people entered the labour market during a period when ‘jobs for life’ were becoming increasingly scarce.

**Figure 3.11 Unemployment among men and women aged 17 to 25, by country**



**Table 3.12 Proportion of employees on insecure contracts, by country and age**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>		
	(a)	(b)	(a/b)
	17-25	31-35	
Finland	39	16	2.4
Denmark	30	13	2.3
Netherlands	31	8	3.9
UK	24	10	2.4
Belgium	29	5	<b>5.8</b>
France	37	6	<b>6.2</b>
Germany	24	10	2.4
Austria	15	11	1.4
Ireland	33	9	3.7
Portugal	37	13	2.8
Spain	<b>77</b>	<b>32</b>	2.4
Italy	27	9	3.0
Greece	37	14	2.6

Note: Boxed figures denote countries with the lowest proportion of employees on insecure contracts; figures in bold type denote countries with the highest proportion.

**Table 3.13** *Proportion of young women with children whose work is part time: two comparison groups*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>		
	<-----Aged 17 to 25----->		
	Other women	<-----Married women with kids----->	
Aged 31 to 35			
Sweden		23	
UK	12	45	
France		20	
Austria		7	34
Portugal		5	
Greece		21	

Note: Table confined to countries where at least 25 young married women with children were in employment (centre column). Figures are reported in the first and third columns only if they are significantly different from the figures in the central column.

Rates of insecure employment are hugely different between countries, especially among younger workers (Table 3.12). As a result of recent labour market measures, Spain has by far the highest proportion of workers on insecure arrangements, both among young workers and older workers. 77 per cent of young workers in Spain, and 32 per cent of workers in their early thirties, are in insecure employment. The proportion of young workers on insecure contracts in Finland, France, Portugal and Greece is also high, at 37 per cent or more in each of these countries. The young workers who are best protected from insecure arrangements are in Austria (15 per cent) and the UK and Germany (24 per cent).

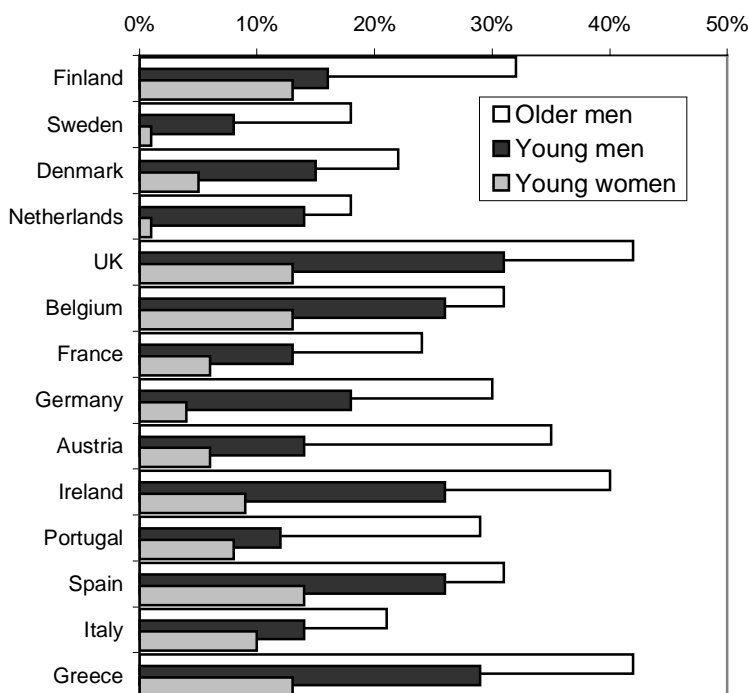
The final column of Table 3.12 shows how much more likely a worker under 25 is to be on an insecure contract, than a worker aged 31-35: in most countries, the young worker is between two and four times more likely to be working under insecure arrangements. In Austria, young workers are only 40 per cent more likely to have insecure contracts than older workers, which is related to younger workers' relatively favoured position. In Belgium and France, young workers are around six times more likely to be working under insecure arrangements as their older

counterparts; however, this is due not to particularly adverse conditions for young workers compared to other countries, but rather to a very low proportion of older workers being on insecure contracts.

### Hours of work

Across Europe as a whole, 6 per cent of young men (aged 17 to 25) who have a job, work less than 30 hours per week. The proportion rises to 26 per cent of women in the age group who are already living with both a partner and with children. For young women who have a partner or children but not both, the proportion working part time is 12 per cent.

The central column of Table 3.13 focuses attention on married women with children in the 17-25 age group, who also have jobs. There are not many respondents with this combination of characteristics, and the table is confined to countries where at least 25 of them contribute to the analysis. The proportion of part-timers ranges from just 5 per cent in Portugal to 45 per cent in the UK. In the UK (but not in other countries) young mothers are significantly more likely to work part time than other young women. In Austria (but not

**Figure 3.14** Proportion of full-time employees who work 50 hours per week or more

in other countries), young mothers are less likely to work part time than older mothers.

We now turn to look at the number of hours worked by full-time workers, ie those working at least 30 hours per week. Across all the countries considered, 21 per cent of young men and 9 per cent of young women report working 50 hours per week or more. Arguably, they are working excessive hours. Women have a lower risk of working long hours than men, whatever their family position: although full-time working mothers are no less likely than other women to work long hours, it may be that occupations employing a large number of women tend to avoid long hours because of the difficulty this would pose for mothers.

Young women are less likely to put in long hours than young men, in every country studied. And young men are less likely to put in long hours than older men – defined, again, as those aged 31 to 35. As Figure 3.14 shows, this is also true of every country. It is the UK

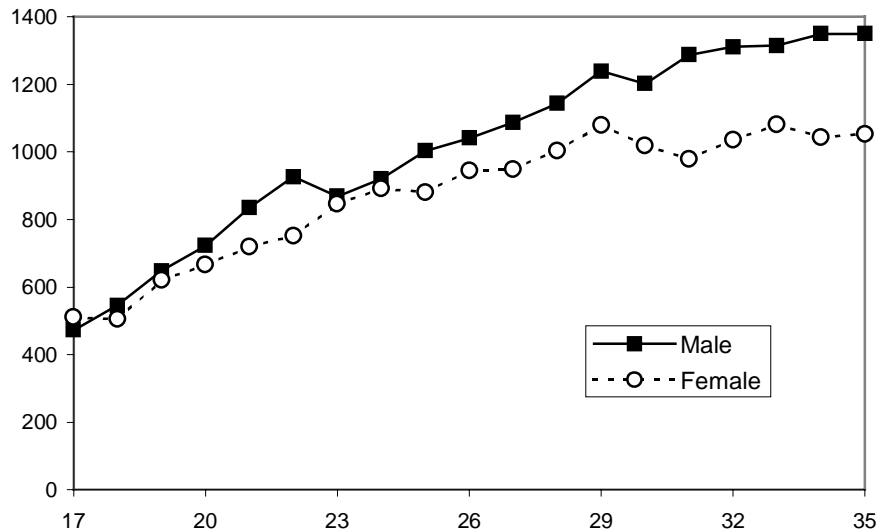
where young men are most likely to report long weekly hours (31 per cent), followed by Greece (29 per cent). The risk is lowest in Sweden, where only 8 per cent of young men, and 1 per cent of young women, work 50 hour weeks.

### Earnings

In our examination of young people's earnings, the analysis is restricted to full-time employees – ie, those for whom employment (rather than self-employment) is their primary activity, who work 30 hours a week or more and who report positive earnings. Monthly earnings have been converted to ECUs (the European unit of account prior to the introduction of the Euro) using purchasing power parities.

The monthly earnings of young men and women in their late teens, are typically about half those of workers in their early thirties (Figure 3.15). For both men and women,

**Figure 3.15 Median earnings (in ECU per month) of full-time employees, by age and sex**



Note: All Europe except Sweden, weighted.

earnings progress steadily with increasing age through the twenties. There is relatively little difference between men and women during the 'young' age range, though a clear gender gap has opened by about the age of 30.

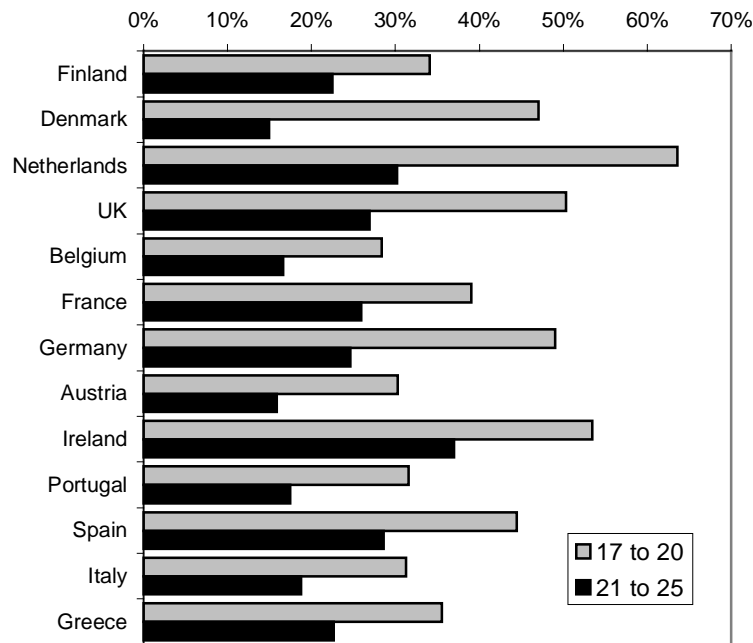
Of course, the most important issue for most young people is not a comparison of their earnings with young people in other countries, but the level of their own earnings relative to those of other workers in their own country. The country-by-country analysis in Figure 3.16 therefore takes a purely relative view, showing what might be termed the 'youth penalty' – the extent to which young men and women's median monthly earnings fall short of the median earnings of 31 to 35-year-olds working in the same country. In several countries, led by the Netherlands, Ireland and the UK, 17 to 20-year-olds earn only about 50 per cent of the wages available to older employees. In several other countries, though, the penalty experienced by the youngest workers is much lower: in Belgium, Austria and Italy, 17 to 20-year-olds earn up to 70 per cent of the wages paid to older workers.

The relative wage reduction faced by workers in their early twenties is always less than that experienced by the teenagers. In general, countries where 17 to 20-year-olds are at a particular disadvantage are the same countries where 21 to 25-year-olds are more disadvantaged, though there is a striking gap between the two groups of young people in Denmark, where the youngest group is among the worst off, while the slightly older group is among the best off, relative to workers in their early thirties.

