

**Stay with mommy and daddy or move out?
Consequences of the age at leaving home in the United States**

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Abstract

Leaving the parental home is a milestone in the transition to adulthood and is often the first step towards independence. Changes over time in the timing of leaving and the increasing share of young adults who return back home have been well documented. However, there is little research investigating the consequences of the timing and pathway of leaving home. We address this gap, examining the relationship between the timing and pathway of leaving home and economic and employment outcomes in early thirties. We use the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97), taking advantage of its longitudinal design and study young Americans born between 1980 and 1984, who are 27-31 years old in 2011. We find that, among those who have not attained a college degree, the higher the age at leaving home the better are the working and especially the economic conditions of individuals between 27 and 31 years of age, albeit with a potential reversal of the effect at later ages of leaving home. Among college graduates instead, age at leaving home is not associated with labor market outcomes, while leaving home to go to college has a positive correlation with subsequent income.

Keywords: Transition to Adulthood; Leaving Home; Employment Status; Income; Returning Home.

1. Introduction

Among the most noticeable changes in the life course during the last century are those in the transition to adulthood (Modell, Furstenberg and Hershberg 1976). During the last decades, the economic circumstances of young people have progressively deteriorated in relative terms, as signaled for instance by the ability to achieve economic independence at later ages for more recent cohorts (Sironi and Furstenberg 2012). It is therefore crucial to investigate the relationship between the transition to adulthood and economic circumstances during adulthood.

A key marker of independence, the age at leaving the parental home, has significantly increased in many Western societies (Aassve et al. 2002; Billari 2004; Cherlin, Scabini and Rossi 1997; Mandic 2008). Still, there are relevant cross-national differences (Buchmann and Kriesi 2011) and some have linked these differences to differences in global economic performance, with the idea that late home leaving has a general negative effect on the economy inspired by Southern Europe (Alesina and Giuliano 2007; Alessie, Brugiavini and Weber 2005; Billari and Tabellini 2011). In the United States, the postponement of leaving the parental home has been modest, mainly due to the growing fraction of teenagers who move out to go to college. However, the median age at leaving home has not remained constant over time, and the occurrence of young adults returning to live with their parents after a temporary independence has become more and more prevalent (Da Vanzo and Goldscheider 1990; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1994).

The decision to move out and start a new life that is independent of the family of origin is driven by many different factors. For the U.S., these factors can be found in its individualistic culture and in the college system that encourages students to live on campus and to relocate

(Avery, Goldscheider and Speare 1992; Buchmann 1989; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993, 1994; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1998; Mulder and Clark 2000; Mulder, Clark and Wagner 2002). While the determinants of home-leaving have extensively studied in the literature, the effects of becoming independent have not been given enough attention. Specifically, the ‘legacy’ (Leopold 2012) of leaving home has been investigated only with an emphasis on family outcomes and relationships (Billari and Rosina 2004; Goldscheider and Waite 1987; Leopold 2012; Mulder and Clark 2002; Waite, Kobrin-Goldscheider and Witsberger 1986) or education (White and Lacy 1997), chiefly without an explicit link with economic outcomes .

This paper helps tackling this gap in the literature. In particular, we study how employment and economic conditions in the early thirties are affected by the age at leaving home, whether leaving home is connected to college attendance, and whether young adults return home. The literature focusing on the late home-leaving of Southern European countries describes the *negative* effects of a long co-residence with parents (Alesina and Giuliano 2007; Alessie et al. 2005; Billari and Tabellini 2011). On the contrary, too early a departure from the parental home can decrease the social capital, increase poverty risks and unfavorable economic outcomes among teenagers, with “scars” that can last, therefore hypothesizing the *positive* effects of longer co-residence (Aassve et al. 2007). Whether young adults leave home to attend college or not might also be linked to later outcomes. Returning home might have a function of protecting young adults, and have a function of insurance against labor market risks—therefore potentially having a *positive* effect on later economic outcomes (Kaplan 2012). It might also let ‘boomerang’ children fall back in terms of independence and therefore have a *negative* effect on later economic outcomes. As we shall see, reverse causality is hard to tackle for what concerns returning home.

We use National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) 1997, and study men and women in the United States born between 1980 and 1984. We exploit information in the NLSY about living arrangements to study outcomes such as income from work, and working conditions, like employment status, job tenure, and hours worked per week when youth are in their late twenties and early thirties. We will also take into account the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, their family background, and their educational attainment.

The paper is organized as follows: The next section briefly surveys the relevant literature and sets our main research questions. Section 3 illustrates the data and methods we use. Section 4 contains the descriptive findings and results from multivariate analyses. Section 5 concludes with a discussion and implications for policy and research.

2. Background and Hypotheses

What are the economic consequences of the timing and pathways of home leaving, and of returning home? We review some of the ideas from the literature and derive some guiding hypotheses for our empirical analyses.

Let us start with the timing. A first possible channels for the consequences of the timing of home leaving runs through the acquisition of human capital. However, the direction of effects might be ambiguous. On the one hand, residential autonomy *per se* might foster skills that are not acquired when living with parents (such as organizational and practical skills) and that are valued in the labor market, therefore predicting a *negative* effect of staying longer with parents—a “taste for independence” (Goldscheider and Waite 1987; Mulder and Clark 2002; Waite et al. 1986). Prolonged co-residence with parents may also impact negatively on

individual motivations and ambitions. If this is the case, leaving home later will limit the acquisition of these skills and will bring a penalty: Billari and Tabellini (2008), using the rather extreme Italian case, estimate that one additional year of delay in leaving home corresponds to the loss of about a third of a year of education. On the other hand, a completely opposite mechanism might be at play. The protective environment of the parental home might be useful to focus on obtaining specific skills that are valued on the labor market, such as any kind of education, and could help in fostering, through one's own parents and the local community, the "weak ties" that are famously strong in terms of labor market outcomes (Granovetter 1973). A longer co-residence might prevent that young adults fall into unemployment and/or poverty (Aassve et al. 2007). If spells of unemployment and poverty have effects that persist, i.e. "scars" (Gangl 2004, 2006), then, a longer co-residence with parents will become protective in the long run. Therefore, the direction of the effects of the age at leaving home on the acquisition of skills that are valued in the labor market is ambiguous. However, when leaving the parental home is associated with the acquisition of human capital that is valued on the market, as in the case of leaving home to attend higher education, the "loss" of human capital at the parental home argument becomes weaker. The loss of ties with the young adult's community might be relevant, but it might be compensated by moves to areas that tend to have better labor markets on average.

A second channel runs through the existence of social norms on the timing of leaving home. Pioneering studies by Settersten and Hagestad (Settersten 1998; Settersten and Hagestad 1996) on a small sample of respondents in the Chicago Metropolitan Area showed that there was almost universal consensus that young men and women should leave home between the ages of 18 and 25. Reasons mentioned in the study were mainly related to the development of self and personality, i.e. related to the acquisition of human capital that we have just discussed. Later research has documented the relevance of age norms in shaping young adults

home-leaving decisions (Billari and Liefbroer 2007). In a study based on the 2002 General Social Survey, 82% of Americans answered that they considered leaving home being at least “somewhat important” to being considered an adult (in contrast with 52% for having a child and 55% for getting married) (Furstenberg et al. 2004).

We hypothesize that the opposite effects of age at home leaving compensate each other, with positive effects of co-residence prevailing at younger ages and negative effects prevailing at older ages for what concerns human capital accumulation. Moreover, leaving at ages that are normatively “too early” or “too late” might carry a penalty. Therefore, we predict an inverse U-shaped effect for the association of the age of home-leaving and labor market outcomes:

H1: The association between the age at leaving home and economic outcomes is inversely U-shaped

For what concerns the pathway, we focus on whether leaving home is linked to pursuing education. Using data from the 1986-87 National Survey on Families and Households, White and Lacy have shown that young people who leave the parental home to attend college have higher educational attainment (White and Lacy 1997). The key question is whether leaving home to pursue education has an effect over and above educational achievement. If we apply the same reasoning as before, for youth enrolled in college, the “positive” aspects of residential independence (or more properly for this case, semi-autonomy (Goldscheider and DaVanzo 1986)) prevail, while the negative aspects are buffered by college enrolment. In addition, leaving home to attend college is a normative way to leave home

Our second hypothesis is therefore:

H2: Leaving home to attend a college (as opposed to attending a college while living with parents) is associated with positive economic consequences during adulthood

We now turn to the consequences of returning to the parental home. In the early, pioneering, study of Settersten, age norms were not seen as constraining the decision to return to the parental home (Settersten 1998). Respondents saw the decision to return to the parental home as regarding needs and circumstances. For the U.S., Mulder and Clark (2002) find evidence that the likelihood of returning home increases with parental income. For the U.K., Stone et al. {Stone, 2014 #2820} find that the likelihood of returning home increases with other “turning points” in the life course such as leaving full-time education, unemployment or partnership dissolution. Returning home is therefore a response to difficult circumstances, and the effect of these circumstances might still be visible in later life. Here causality is the trickiest, as it is likely that young adults who anticipate worse economic outcomes later are more frequently returning home. However, a negative association is consistently predicted:

H3: Returning to the parental home is associated with negative economic consequences during adulthood

3. Data and Methods

Our analysis investigates the association between the age at leaving home of young Americans born between 1980 and 1984 and economic and employment outcomes in 2010/2011. The analysis has been carried out using the National Survey of Youth started in 1997. The NLSY97 is an ongoing, nationally representative longitudinal study of 8,984 youths who were 12 to 16 years old in 1997. The first round took place in 1997 and

respondents are interviewed and followed on an annual basis. The fifteenth and most recent wave has been collected in 2011, when individuals in the sample are 27 to 31 years old. The data set has been created to document the transition from school to work and from adolescence to adulthood. Hence, the NLSY collects detailed information on educational trajectories and labour market experiences of the respondents. Also, it includes questions on family socioeconomic background, living arrangements and other demographic characteristics, so that it is possible to reconstruct their life course trajectories from adolescence to early thirties. The survey oversamples black and Hispanic population. For this reason all the descriptive statistics have been weighted using sampling weights.

Dependent Variables

As the main objective of the paper is to study the association between the age at leaving home and economic and work conditions among young adults, our dependent variables aim at describing these conditions in our sample. We look at the proportion of respondents working full-time in 2011. Working full-time is defined as being employed (or self-employed) and working at least 35 hours per week. To have a more detailed picture of respondents' employment situation we also look at the number of hours they work per week and the length of job tenure (i.e. for how many *weeks* they have had the same job). Job tenure is an indicator of (in)stability that can be more informative than employment status per se, especially during times of economic recessions and so of high turnover (Hollister & Smith, 2014). Finally, we explore income from work reported by young adults. Respondents are asked to state the income from wages and salary – before deductions for taxes – from all jobs received in the year preceding the interview (2010 in this case). They are also asked to report any income they received from self-employment, e.g. from own farm, business, etc. If a person is not

employed, then the number of hours worked per week, job tenure, and income is set equal to zero¹.

Independent Variables

Our central independent variable is the age at leaving the parental home. The NLYS97 contains two very relevant questions that allows us to determine the exact age at which respondents have moved out: “*What month and year did you first move out on your own for at least three months, even if you moved back in to someone else's household after that?*” and “*Did you ever move back in with your parents or into someone else's household for at least three months after that?*”. However, these questions have been asked only from the 2003 wave onwards. For those who did not answer we used household roster information. Household rosters refer to the day of the interview, giving us only a partial picture of young adults living arrangements. Additionally, not all respondents are interviewed every year, but they are re-included in the sample when possible in the following waves. Based on the two questions on moving out and moving back in with parents, and on the household roster we were able to collect information on the age at leaving home for 6,931 out of 7,423 individuals. Among them, 378 have never left the parental home as of 2011 wave. Our final subsample includes 3,357 women and 3,196 men, who in 2011 are on average 28.9 years old.

As mentioned above, our key variable is *age at leaving the parental home*. The variable is measured in continuous way, thanks to information on both the year and the month at which

¹ Further analyses have been conducted as robustness checks: excluding those with zero income or excluding those respondents who are not working the results of our analyses are consistent with the results shown here.

respondents moved out. When the answer to this question is missing, we used the household roster to determine living arrangements and the date of the interview to determine the precise age. Given the relatively modest postponement of the age at leaving the family nest among American young adults and the fact that some of them move out early to go to college, it is necessary to consider both the possibility that youths who move out will move back in after a period of independent living, and the reasons behind the decision to leave. Consequently, exploiting the questions on if respondents ever *moved back in* with parents after leaving for at least three months, we know if the first departure from home is a permanent decision or not. This data is complemented by the household grid, which tells us if after a wave in which the respondent does not live with parents he/she reports parents as household members. Moreover, using extremely detailed monthly information on people in the sample being enrolled in college, it is possible to determine the first and the last months in which they have ever been enrolled in college, and so two possible pathways of leaving home: First, if they leave the parental home during the three months preceding or following the month of the first enrolment in college we assumed that the motivation behind moving out was exactly *to go to college*. Second, we know if young adults *go to college but live with parents*, and leave the parental home only after leaving college (because of drop out or graduation).