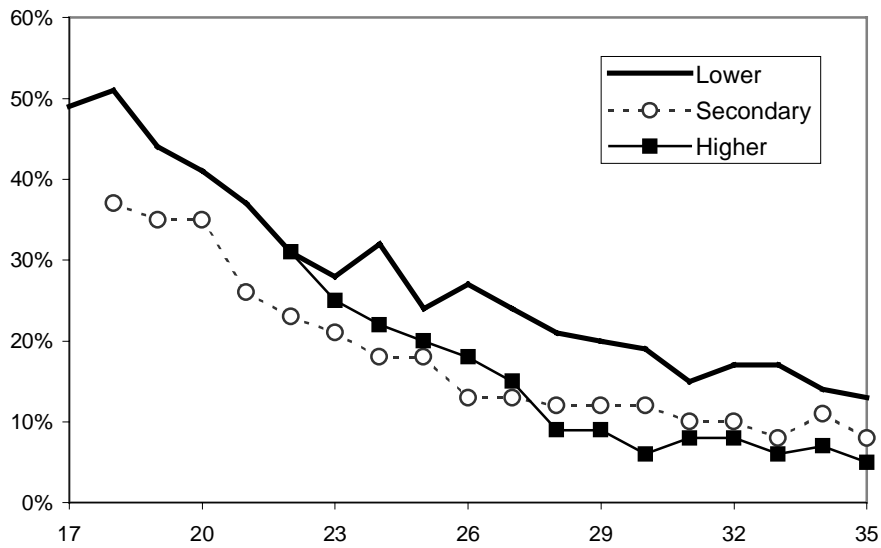
### Education and employment

Finally, we make an inter-country comparison of the impact of education on the employment prospects of young people. The analysis is in two stages: it considers first the relationship between educational qualifications and the risk of unemployment; and second, the extent to which better qualifications are associated with higher salaries among those who have a job.

**Figure 3.16 Reduction in median earnings among young people, compared with 31 to 35-year-olds, by country**



**Figure 3.17 Unemployment rates by educational attainment and age**



Note: All Europe, weighted.



An initial difficulty in comparing educational effects on employment is that young people's age at entry into the labour market is directly related to their educational careers<sup>11</sup>. Is the very high rate of unemployment among teenagers associated with their age and/or inexperience, or is it linked to the fact that teenagers who are in the labour market are those with poor educational qualifications? Figure 3.17 shows that for each educational group, the risk of unemployment falls consistently across the age range illustrated. So, for example, up to half of teenagers who have not obtained upper secondary qualifications are unemployed; but this rate falls to less than 20 per cent among unqualified men and women in their early 30s. This is consistent with the idea that inexperience is a problem in its own right, and that it takes many young people some time to secure a steady place in the labour market. Although this age-effect affects young people with qualifications too, those with upper secondary qualifications or degrees have a lower unemployment rate than those with minimal qualifications. In detail, graduates are slightly worse off than those with secondary qualifications during the period immediately after completing their studies, arguably because they have not yet gained experience; but gain a slight advantage from the age of about 28 onwards. The gap between the middle and higher education groups is never wide, though.

If attention is focused on men and women aged between 23 and 27, there is no country in the sample where the unemployment rate of

graduates is significantly different from that of young people with upper secondary qualifications. It is therefore convenient to use that age-band to compare both well-qualified groups with the less-privileged group of young people whose qualifications are below the level defined as 'upper secondary' (Table 3.18). Less-qualified men and women experience higher unemployment rates in most countries – as much as three times the risk in Denmark and 2.8 times the risk in Austria. There are some countries, though, where there is no real difference between well- and under-qualified people: this includes Spain, Italy and Greece (where the rate of unemployment is at the high end for the lower educated, but very high indeed for the higher educated) followed by the UK (where unemployment rates are low for both groups).

Apart from influencing employment prospects, education may also influence the earnings of those who do have a job. Because earnings also vary by age and between men and women, we have used a multivariate regression equation to calculate the independent effects of all three variables (among men and women aged 23 to 27). Across Europe as a whole, average monthly earnings within this group increase by:

7 ECU for each year of age

109 ECU for men compared to women

109 ECU for those with upper secondary qualifications, compared with none

280 ECU for those with a degree, compared with no qualifications

171 ECU for those with a degree compared with upper secondary qualifications

So for earnings (in contrast to employment) a degree is worth substantially more than upper secondary qualifications.

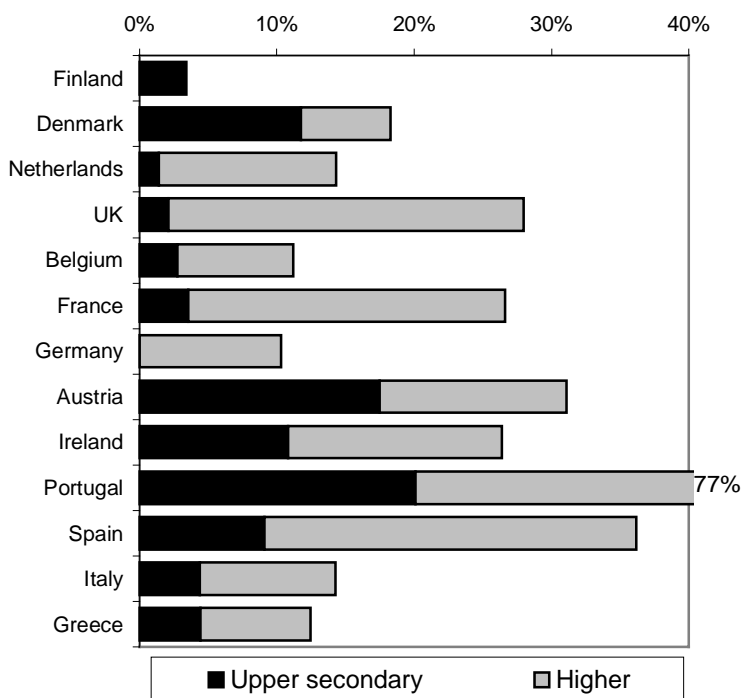
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<sup>11</sup> Throughout this section, unemployment is defined according to the conventional measure, counting only those who are 'economically active', and excluding not only those in education, but also home-makers. A more detailed analysis would need to take account of the fact that educational qualifications also affect the age at which women have children, and the probability that mothers will concentrate on child care. Also excluded from this analysis are those on military service.

**Table 3.18 Unemployment rates among 23 to 27-year-olds, by educational qualifications and country**

	Upper secondary or higher	Lower	Ratio
Finland	15	<b>35</b>	2.3
Sweden	14	<b>29</b>	2.1
Denmark	11	<b>33</b>	<b>3.0</b>
Netherlands	<b>5</b>	14	<b>2.8</b>
UK	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	1.4
Belgium	11	29	2.6
France	16	24	1.5
Germany	<b>6</b>	12	2.0
Austria	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	2.3
Ireland	12	26	2.2
Portugal	<b>8</b>	13	1.6
Spain	<b>21</b>	28	<b>1.3</b>
Italy	<b>23</b>	28	<b>1.2</b>
Greece	<b>25</b>	27	<b>1.1</b>

Note: Boxed figures denote the lowest unemployment rates; figures in bold type denote the highest.

**Figure 3.19 Percentage increase in earnings associated with educational qualifications: men and women aged 23-27, by country**

Note: Derived from linear regression equations predicting relative earnings among full-time workers aged 23 to 27, also controlling for age and sex.

For the analysis by country, a similar calculation has been based on a relative measure of earnings; that is, the effect of qualifications has been measured in terms of a percentage of average earnings among young people in each country (Figure 3.19).

The striking point is that qualifications are worth far more in Portugal than in any other country. Secondary qualifications there are equivalent in value to degrees elsewhere in Europe, and the value of a degree in Portugal (an increase in earnings of 77 per cent) is so high that it could not be recorded on the same scale as the other countries. These very high values clearly arise because of the low absolute level of earnings in Portugal and the scarcity of educational qualifications. The small proportion of graduates in Portugal are probably earning about the same amounts (in ECUs per month) as graduates elsewhere.

Upper secondary qualifications are also relatively valuable in Austria, Denmark and Ireland, but are worth nothing, or next to nothing, in Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. Apart from Portugal, degrees are associated with the largest increases in earnings in Spain, the UK and France; they are least valuable in Finland.

## 4. LEAVING HOME AND FAMILY FORMATION

The previous chapter examined young people's transitions from education to employment. In this chapter, the ECHP analysis follows them through transitions in the sphere of the family – from living at home with their parents, to the formation of their own partnerships and having children.

This is an aspect of young people's lives where some fairly regular differences can be observed between the seven countries labelled 'northern/Protestant' and the six countries labelled 'southern/Catholic' (see listings in Table 4.1). This categorisation does not describe differences between countries perfectly, but the pattern is consistent enough for the analysis to be presented in ways that emphasise the variations between the northern and the southern regions.

### Families of origin

It is interesting to start by describing the families of origin of young people who are still single and living at home. Three key elements are summarised in Table 4.1.

The first column shows the proportion of young people still living at home, who are not living with both their natural mother and their natural father. The proportion is higher in the northern/Protestant region, reaching more than one fifth in Denmark and Belgium. The proportion not living with both natural parents is lower in the southern/Catholic region, especially in Ireland, Italy and Greece. One might have expected a greater difference between the southern countries, with their more traditional family structures and lower incidence of divorce, and the northern countries, where non-traditional family forms are more common and the rate of divorce is higher. More detailed analysis (not shown in the table) suggests that young people are more

likely to live with widowed parents in the southern region, and more likely to live in step-families, with divorced lone parents or with never-married single parents in the northern countries.

The numbers of brothers or sisters in the young person's family (middle column) is a function of the number of children ever born to the family, the ages of the siblings relative to each other, and the rate at which young people leave home. In every country except Denmark, the average young person living with their parents also lives with at least one brother or sister. The average number is rather higher in the south than in the north, but there is a very wide range between the extremes: the average number of siblings in the household is only 0.8 in Denmark, compared with 2.5 in Ireland.

The final column in Table 4.1 shows the incidence of three-generation households. In the north, very few young people living with their parents also live in households including their grandparents, the partial exception being Germany. Such extended families are more common in the south – more than one in ten young people in Austria and Greece who live with their parents also live with at least one grandparent. Even in the south, though, only a minority of young people live in three-generation households.

### Leaving home

Moving away from the parental home is often seen as a decisive moment in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Here, we do not examine leaving home as an event, but analyse the number of young people who are living away from their families at the time of the survey. We define those still at home as single (ie, not partnered) people living in the same

**Table 4.1 Characteristics of families of origin: young people aged 17-25 still living at home**

	Percent not living with both natural parents	Average number of brothers and sisters	Percent living with grandparents
Northern/Protestant	17	1.1	3
Southern/Catholic	14	1.6	8
Finland	20	1.1	<b>1</b>
Denmark	<b>23</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0</b>
Netherlands	12	1.1	<b>0</b>
UK	17	1.1	2
Belgium	22	1.2	3
France	20	1.3	2
Germany	13	1.0	4
Austria	17	1.4	<b>12</b>
Ireland	<b>12</b>	<b>2.5</b>	4
Portugal	16	1.5	7
Spain	14	1.6	9
Italy	<b>10</b>	1.4	4
Greece	<b>11</b>	1.2	<b>10</b>

Note: Based on single respondents aged 17 to 25 who live with their parents or step-parents. Sweden omitted because data on parental relationships are not available. Step-parents do not seem to have been identified in the Netherlands' data, and the number not living with both natural parents may therefore be an under-estimate. Boxed figures denote countries with the highest figures in each column; figures in bold type denote the lowest figures.

household as at least one of their parents. Thus, young people who have formed a partnership are considered to have 'left home' even if the couple still live in the same household as one set of parents – on the common assumption that marriage (or cohabitation) leads to a measure of independence from parental control<sup>12</sup>.

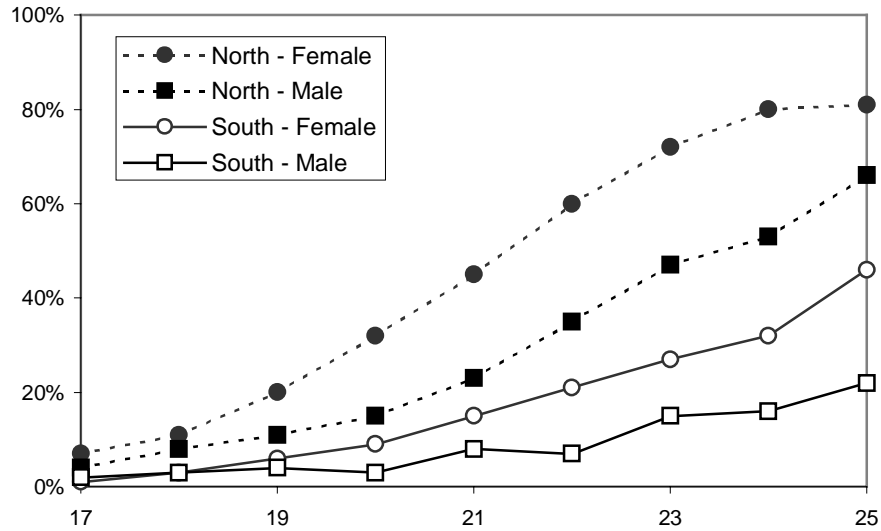
The data start at the age of 17, when the overwhelming majority of young people are living at home. As Figure 4.2 shows, the proportion who have achieved independence

from their family of origin increases steadily with age. At every stage, young women are more likely to have left home than young men – associated with the tendency of women to have male partners older than themselves.

It is striking that both men and women live away from home earlier in the northern/Protestant countries than in the southern/Catholic region. At age 23, for example, three times as many northerners have left home than southerners (72 versus 27 per cent for women, 47 versus 15 per cent for men).

<sup>12</sup> Many of the countries' surveys did not include students living in colleges or halls of residence. This will affect the estimates of the proportion observed to have left home.

**Figure 4.2** *Proportion of men and women who have left home or formed a partnership, by age*



Note: North excludes Sweden, where data on parental relationships are not available.

**Figure 4.3** *Proportion of 21 to 25-year-olds who have left home or formed a partnership, by country*

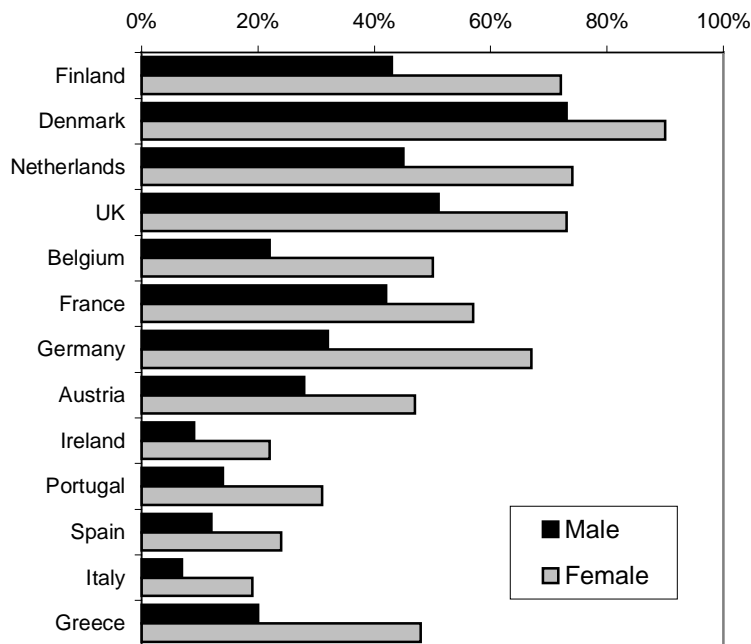


Figure 4.3, which charts results country by country, indicates that young people leave home earliest in Denmark, and latest in Italy and Ireland. The north/south split is fairly consistent, although Greek women are more likely than other southern women to have left home, and Belgian men are less likely than other northern men. Austria appears more similar to the northern than the southern group on this measure, even though other statistics place it in the southern group.

### Partnerships and marriage

In the analysis of the transition from school to work in Chapter Two, the economic activities of young people are presented as a series of stages: education, training, unemployment and employment (followed by family care for many women). A similar sequence can be defined for the transition from homes of origin to eventual partnerships:

- living at home
- living independently (or with friends)
- cohabiting with a partner
- marriage<sup>13</sup>

Not all young people actually follow all four stages of this sequence: some of them marry the day they leave home; others never marry at all. Cohabiting is a stage for some, but not for others. Nevertheless, the notion of stages is of some value, and Figure 4.4 illustrates the sequence across the 17-25 age-range for women. Men's patterns are very similar, but they are less likely to have made each transition at any age – in terms of the graphs, all sectors would appear upwards and to the right if men were being analysed.

The fact that women are more likely to have left home as they grow older is shown as the shrinking unshaded sector of the graph in Figure 4.4. The tendency of southern women to remain at home longer than their northern counterparts is clearly visible. The fact that women are more likely to be married as their age increases is shown as the growing black sector. Here there is much less difference between the northern and southern regions: by the age of 25, 40 per cent of women in the north are married, compared with 35 per cent of women in the south. The much more important difference is that women in the north are much more likely to spend some time living independently (that is, with neither their parents nor a partner), or cohabiting with a partner<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, as other research has shown, cohabitation is the primary form of first partnership in many European countries, though it is not yet clear how many are temporary relationships, how many are preliminary to marriage and how many are long-term substitutes for marriage. In the south, though, the graph suggests that only a small proportion of women experience a period of independence between leaving home and forming a partnership, and only a small proportion enter cohabiting relationships. In the south, therefore, women's most common route out of their parents' home, is to move directly to living with their husband.

The calculations in Table 4.5 show the proportion of young people who have left home, who live with a partner, and the proportion of those with a partner, who are married. Men are less likely than women to have formed a partnership, marital or otherwise, during the 21 to 25 period. Southern women are more likely than their

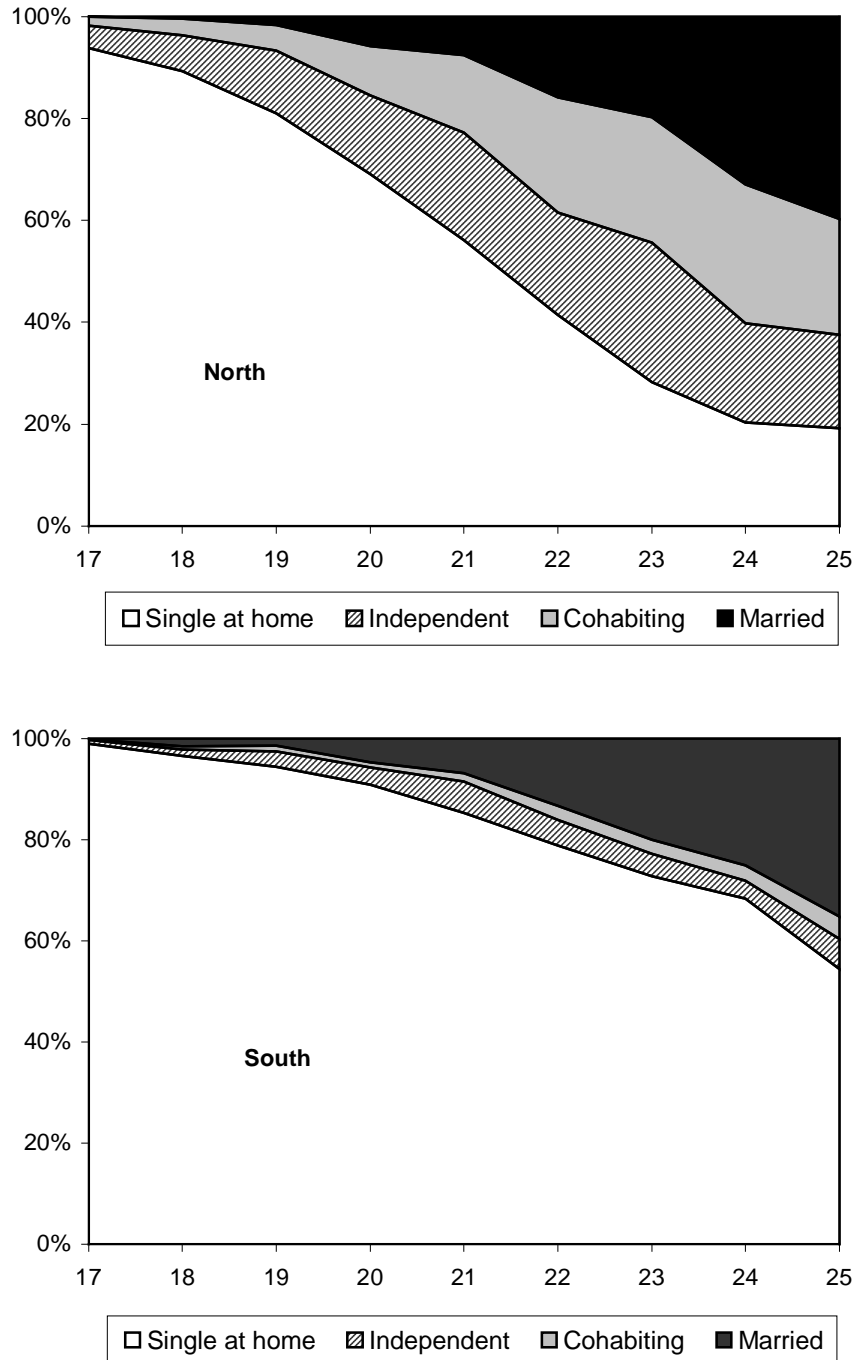
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<sup>13</sup> Followed perhaps by separation, divorce or widowhood, though these are of only secondary importance to this age group.

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<sup>14</sup> Cohabitation means living with a partner without being formally married. It is referred to in the ECHP data as a 'consensual union'.

**Figure 4.4** *The transition from home to partnerships: women in the north compared with women in the south*



Note: North excludes Sweden. 'Married' includes a small number who are separated, divorced or widowed.

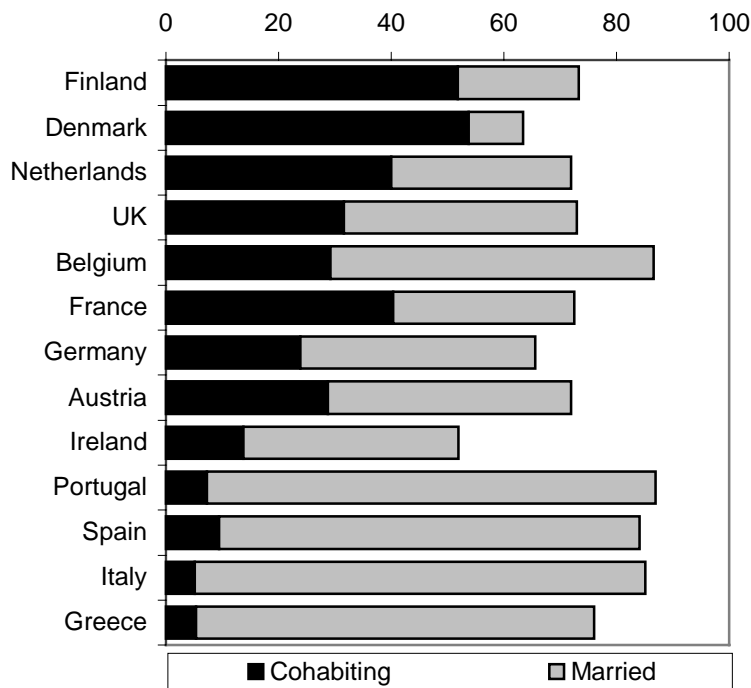


**Table 4.5 Partnership formation among 21 to 25-year-olds: north vs south**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>			
	Women		Men	
	North	South	North	South
Proportion of those who have left home, who have formed a partnership	68	82	55	58
Proportion of young people with a partner, who are married	51	87	44	77

Note: Analysis confined to respondents aged 21 to 25, excluding Sweden where data on parental relationships are not available. 'Those who have left home' includes respondents with a partner, even if they live with their parents. 'Married' includes a small number who are separated, divorced or widowed.