Control Variables

In order to control for socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and his/her family that could influence both the age at leaving home and their economic and employment outcomes, we included in the analysis variables such as gender (=0 if male, =1 if female), self-reported health at the first interview (ranging from 1=Excellent to 5=Poor), race (white, Hispanic, Black, and other race), and age at interview because the age range in 2011 goes

from 27 to 31, and it could be responsible for some fluctuations in income and employment status. Also, we considered parents' education as an indicator of parental social class. Family background has been found to influence the way in which young people face the transition to adulthood (Sironi et al., 2013). Moreover, parents can influence the decision of their children to go to college, and also determine the economic resources flowing into their kids' pockets in a transition out of the family nest. Parents' education is measured as the highest grade completed by the biological father, or of the biological mother if higher. When information about biological (and residential) parents is not present we used education of the residential (and non-biological) parents. Finally, we included the *number of sibling* as a last control, given that according to the 'resource dilution hypothesis', having more siblings means receiving less parental resources (Downey, D. B. 2001) that could be related to the decision of leaving home and also to labor market outcomes.

Analytical strategy

Our main hypothesis or expectation, as outlined in the theoretical background, is that leaving the parental home 'too early' or 'too late' would be associated with worse economic and employment outcomes later in life, while there is an optimal age range to leave home. To test the existence of this inverted U-shaped relationship and answer our research questions first we produce some descriptive statistics that describe the sample characteristics and the distribution of the age at leaving the parental home. Then we use graphs to show the association between the age at move out and income from work, employment status, hours worked per week, and job tenure.

The variation observed in the graphs is then tested using multivariate regression models. Given the different nature of our key dependent variables we implement two different model specifications: a logistic regression to look at employment status (=1 if working full-time, =0 otherwise), and standard OLS regressions for the other three outcomes.

In order to study the role of the age at leaving home in shaping young adults' economic outcomes, we introduce the key variables step by step. The first model (1) includes only age at leaving home, a quadratic term of age at moving out (because the age effect is unlikely to be linear), and the exogenous variables gender and age at interview. In the second model (2) we include two possible pathways of leaving home: *leaving home to go to college* and *leaving home after leaving college* (because of graduation or drop out). Model (3) adds whether the individual has *ever moved back* in with parents. The control variables – parents' education, race, self-reported health in 1997 and number of siblings – are inserted in the last model (4), to look at how much of the age effect actually stays in place after taking into account socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the respondents and the family of origin. Given the strong influence of educational attainment on labor market outcomes, and the association between going to college and leaving the parental home, the multivariate analysis is repeated separating those with and without a college degree.

4. Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows a first description of our sample. Given that only 6,553 young adults in the sample left the parental home at least once, we will focus on the characteristics of this

subsample. On average young adults born between 1980 and 1984 complete 13.9 years of education and 69% of them have enrolled in college. When they are between 27 and 31 years old 61.5% is in a co-residential union (41.5% married and 20% cohabiting), 32.4% is single and 5.8% separated, divorced or widowed. The mean age at leaving the parental home is 20.1. Also 95.5% of the sample has left the parents' house at least once, and of those who left 19.4% left to go to college and 21.5% left the parental home after leaving college (for drop out or graduation). However, 42.4% of the sample moved back in for a period of minimum three months, meaning that the early age at leaving home is not always the start of a stable and long-term independent living. In 2011 most of these young adults have completed education, as only 11.8% are still enrolled in school, and presumably they are enrolled in graduate programs. 61.3% of them is working full-time, and the mean age at first job is 16.2, meaning that many of them started working while they were still in school. If active on the labor market, these young adults, on average, work 39 hours per week, have earned \$35,781 in 2012, and have the current job since three and half years. Having stable employment and income might not be enough to buy a house, given that only 9.4% of the respondents owns a house. This might also reflect the more complicated situation of the housing market after the 2008 economic crisis.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

If Table 1 gives us a general picture of our sample, we want to know in more details at which age young adults leave their family of origin and how this is interconnected with economic outcomes in their late twenties/early thirties. As can be seen from Figure 1, the distribution of age at leaving home is concentrated between age 17 and 24, with a median age of 19.5. 35%

of them leave between 17 and 19 years of age that usually corresponds to the beginning of college.

[FIGURES 1-2 ABOUT HERE]

In Figure 2 we can see how the age at leaving home is slightly higher for those who then never moved back in, suggesting that waiting a bit longer can guarantee a more stable independence or that moving out too early can be a risky decision. At this point we start to perceive how it might be possible that a higher age at leaving the parental home is associated with positive economic and employment outcomes.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Starting from Figure 3 we look exactly into this possibility, plotting different employment and economic outcomes by age at leaving home. Figure 3 shows the proportion of individuals working full-time, i.e. 35 hours per week or more. Immediately we can see how a higher proportion of young adults is working full-time when 27-31 years old if they left at 18 rather than at younger ages. This result is easily attributable to the motivation behind the departure from home, which is most likely related to the beginning of college (that then influences educational attainment and success in the labor market).