**Figure 4.6 Partnership formation among 21 to 25-year-old women who are no longer at home, by country**



**Table 4.7** *Proportion of non-single young people who live with their parents, by marital status: north vs south*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>	
	Northern/Protestant	Southern/Catholic
Cohabiting	2	12
Married	2	13
Separated, widowed or divorced	40	65

Note: All Europe excluding Sweden, weighted.

northern counterparts to have entered a partnership, given that they have left home; but this is not the case for men. For both sexes, southern Europeans who have partners are much more likely to have married them.

These numbers are shown for individual countries in Figure 4.6. There is substantial variation between countries in the ratio of legal marriages to cohabitations. In Italy and Greece, nine out of ten young women living with a partner are married to him. In Denmark, the proportion is only one in seven.

Interestingly, there is much less variation between countries in the proportion of women who have left home, who are in partnerships.

This proportion ranges from 52 per cent in Ireland to around 85 per cent in Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Italy.

In Tables and Figures 4.2 to 4.6, young people who are living with a partner have been treated as though they have left home. In practice, some young people continue to live with their parents after taking a partner. In some circumstances, this may be a temporary arrangement before the young couple can afford to set up their own home; in other cases, it may be a long-term arrangement, with the young family expecting eventually to take over the roles of breadwinner and head of the household. The ECHP does not allow us to distinguish between these types of situation,

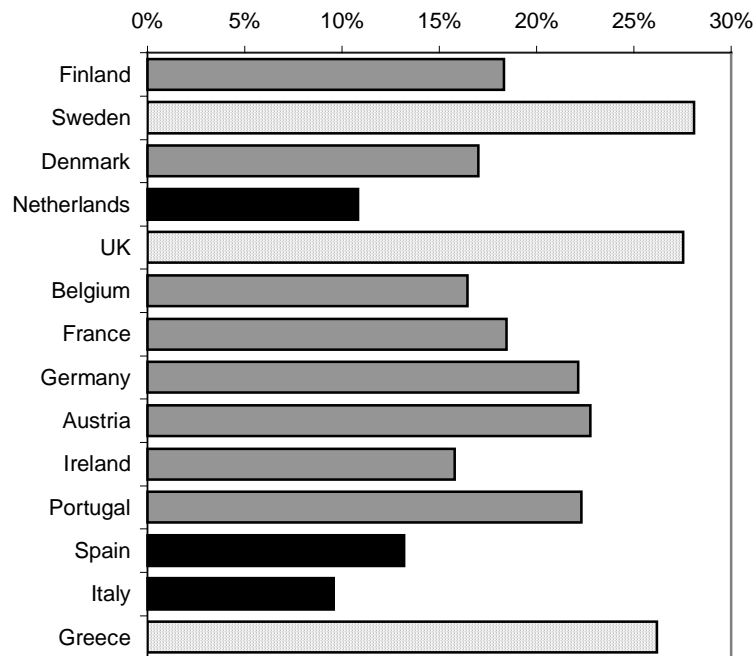
but Table 4.7 shows that young couples are substantially more likely to be found living with one of their parents in the southern/ Catholic countries than in the northern/ Protestant region (and young people also appear more likely to return home after the end of a marriage, too). Since the southern countries are also distinguished by the number of three-generation families (recorded in Table 4.1), it is not unlikely that a fair proportion of these couples living with their parents intend to remain in the family home.

### Having children

Another key stage in the transition from home to family formation is having children. Although the ECHP in some countries obtained information about children ever born to each man or woman, the data analysed here is based on children currently living with each respondent; for that reason, the analysis is confined to women.

Comparisons across each single year of age show that only 0.3 per cent of 17-year-old women have a child, rising steadily to 5 per cent of 20-year-olds, 28 per cent of 25-year-olds and 65 per cent of 30-year-olds. Clearly it is the women who have children early on in that period who are of greatest concern for the purposes of social policy. The proportion of 17 to 20-year-olds with children ranges from 0.4 or 0.5 per cent in Finland, the Netherlands and Italy, to ten times those figures in Sweden,

the UK, Austria and Greece (no table). But the very low rates of motherhood among teenagers

**Figure 4.8 Proportion of women aged 21 to 25 who have children, by country**

**Table 4.9 Family status of women with children, by age**

	<i>Column percentages</i>		
	17 to 20	21 to 25	26 to 30
Single, living at home	23	4	0
Single, living independently	9	7	5
Cohabiting	32	17	11
Married	35	72	85

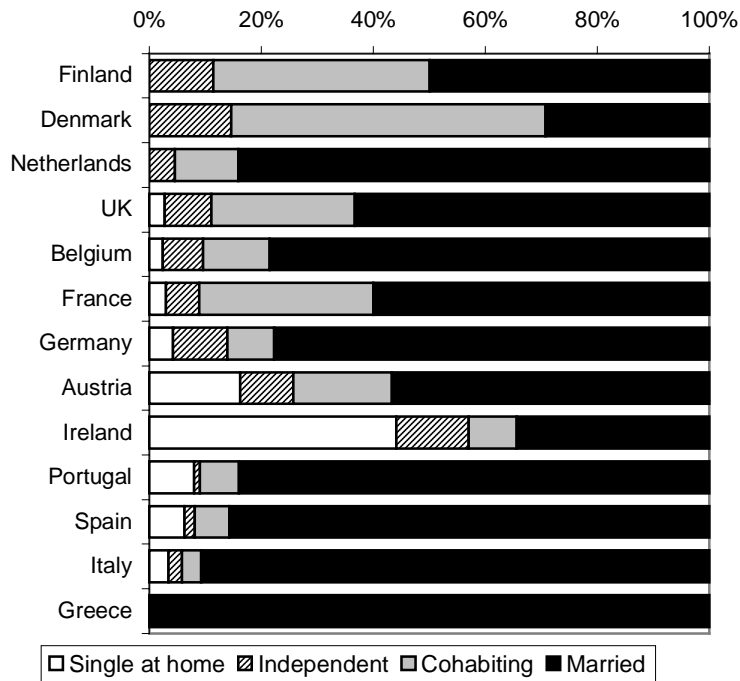
Note: All Europe, weighted. 'Married' includes a small number separated, widowed or divorced.

are more reliably estimated from birth registration statistics, and our own analysis of young mothers is based on the 21 to 25 age range.

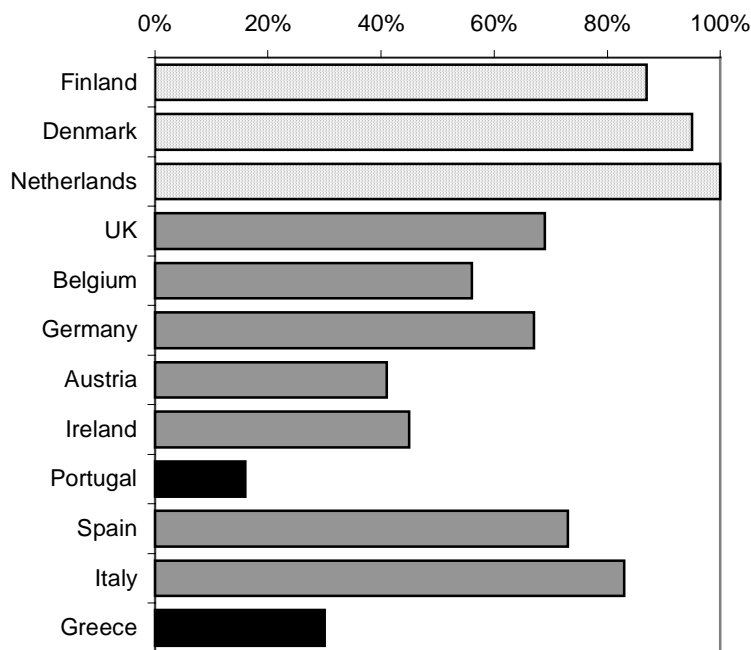
Figure 4.8 shows the proportions of young women in the 21-25 group who have children. In Sweden, the UK and Greece this proportion is over one in four. In the Netherlands, Spain and Italy, on the other hand, the proportion is barely one in ten.

Table 4.9 shows how the family status of mothers varies by age. The youngest group of mothers (aged 17-20) is approximately equally distributed between single women (a great many of whom live at home with their parents), cohabiting relationships, and formal marriages. Among women in their twenties, the proportion of single mothers living at home is much lower, and marriage is the most common family status.

**Figure 4.10 Family status of 21 to 25-year-old women with children, by country**



**Figure 4.11 Proportion of 21 to 25-year-old fathers who spend time caring for their children, by country**



Note: France is omitted: the proportion of fathers caring for their children in France is low, but the proportion of mothers doing so is also exceptionally low, suggesting a problem with the data.

In fact, mothers' family status varies very widely between countries (Figure 4.10). *All* the young Greek mothers in the sample, and nearly all the young mothers in the other Mediterranean countries, are (or at least have been) married. In the three Scandinavian countries, a high proportion of mothers are cohabiting, presumably with the fathers of their babies. Single motherhood (ie never married and not cohabiting) is most common in Ireland and Austria: in Ireland, no less than 44 per cent of all mothers in the 21 to 25 age-range are living with their parents, with no partner.

Although the analysis of parenthood has focused on women, the great majority of children live with their father as well as their mother – even in the youngest families. So it is interesting to compare mothers' and fathers' level of involvement in child care. The analysis here has been based on couples (married or cohabiting) with children; by comparing men and women aged 21 to 25 we are not necessarily looking at the same couples, because men are often older than their wives/partners. The ECHP asks respondents whether they spend any time at all looking after their children. Virtually all women with children say that they spend time looking after them, but only just over half of men with children say they spend any time caring for them. Young men in their early twenties are very similar to those in their early thirties in the level of involvement they report, so there is no immediate sign of a trend towards greater involvement among more recent fathers. Figure 4.11 shows that there is a very wide range of variation between young fathers in different countries in terms of how likely they are to report spending time caring for their children. In Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands, almost all fathers say that they spend time caring for their children. The proportion is as low as 30 per cent in Greece, and down to just 16 per cent in Portugal. Yet fathers in the two

other Mediterranean countries, Spain and Italy, are much more likely to spend time looking after their children.

### **Links between labour market and family status**

A theme in this analysis has been the parallel life-transitions which most people experience during their late teens and twenties: from education to the labour market, and from living at home to having their own family. Given that for many individuals both of these transitions occur at about the same time, it may be asked how far the steps tend to occur together, and/or whether the transition stages on one path affect people's speed of movement along the other path. Again, these are complex events which require longitudinal data to unravel with any accuracy; nevertheless, the cross-sectional surveys used for this paper can help to map variations in the strength of the possible links.

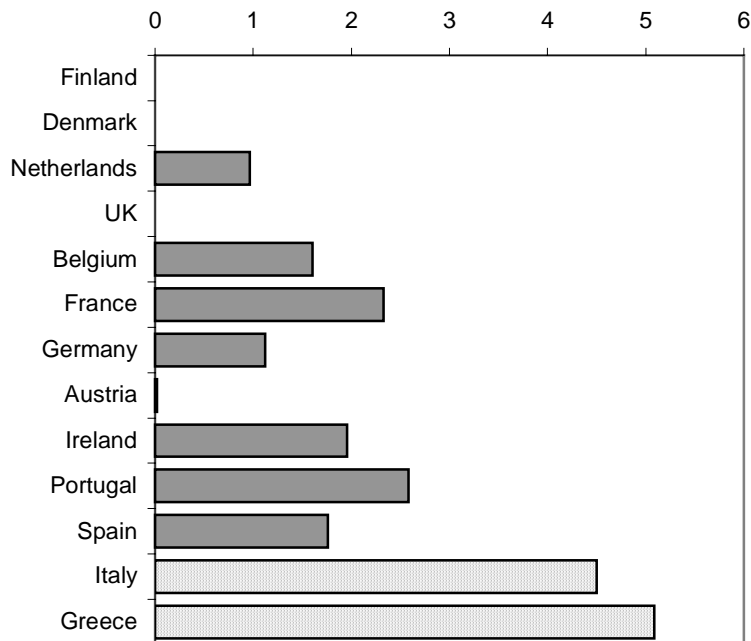
For men, a fairly straightforward relationship may be hypothesised between employment and partnership: men need to remain at home while they are financially dependent on their parents, but may be in a position to leave home once they find a job (or they may leave home in order to take a job). The traditional, and still widely held idea is that a man should have a steady job before setting up home with a partner, or getting married, and particularly before having children. All these considerations lead one to expect that young men with jobs will be further along the path between home and family formation than those who are still studying or looking for work.

Table 4.12 confirms the expected links for men across Europe as a whole. The data do not show which transitions happen first, but young men in the 21 to 25 age range who have jobs

**Table 4.12 Leaving home and partnership formation among men aged 21 to 25, by economic activity**

	Column percentages	
	Not in work	Working
Proportion of all young men who have left home	24	40
Proportion of men who have left home, who have formed a partnership	39	64
Proportion of young men in couples who are married	36	54

Note: All Europe, weighted, excluding Sweden where data on parental relationships are not available. Analysis confined to men aged 21 to 25. 'Left home' includes respondents with a partner, even if they still lived with their parents. A small number of separated and divorced men are counted here as 'married'.

**Figure 4.13 Estimated number of years increase in the speed of men's family transitions associated with being in work, by country**

Note: Derived from country-by-country ordered logit regressions using age and work to predict family status (the categories shown in Table 4.12) among men aged 21 to 25. The graph shows the work coefficient divided by the age coefficient.

**Table 4.14** *Proportion of 21 to 25-year-old women who are married, or who have children, by educational attainment*

	Column percentages		
	Higher education	Upper secondary	Lesser qualifications
Married	8	23	35
Had children	4	19	34

Note: All Europe, weighted.

are substantially more likely to be living independently of their parents than those without employment. The likelihood that a man has formed a partnership is also associated with employment; and so too is the likelihood of being formally married rather than cohabiting. Combining the three stages illustrated in the table, only a minority of 21 to 25-year-old men have reached the stage of marriage, but this is four times more common among workers than among non-workers.

Of course, it is not possible to distinguish between-country effects from within-country effects from the figures in Table 4.12; the effects of having a job on family status for each country individually are summarised in Figure 4.13. There are noticeable variations between north and south, although the two broad categories used elsewhere do not summarise the picture very clearly.

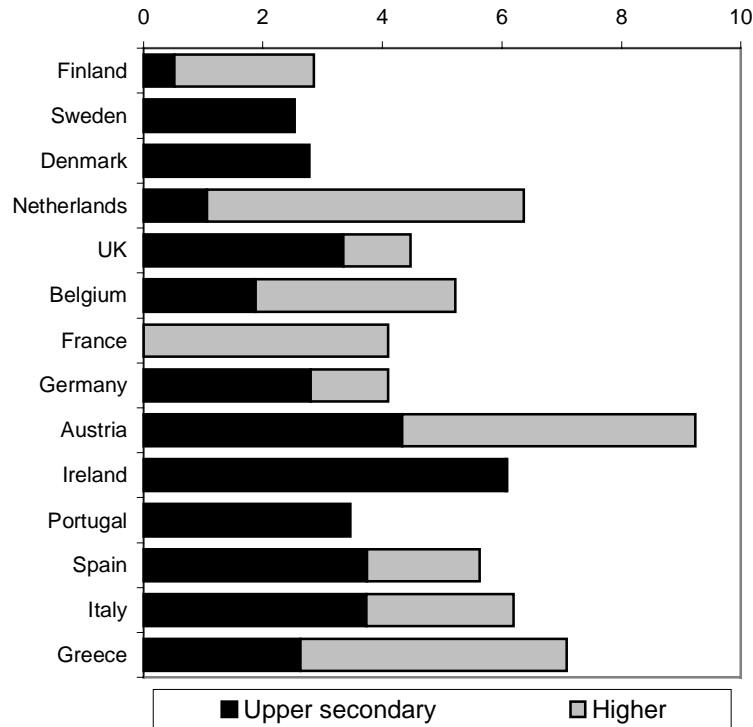
- In Finland, Denmark, the UK and Austria, men who have a job are no faster through the family transitions than those without a job. In these countries, there appears to be no link between getting a job on the one hand and leaving home or forming a partnership on the other.
- In most other countries, men with jobs seem to be one or two years ahead of men without jobs in their family transitions.
- In Portugal and Greece, workers are four or five years ahead of other men. In these countries, economic position is more important than age in predicting a man's family position.

The hypothesised link between employment and family is more complicated for women. Although having a job may speed up the process of leaving home, it may slow down the process of marrying and having children. And the family transition may then have a reverse effect on the economic pathway, as many women give up work to rear children. It can be argued, on the other hand, that women's family formation would be related instead to their educational trajectories. Those who continue their education can be expected to delay marriage, and children, at least for the duration of their extended education, and perhaps longer while they take initial advantage of their educational achievements to earn an income. As Table 4.14 shows, better educated women are substantially less likely to have married, and substantially less likely to have children, than women with minimal qualifications. Note that the analysis does not clearly establish the direction of cause and effect. A decision to continue education might delay a woman's progress towards family formation; alternatively, a woman who is not eager to start a family might decide to extend her education.

- An analysis similar to men's can be used to show how far educational qualifications tend to be associated with later motherhood in each country. Logistic regressions are run in each country to estimate the probability of a woman having children, based on her age and her qualifications. Figure 4.15 then shows how much older the well-qualified women tend



**Figure 4.15** *Estimated number of years delay in women's transition to motherhood associated with educational qualifications, by country*



Note: Derived from country-by-country logistic regressions using age and education to predict whether women aged 21 to 25 have any children. The graph shows the education coefficients divided by the age coefficient.

to be when they have children, compared with less qualified women.

educational systems, and participation in these systems, differ so widely between countries.

- In the Scandinavian group of countries, education tends to delay motherhood by only about three years.
- In the Netherlands, Greece and Austria, the women with degree-level education have children more than six years later (and in the case of Austria, over nine years later) than their less well-educated compatriots.

However, there is no consistent pattern of variation between these extremes. In some countries, secondary education is a more important factor than higher education; in other countries, the opposite is true. This probably to some extent reflects the fact that

## 5. YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVING STANDARDS

The previous chapters of this report have focused on the stages of the life course which are of special importance to young people: completing their education, starting their careers, leaving home and starting a family. The idea of this last chapter is to assess young people's living standards within the overall context of each country's living conditions. Issues covered in this section are housing, income and deprivation, and they are addressed as household issues. Thus, it is assumed that accommodation is a characteristic shared by all the people living in it, rather than attributable to some individuals and not others; and (less obviously) that income and consumption are pooled within the household. So young people living at home are treated as sharing their parents' accommodation, and pooling their income and consumption; whereas those who have left home have their own living standards, possibly shared with friends, partners and/or children.

This means that a comparison of the living conditions of those who have left home with those who still live with their parents provides key comparisons of young people's welfare either side of that transition.

### Housing

Across Europe as a whole, three quarters of young people still living at home are in owner-occupied accommodation – the owners, in the overwhelming majority of cases, being their parents (Table 5.1). Less than one in five of single people who have left home own their accommodation, though the figure reaches nearly two in five for those who have married. Renting – especially from a commercial landlord – is much more common among young people no longer with their parents; though the assumption must be that many of them will become owner-occupiers by the time their own children grow up.

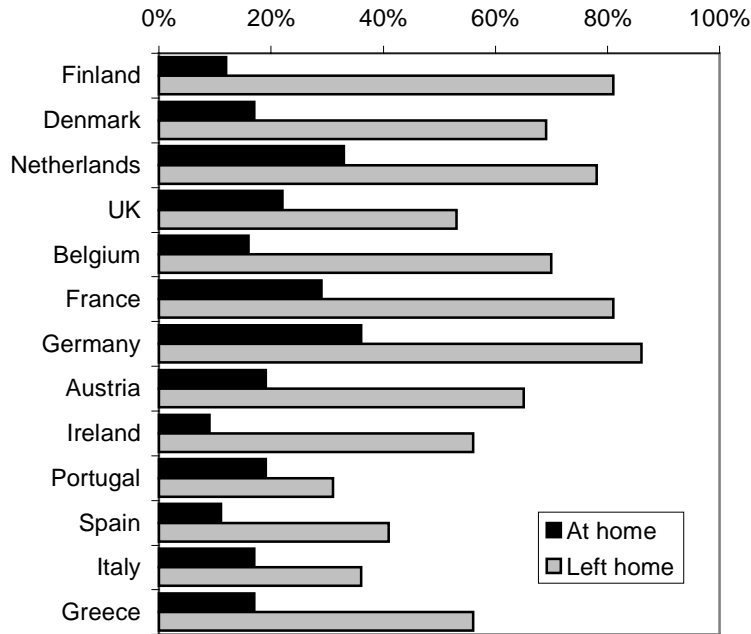
Figure 5.2 shows the proportion of young people living in rented accommodation in different countries. The black bars show this proportion for young people living with their parents, and thus give an indication of the overall availability of rented accommodation in each country. Among young people living at home, renting is most common in Germany, the Netherlands and France, but is under 40 per cent in all countries. In every country, young people are more likely to live in rented accommodation after leaving home. The biggest difference is in Finland, where home-leavers are nearly seven times as likely to rent

**Table 5.1** *Housing tenure of 17 to 25-year-olds, by family position*

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	At home	Independent	Cohabiting	Married
Owner	74	19	27	38
Social tenant	12	21	25	19
Private tenant	12	54	44	36
Accommodation provided	3	6	4	6

Note: All Europe excluding Sweden, weighted. Owner includes buying on a mortgage. Social tenant means renting from a local authority, housing association or other not-for-profit organisation.

**Figure 5.2** *Proportion of 17 to 25-year-olds living in rented accommodation, by country*



as (the parents of) young people at home. It is smallest in Portugal, where the ratio is less than double.

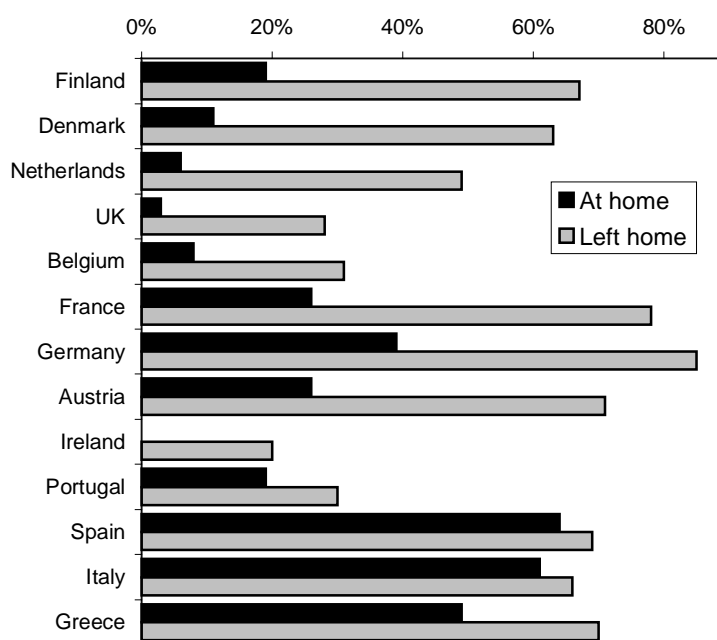
The type of accommodation occupied by young people also varies greatly according to their family situation (Table 5.3). Those still living with their families of origin tend to live in detached houses, and relatively rarely in apartments. Those living independently are much more likely to live in apartments, but

there are signs of a drift towards houses among young people who have set up with partners. Looking at countries individually (Figure 5.4), the implied tendency to move from a house (with one's parents) to a flat (independently) is very clear in most of the countries studied, except in Spain, Italy and Greece where a substantial proportion of the parental households also occupy flats.

**Table 5.3** *Type of accommodation lived in by 17 to 25-year-olds, by family position*

	<i>Column percentages</i>			
	Living at home	Independent	Cohabiting	Married
Detached house	33	7	8	16
Semi-detached/Terraced house	26	20	30	30
Apartment	39	69	60	51
Other	2	4	2	2

Note: All Europe excluding Sweden, weighted.

**Figure 5.4 Proportion of 17 to 25-year-olds living in apartments, by country**

The ECHP survey also included questions about the number of rooms in each dwelling, about the facilities available and about potential problems such as cold or damp. Analysis of these questions was undertaken, to examine the possibility that home-leavers face a significant deterioration in the quality of their accommodation at the transition point. But, although there are some important variations in housing quality between countries, there are few signs that problems vary substantially either by age, or by the stage young people have reached in their family careers. Such differences as do occur tend to be associated with having children, rather than leaving home, and our preliminary conclusion is that problems of space and facilities are not specifically a youth issue. This conclusion applies, of course, only to those young people who are living in stable enough circumstances to be recruited to a survey based on private households. Homeless young people are not included in the survey, and their problems could not be taken into account.

### Income and poverty

Young people's earnings have been dealt with elsewhere in this report in relation to their economic activities. The analysis in this section relates to their overall standard of living in terms of the joint income of the households in which they live. To measure this, the earnings, benefits and other receipts of all household members are added together, net of tax. They are then divided by a factor (known as an 'equivalence scale') reflecting the number of adults and children in the household among whom the income has to be shared<sup>15</sup>. Those in the lowest 20 per cent of their country's distribution have been defined as 'poor'.

Across Europe as a whole, young men and women are rather more likely to be living in

<sup>15</sup> The equivalence scale used is the OECD scale, computed as 1.0 for the first adult in a household, plus 0.7 for each additional adult, plus 0.5 for each child.

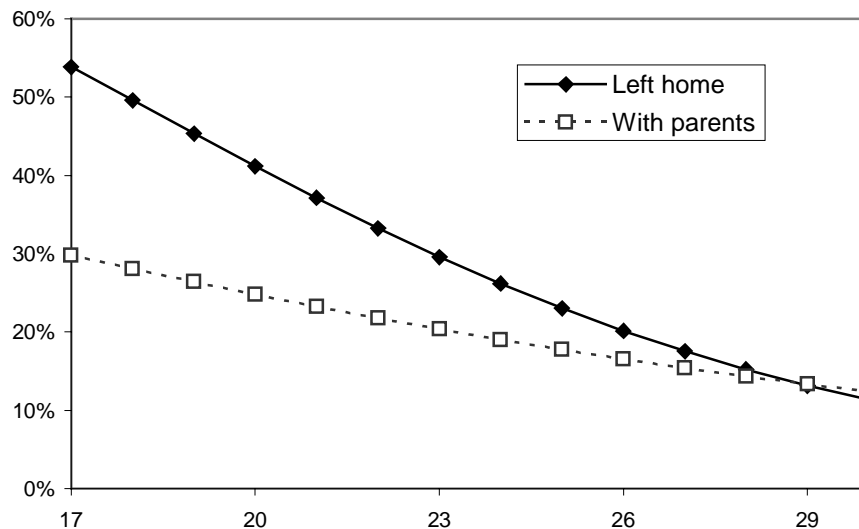
**Table 5.5** *Proportion of young people in relative poverty, by age and sex*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>			
	Age 17-20	Age 21-25	Age 26-30	Age 31-35
Male	29	24	18	17
Female	31	27	21	21

Note: All Europe excluding Sweden, weighted.

poverty than individuals in their late twenties or thirties (Table 5.5). As many as 29 per cent of 17 to 20-year-old men are below their country's relative poverty line, falling to 24 per cent of 21 to 25-year-old men, 18 per cent of 26 to 30-year-old men and 17 per cent of 31 to 35-year-old men. Poverty rates are 2 or 3 percentage points higher among young women than young men (not shown in the table), though this gender gap disappears across the middle age ranges.

Figure 5.6 shows that poverty rates decline with age both for those living at home and those who have left home. Over most of the age-range under consideration, those living with their parents are less likely to be poor than those who have left home. However, the gap is far larger at the lower end of the age range: the young people most likely to be poor are those (relatively few in number) who are aged under 20 and who have already left home.

**Figure 5.6** *Estimated relative poverty rates for young people living and not living with their parents, by age*

Note: All Europe, weighted. Relative poverty is defined as the lowest fifth of the distribution of household equivalent income in each country. The lines have been smoothed using two separate logistic regression equations.

**Table 5.7** *Proportion of 17 to 25-year-olds in relative poverty, by economic activity and family structure*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>			
	Lives with parents	Has working partner	Non-working partner	Independent
Employment	14	10	27	19
Education/training	24	21	53	54
Unemployed	34	20	53	46
Family care	42	30	67	61

Note: All Europe excluding Sweden, weighted.

The likelihood of being poor also varies according to the young person's labour market and partnership status (Table 5.7). Young people in work are less likely to live in poor households than those without work, regardless of their domestic arrangements. The best combination of circumstances, from the point of view of avoiding poverty, is to have a job, and to have a partner (married or cohabiting) who also has a job; only 9 per cent in this group are poor. The worst combination of circumstances is to have left home, and to have neither a job, nor a working partner. The small number of young people living with their parents and engaged in family care are also at high risk of being poor.

The lines in Table 5.7 divide young people into four broad groups: the horizontal line divides those with jobs from those without, and the vertical line divides those living with others (parents or partner) who can offer financial support, from those without this support.

The position of the four groups thus created is shown in Table 5.8, and highlights huge differences in the risk of poverty, which ranges from just 13 per cent for those with both family support and work, to 57 per cent for those with neither. Also shown in Table 5.8 is the proportion in each of the four situations, by age group (the 'youngest young' versus the

**Table 5.8** *Distribution of young people by family support, work and relative poverty*

	Proportion in poverty	Percentage in each situation	
	17 to 25	17 to 20	21 to 25
	<i>(percentages)</i>	<i>(column percentages)</i>	
Family support and work	13	15	38
Family support but no work	28	78	38
No family support, but work	23	2	12
No family support, no work	57	6	12

Note: All Europe, weighted. 'Family support' is defined as living with parents, or living with a working partner.

**Table 5.9 Exclusion and poverty among 17 to 25-year-olds, by country**

	<i>Row percentages</i>		
	Percentage 'excluded' (no family support, no employment)	Percentage of excluded who are 'poor' (lowest 20% of incomes)	Percentage 'excluded' and 'poor'
	a	b	a x b
Finland	11.3	<b>70.5</b>	8.0
Denmark	<b>17.3</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>12.0</b>
Netherlands	<b>14.8</b>	<b>77.4</b>	<b>11.5</b>
UK	<b>13.8</b>	50.6	7.0
Belgium	4.3	<b>70.0</b>	3.0
France	11.6	50.7	5.9
Germany	8.5	57.8	4.9
Austria	5.8	48.5	2.8
Ireland	<b>2.3</b>	58.5	1.3
Portugal	<b>1.8</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Spain	<b>2.8</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Italy	<b>2.2</b>	47.3	<b>1.0</b>
Greece	9.4	<b>24.7</b>	2.3

Note: 'Family support' is defined as living with parents, or living with a working partner. Boxed figures denote the highest risk of exclusion or poverty; figures in bold type denote the lowest risk.

'older young'). The number of individuals in the most protected position increases with age, as education gives way to employment and young people enter partnerships. But the number of individuals in the riskiest position increases too, as young people leave home but do not necessarily move into work.

The first column of Table 5.9 shows the proportions in the 'excluded' group (no family support and no job), for each country. There are stark differences between countries. Young people in northern/Protestant countries are far more likely than those in southern/Catholic countries to be 'excluded' (the exceptions being Belgium on the one hand and Greece on the other). At the extreme, there are nearly ten times as many excluded young people in Denmark (over 17 per cent) than in Portugal (under 2 per cent) – because it is so common

to leave home without yet having a job in one country, and so rare in the other.

The second column of Table 5.9 shows the proportion of the 'excluded' group in each country, who are also poor. This proportion ranges from 77 per cent in the Netherlands down to 25 per cent in Greece. A relationship is visible between the incidence of 'exclusion' and the severity of its consequences. In the northern/Protestant countries, where young people are most likely to be excluded, exclusion is most likely to be combined with poverty; in the southern/Catholic countries, young people are least likely to be excluded, and the relationship between exclusion and poverty is least strong.

The high exclusion rates and high poverty rates for excluded young people in the north lead to substantial differences between countries in the number of young people who are *both* excluded *and* poor. As many as one young person in eight is in this serious position in Denmark and the Netherlands,



**Table 5.10 Lack of consumer durables and 'hardship' in young people's households, by family situation**

	<i>Regression estimates</i>			
	Left home		Lives with parents	
	Lacks durables	Hardship	Lacks durables	Hardship
At age 17	3.3	3.0	1.6	2.6
At age 25	2.1	2.0	1.7	2.6

Note: All Europe except Sweden, weighted. Estimates derived from regression equations using age to predict lack of durables and hardship.

compared with one in a hundred, or less, in Portugal, Spain and Italy. Thus the earlier independence gained by young people in some northern/Protestant countries could lead to material disadvantages.

### Deprivation

Two measures are used to analyse material well-being.

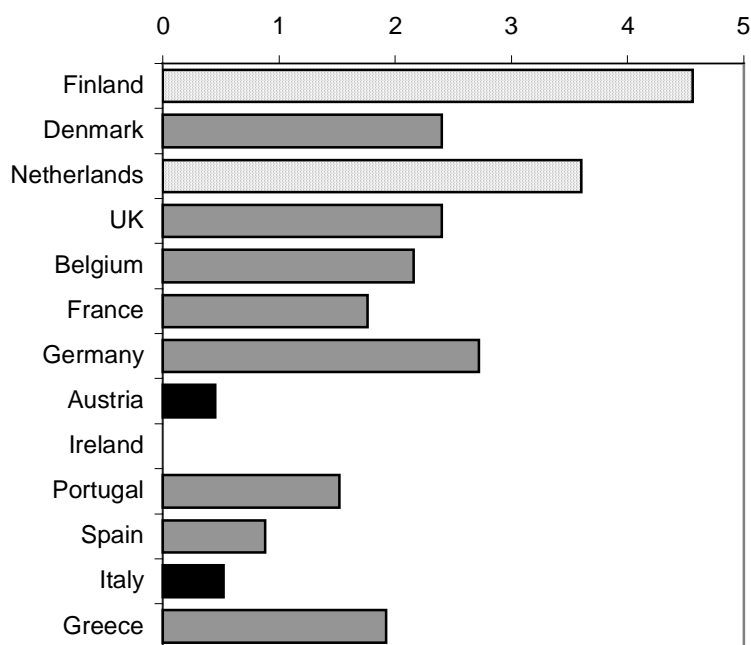
The first is a measure of the modern 'consumer durables' available to the household. One member of the household was asked whether the household owned the following: a car, a micro-wave oven, a dishwasher, a colour TV, a video cassette recorder and a telephone. The proportion of young people whose households own these items ranges from 96 per cent for a colour TV down to 31 per cent for a dishwasher. These proportions vary by income, and also by country in a pattern which could be explained at least in part by country-variations in income. For the purposes of this section, access to consumer durables is summarised as a score, counting the number of items from the list which are missing in each household.

The second measure used is one of 'hardship'. The household representative was asked whether they could afford the following: keeping their home adequately warm; a week's holiday each year; to replace worn out furniture; new rather than second hand clothes; eating meat (if they wanted it) every second

day; and having guests over for dinner once a month. In households where young people live, the proportion unable to afford these items ranges from 9 per cent (could not afford meat) to 50 per cent (could not afford to replace worn out furniture), with income helping to explain why some households could and others could not afford specific items. For the analysis here, an initial 'hardship' score is calculated as the number of items the household could not afford. An extra point is added to the score if the household representative said they had 'difficulty' making ends meet, or two extra points if s/he said they had 'great difficulty'.

The data therefore provide two measures of living standards: lack of consumer durables, and 'hardship'. Table 5.10 shows how these measures vary according to domestic arrangements and age. Among young people who live with their parents, the overall European average is 2.6 durables missing from the household stock, and a hardship score of 1.6. These indices vary with household income but, as the right hand side of the table shows, they do not vary with age (in the range 17 to 25). The implication is that it is the parents' incomes and expenditure patterns which affect the household's living standards, and the young people themselves enjoy or suffer the same position as the rest of the family.

**Figure 5.11** *Estimated difference in deprivation scores between 17-year-olds who have left home and 25-year-olds who have left home, by country*



Note: Derived from country by country regression equations using age to predict lack of durables plus hardship.

Among young people who have left home, on the other hand, the standard of living indicators are heavily dependent on their own age. The small number of 17-year-old home-leavers have substantially fewer consumer durables, and record substantially higher hardship scores, than the households where members of their age-group still live at home. By the age of 25, though, both indices of deprivation have fallen sharply for home-leavers, so that those who have left home are, on balance, rather better off than those of their age-group remaining in the parental household.

It might be argued, then, that an important axis of deprivation among young people is the extra difficulty faced by *very young* people who have left home, compared with older men and women living independently. So we have calculated, for each country, how much worse off is the average 17-year-old not living at home, compared with the average 25-year-old

not living at home. Across all countries, and combining the 'durables' and 'hardship' scores, the average 'youth penalty' is 2.2 points. But this average conceals wide variations between countries (Figure 5.11). The penalty for leaving home at 17 is around four points in Finland and the Netherlands; but only about half a point in Austria, Ireland and Italy. Again, it tends to be the northern/ Protestant countries, where early home-leaving is most common, that it is also most problematic.

## APPENDIX

This appendix gives the numbers on which graphs in the text are based. Table numbers in this appendix match the Figure numbers in the main text.

**Table 2.2** *Proportion of students aged 17 to 25 who have part-time employment*

	<i>Row percentages</i>
Finland	3
Sweden	0
Denmark	22
Netherlands	44
UK	31
Belgium	4
France	2
Germany	12
Austria	4
Ireland	13
Portugal	1
Spain	3
Italy	1
Greece	2

**Table 2.4** *Educational attainments of all adults, by date at which they reached the age of 20*

	<i>Row percentages</i>	
	Higher	Upper secondary
1930-34	5	18
1935-39	7	22
1940-44	8	33
1945-49	10	34
1950-54	12	36
1955-59	14	42
1960-64	17	51
1965-69	20	55
1970-74	20	59
1975-79	23	64
1980-84	24	68
1986-89	28	71

Note: All Europe, weighted. Dates are grouped in five-year ranges: 1930-34 is plotted at 1932, and so on.

**Table 2.5** *Educational attainment score of all adults, by date at which they reached the age of 20: four groups of countries compared*

	<i>Average scores</i>			
	Scandinavian	Northern	Catholic	Mediterranean
1930-34	0.39	0.28	0.29	0.10
1935-39	0.40	0.36	0.38	0.12
1940-44	0.53	0.48	0.34	0.14
1945-49	0.58	0.54	0.40	0.17
1950-54	0.72	0.59	0.49	0.19
1955-59	0.76	0.70	0.53	0.22
1960-64	0.93	0.84	0.67	0.29
1965-69	1.00	0.87	0.72	0.41
1970-74	1.08	0.89	0.77	0.50
1975-79	1.10	0.95	0.82	0.63
1980-84	1.14	1.01	0.87	0.67
1986-89	1.16	1.06	0.98	0.78

Note: Educational attainment score is based on one point for upper secondary qualifications and two points for higher qualifications. Country groupings as follows: Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Netherlands are 'Scandinavian'; the UK, Belgium, France and Germany are 'Northern'; Austria and Ireland are 'Catholic'; and Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy are 'Mediterranean'.

**Table 2.7 Educational attainment scores of men and women, by date at which they reached the age of 20**

	Average scores	
	Male	Female
1930-34	0.27	0.18
1935-39	0.37	0.21
1940-44	0.59	0.30
1945-49	0.55	0.32
1950-54	0.60	0.34
1955-59	0.69	0.42
1960-64	0.79	0.56
1965-69	0.82	0.66
1970-74	0.87	0.70
1975-79	0.92	0.81
1980-84	0.94	0.89
1986-89	0.98	0.97

Note: Educational attainment score is based on one point for upper secondary qualifications and two points for higher qualifications.

**Table 2.8 Relative education scores of women and men aged 21 to 25, by country**

	Average scores	
	Male	Female
Finland	1.19	1.47
Sweden	1.25	1.32
Denmark	1.08	1.19
Netherlands	1.21	1.10
UK	0.90	0.96
Belgium	1.36	1.37
France	1.15	1.27
Germany	1.09	1.02
Austria	1.17	1.09
Ireland	1.00	1.10
Portugal	0.52	0.73
Spain	0.95	1.17
Italy	0.89	1.03
Greece	1.00	1.19

**Table 3.1 Distribution of activities across the age-range 17 to 30: men compared with women**

		Row percentages					
		Educ	Training	U/E	Working	Family	
Men	17	73	11	7	9	0	
	18	62	11	12	15	0	
	19	54	12	15	19	0	
	20	44	10	17	29	0	
	21	34	7	19	39	0	
	22	30	4	18	48	0	
	23	22	3	18	57	1	
	24	19	3	18	60	0	
	25	15	2	16	67	0	
	26	12	2	15	71	1	
	27	9	1	15	75	1	
	28	8	2	11	78	0	
29	4	1	12	83	0		
30	3	1	11	84	0		
Women	17	81	6	7	5	1	
	18	69	8	10	10	3	
	19	55	7	12	22	3	
	20	46	5	16	25	8	
	21	39	5	16	35	5	
	22	27	4	16	42	12	
	23	26	1	15	47	11	
	24	18	2	16	50	14	
	25	12	2	16	55	14	
	26	7	1	14	61	17	
	27	6	1	13	61	19	
	28	6	0	11	60	22	
29	3	1	12	59	26		
30	3	1	10	55	31		

Note: All Europe, weighted.

**Table 3.2 Age by which half of young people are in employment, by country**

	Years
Finland	23.5
Sweden	22.5
Denmark	22.7
Netherlands	22.7
UK	19.1
Belgium	22.9
France	23.0
Germany	22.0
Austria	20.3
Ireland	20.5
Portugal	21.4
Spain	24.3
Italy	24.3
Greece	23.2

Note: Derived from a logistic regression equation analysing activity by age and square of age. The 'employment' category includes a small number of women engaged in family care; this has only a marginal effect on the results.

**Table 3.3 Distribution of activities across the age-range 17 to 30: men and women in the UK compared with Italy**

		Row percentages			
		Ed/train	U/E	Working	Family
UK	17	67	10	22	1
	18	52	13	32	3
	19	32	16	47	5
	20	16	14	60	10
	21	18	11	67	4
	22	8	11	68	14
	23	3	9	76	11
	24	5	12	69	14
	25	6	7	71	17
	26	2	6	81	11
Italy	27	4	8	70	17
	28	4	6	73	17
	29	3	9	66	23
	30	2	7	68	23
	17	82	13	4	1
	18	75	17	7	1
	19	62	24	12	2
	20	57	24	18	2
	21	43	29	24	3
	22	31	30	34	5
23	33	27	33	7	
24	23	30	40	6	
25	22	26	45	7	
26	13	23	54	10	
27	12	23	56	9	
28	9	18	61	12	
29	5	17	63	14	
30	6	15	62	17	

**Table 3.4 Proportion who were unemployed before their first job: adults who reached their 20<sup>th</sup> birthdays in the 1960s and 1980s, by country**

	Cell percentages	
	1960s	1980s
Finland	8%	16%
Denmark	4%	21%
Netherlands	15%	27%
UK	5%	23%
Belgium	8%	32%
France	5%	34%
Germany	2%	5%
Austria	9%	17%
Ireland	9%	20%
Portugal	8%	18%
Spain	8%	37%
Italy	53%	68%
Greece	16%	27%

**Table 3.7 Unemployment among young men: 17 to 20-year-olds compared with 31 to 35-year-olds**

Table 3.7 is derived from the data in Table 3.6

**Table 3.10 Proportion of women under age 25 whose main activity is family care, compared with the proportion who are mothers**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>	
	Percentage who are mothers	Percentage doing family care
Finland	7	5
Sweden	19	6
Denmark	11	1
Netherlands	7	5
UK	18	18
Belgium	10	2
France	12	5
Germany	14	6
Austria	15	7
Ireland	10	8
Portugal	12	8
Spain	8	7
Italy	6	8
Greece	16	15

**Table 3.11 Unemployment among men and women aged 17 to 25, by country**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>	
	Male	Female
Finland	35%	35%
Sweden	29%	29%
Denmark	16%	25%
Netherlands	13%	14%
UK	23%	8%
Belgium	22%	28%
France	28%	35%
Germany	11%	16%
Austria	9%	8%
Ireland	30%	22%
Portugal	20%	28%
Spain	41%	51%
Italy	48%	52%
Greece	43%	57%

**Table 3.14 Proportion of full-time employees who work 50 hours per week or more**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>		
	Young women	Young men	Older men
Finland	13%	16%	32%
Sweden	1%	8%	18%
Denmark	5%	15%	22%
Netherlands	1%	14%	18%
UK	13%	31%	42%
Belgium	13%	26%	31%
France	6%	13%	24%
Germany	4%	18%	30%
Austria	6%	14%	35%
Ireland	9%	26%	40%
Portugal	8%	12%	29%
Spain	14%	26%	31%
Italy	10%	14%	21%
Greece	13%	29%	42%

**Table 3.15 Median earnings of full-time employees, by age and sex**

	<i>ECU per month</i>	
	Male	Female
17	473	511
18	546	505
19	648	620
20	723	666
21	835	719
22	926	752
23	869	846
24	921	891
25	1003	881
26	1041	944
27	1087	949
28	1143	1004
29	1239	1080
30	1202	1018
31	1287	979
32	1311	1035
33	1315	1081
34	1350	1044
35	1350	1053

Note: All Europe except Sweden, weighted.

**Table 3.16 Reduction in median earnings among young people, compared with 31 to 35-year-olds, by country**

	17 to 20	21 to 25
Finland	34%	22%
Denmark	47%	15%
Netherlands	64%	30%
UK	50%	27%
Belgium	28%	17%
France	39%	26%
Germany	49%	25%
Austria	30%	16%
Ireland	53%	37%
Portugal	32%	17%
Spain	44%	29%
Italy	31%	19%
Greece	35%	23%

**Table 3.17 Unemployment rates by educational attainment and age**

	<i>Cell percentages</i>		
	Higher	Secondary	Lower
17			49%
18		37%	51%
19		35%	44%
20		35%	41%
21		26%	37%
22	31%	23%	31%
23	25%	21%	28%
24	22%	18%	32%
25	20%	18%	24%
26	18%	13%	27%
27	15%	13%	24%
28	9%	12%	21%
29	9%	12%	20%
30	6%	12%	19%
31	8%	10%	15%
32	8%	10%	17%
33	6%	8%	17%
34	7%	11%	14%
35	5%	8%	13%

Note: All Europe, weighted.

**Table 3.19** *Percentage increase in earnings associated with educational qualifications: men and women aged 23 to 27, by country*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>	
	Upper secondary	Higher
Finland	3%	0%
Denmark	12%	7%
Netherlands	1%	13%
UK	2%	26%
Belgium	3%	8%
France	4%	23%
Germany	0%	10%
Austria	17%	14%
Ireland	11%	16%
Portugal	20%	57%
Spain	9%	27%
Italy	4%	10%
Greece	4%	8%

Note: Derived from linear regression equations predicting relative earnings among full-time workers aged 23 to 27, also controlling for age and sex.

**Table 4.2** *Proportion of men and women who have left home or formed a partnership, by age*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>			
	North - Male	North - Female	South - Male	South - Female
17	4%	7%	2%	1%
18	8%	11%	3%	3%
19	11%	20%	4%	6%
20	15%	32%	3%	9%
21	23%	45%	8%	15%
22	35%	60%	7%	21%
23	47%	72%	15%	27%
24	53%	80%	16%	32%
25	66%	81%	22%	46%

Note: North excludes Sweden, where data on parental relationships are not available.

**Table 4.3** *Proportion of 21 to 25-year-olds who have left home or formed a partnership, by country*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>	
	Male	Female
Finland	43%	72%
Denmark	73%	90%
Netherlands	45%	74%
UK	51%	73%
Belgium	22%	50%
France	42%	57%
Germany	32%	67%
Austria	28%	47%
Ireland	9%	22%
Portugal	14%	31%
Spain	12%	24%
Italy	7%	19%
Greece	20%	48%



**Table 4.4** *The transition from home to partnerships: women in the north compared with women in the south*

	<i>Cell percentages</i>			
	Single at home	Independent	Cohabiting	Married
<b>North</b>				
17	94	4	2	0
18	89	7	3	0
19	81	12	5	2
20	69	16	10	6
21	56	21	15	8
22	41	20	23	16
23	28	27	25	20
24	20	19	27	33
25	19	18	23	40
<b>South</b>				
17	99	1	0	0
18	97	1	1	2
19	94	3	1	1
20	91	3	1	5
21	85	6	2	7
22	79	5	3	13
23	73	4	3	20
24	68	3	3	25
25	54	6	4	35

Note: North excludes Sweden. 'Married' includes a small number who are separated, divorced or widowed.

**Table 4.6** *Partnership formation among 21 to 25-year-old women who are no longer at home, by country*

	<i>Row percentages</i>	
	Cohabiting	Married
Finland	52	22
Denmark	54	10
Netherlands	40	32
UK	32	41
Belgium	29	57
France	40	32
Germany	24	42
Austria	29	43
Ireland	14	38
Portugal	7	80
Spain	9	75
Italy	5	80
Greece	5	71

**Table 4.8** *Proportion of women aged 21 to 25 who have children, by country*

	<i>Row percentages</i>
Finland	18%
Sweden	28%
Denmark	17%
Netherlands	11%
UK	28%
Belgium	16%
France	18%
Germany	22%
Austria	23%
Ireland	16%
Portugal	22%
Spain	13%
Italy	10%
Greece	26%

**Table 4.10 Family status of 21 to 25-year-old women with children, by country**

	<i>Row percentages</i>			
	Single at home	Independent	Cohabiting	Married
Finland	0	11	39	50
Denmark	0	15	56	29
Netherlands	0	5	11	84
UK	3	8	26	63
Belgium	2	7	12	79
France	3	6	31	60
Germany	4	10	8	78
Austria	16	9	18	57
Ireland	44	13	9	34
Portugal	8	1	7	84
Spain	6	2	6	86
Italy	3	2	3	91
Greece	0	0	0	100

**Table 4.11 Proportion of 21 to 25-year-old fathers who spend time caring for their children, by country**

	<i>Row percentages</i>
Finland	87%
Denmark	95%
Netherlands	100%
UK	69%
Belgium	56%
Germany	67%
Austria	41%
Ireland	45%
Portugal	16%
Spain	73%
Italy	83%
Greece	30%

Note: France is omitted: the proportion of fathers caring for their children in France is low, but the proportion of mothers doing so is also exceptionally low, suggesting a problem with the data.

**Table 4.13 Estimated number of years increase in the speed of men's family transitions associated with being in work, by country**

	<i>Years</i>
Finland	0.0
Denmark	0.0
Netherlands	1.0
UK	0.0
Belgium	1.6
France	2.3
Germany	1.1
Austria	0.0
Ireland	2.0
Portugal	2.6
Spain	1.8
Italy	4.5
Greece	5.1

Note: Derived from country-by-country ordered logit regressions using age and work to predict family status (the categories shown in Table 4.12) among men aged 21 to 25. The graph shows the work coefficient divided by the age coefficient.

**Table 4.15** *Estimated number of years delay in women's transition to motherhood associated with educational qualifications, by country*

	Years	
	Upper secondary	Higher
Finland	0.5	2.3
Sweden	2.4	1.8
Denmark	2.9	0.9
Netherlands	1.1	6.4
UK	2.9	3.4
Belgium	2.9	5.3
France	0.0	2.9
Germany	2.6	2.5
Austria	9.5	2.6
Ireland	3.7	3.1
Portugal	2.6	3.0
Spain	3.5	3.9
Italy	3.4	2.5
Greece	2.4	6.4

Note: Derived from country-by-country logistic regressions using age and education to predict whether women aged 21 to 25 have any children. The graph shows the education coefficients divided by the age coefficient.

**Table 5.2** *Proportion of 17 to 25-year-olds living in rented accommodation, by country*

	Left home	At home
Finland	81%	12%
Denmark	69%	17%
Netherlands	78%	33%
UK	53%	22%
Belgium	70%	16%
France	81%	29%
Germany	86%	36%
Austria	65%	19%
Ireland	56%	9%
Portugal	31%	19%
Spain	41%	11%
Italy	36%	17%
Greece	56%	17%

**Table 5.4** *Proportion of 17 to 25-year-olds living in apartments, by country*

	Left home	At home
Finland	67%	19%
Denmark	63%	11%
Netherlands	49%	6%
UK	28%	3%
Belgium	31%	8%
France	78%	26%
Germany	85%	39%
Austria	71%	26%
Ireland	20%	0%
Portugal	30%	19%
Spain	69%	64%
Italy	66%	61%
Greece	70%	49%

**Table 5.6** *Estimated relative poverty rates for young people living and not living with their parents, by age*

Age	Left home	With parents
17	54%	30%
18	50%	28%
19	45%	26%
20	41%	25%
21	37%	23%
22	33%	22%
23	30%	20%
24	26%	19%
25	23%	18%
26	20%	17%
27	18%	15%
28	15%	14%
29	13%	13%
30	11%	12%

Note: All Europe, weighted. Relative poverty is defined as the lowest fifth of the distribution of household equivalent income in each country. The lines have been smoothed using two separate logistic regression equations.

**Table 5.11** *Estimated difference in deprivation scores between 17-year-olds who have left home and 25-year-olds who have left home, by country*

	Estimated difference
Finland	4.6
Denmark	2.4
Netherlands	3.6
UK	2.4
Belgium	2.2
France	1.8
Germany	2.7
Austria	0.4
Ireland	0.0
Portugal	1.5
Spain	0.9
Italy	0.5
Greece	1.9

Note: Derived from country by country regression equations using age to predict lack of durables plus hardship.

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This report gives an overview of young people's lives in member states of the European Union.

Four or five decades ago, a person's early life could be conceptualised as consisting of well-defined phases, with 'childhood' followed rapidly by 'adulthood'.

But now, the life course is increasingly diverse: transitions in the sphere of the family and the labour market are multiple and reversible, and less likely to occur in an orderly fashion.

There are enormous variations between young people's experiences in different countries. For example:

*73% of Danish men aged 21-25 have left the family home... but only 7% of Italian men in the same age group have left home.*

*In the UK, half of all young people are in work by age 19 years and 1 month. But in Spain and Italy, entry into the labour market often comes a full five years later: in these countries, half of young people do not have a job until 24 years and 4 months.*

*Young men in the UK are more likely than anywhere else to work long hours: 31% of those with a job work long hours in the UK, compared with only 12% in Ireland and only 8% in Sweden.*

These fascinating and often surprising variations are investigated using a single source – the European Community Household Panel. The report focuses on key areas in young people's lives: education, the labour market, the family, and income, poverty and deprivation, with the analysis presented in a readily accessible form throughout.

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