This proportion declines slightly for those leaving at 19, 20, and 21 years old. From age 22 onwards the proportion working full-time is higher than among those who left at 18, but the confidence intervals show that this difference is not statistically significant.

The same trend and age effect can be observed when we look at the number of hours worked per week (Figure 4) and job tenure (Figure 5) in 2011. So we see an increase in hours worked and job stability among young adults in their late twenties if they leave their parents' house at age 18, or when 21 years old and older.

[FIGURES 4,5,6,7 ABOUT HERE]

Finally, in Figure 6 we plot the average income from work earned in 2010 by the respondents based on the age at move out. The average income in 2010 of young Americans born between 1980 and 1984 is \$33,334 if they left the parental home at age 18, while it is below \$25,000 if they left at age 17 or earlier. Remarkably, their income is also lower if they moved out when they were 19 and 20 years old (\$28,996 and \$27,902, respectively). What we observe is an inverted U-shaped relationship between income and age at leaving home that repeats itself between ages 21 and 26. The highest average income is observed among young adults who left their parents when they were 22 years old, and who have earned \$35,925 in 2010. If these descriptive results are driven by respondents' enrolment in college, it seems to be beneficial for them either to leave their family of origin to go to college or just wait until graduation. When we try to take into account the possibility of moving back in with parents (Figure 7), we find that the same trend in average income is shown for those who never moved back and those who moved back in with their parents at least once. However, those who happened to move back seem to report an average income that is consistently lower, independently on the age at which they left (except for ages 18 and 19).

Multivariate Analysis

The bivariate associations that we have described so far show a very interesting image of the role of age at leaving home in determining later economic and work outcomes. However, several factors could influence both the age at moving out and later outcomes that we need to take into account in our analysis. For this purpose we implement several regression models that allow us to consider both key explanatory variables and very important mediating factors.

Starting from Table 2, we look at how age at leaving home influences the probability of working full-time in 2011 through a series of logistic regression models. When we only consider the age at move out, gender, race in model and age at interview (Model 1) we find a positive association between age at leaving home and our outcome, meaning that the older the respondents are when they leave their parents the better are their odds to be working more than 35 hours per week in 2011. This relationship is not linear, as it is shown by the significance of the quadratic term coefficient. Moreover, as expected, the probability of working full-time is significantly lower for women, Blacks, and Hispanics. This non-linear relationship seems to hold also when we include the possible pathways of leaving home, i.e. leaving to go to college or leaving after leaving college (Model 2). Both pathways show a positive association with the probability of working full-time, most likely capturing the positive effects of going to college on employment outcomes. In Model (3) we add the variable related to moving back in with parents, that is not significantly associated with working full-time, but does not alter the positive relationship between the age at leaving home and the probability of being employed full-time. Finally, as shown in Model (4), a higher parental social class measured through parental education is associated with slightly

higher odds of being employed (or self-employed) full-time, while a higher number of siblings with slightly lower odds ratios. Even including these variables in the model the odds ratio of age at leaving home remains greater than one and significant (only at 5% level in model 3 and 4). This shows how a delayed departure from the family of origin can be beneficial in terms of later employment outcomes².

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

All the results just described remaining similar when we look at hours worked per week and job tenure in 2011. Our analysis seems to suggest that the higher the age at leaving home the better (with diminishing returns) are the working conditions of individuals between age 27 and 31. The only major difference that can be observed in Tables 3 and 4 is that moving back in with parents has a negative and now significant association with hours worked per week and job tenure in 2011.

The most interesting results come from the analysis of economic conditions of young adults. When looking at average income from work in 2010, we can see how an extra year spent living with parents has a not negligible positive association with their economic conditions a few years later. This relationship of age at leaving home and income stays strong and significant throughout all the model specifications. Moreover, if moving out to go to college and leaving home after leaving college have a positive association with income from work when older (the latter is smaller), the opposite is true about moving back in with parents. Moving back did not have any association with the probability of being employed full-time, but in this case the coefficients are negative and significant diminishing the average income

² Further regression models have been implemented as a robustness check, mainly focusing on the interaction between age at leaving home and other key covariates. The interaction terms were generally not significant, and did not modify the main association between age at leaving home and labour market outcomes.

by almost \$4,000. Figure 8 shows the predicted income from work obtained by the regression model (4), by age at leaving home. We can see how our expectation of an inverted-U shape relationship between age at leaving home and income is confirmed by the data.

[TABLES 3,4,5 ABOUT HERE]

[FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE]

From our multivariate analyses we can conclude that there is in fact an association between age at leaving the parental home and labor market outcomes in late 20s and early 30s. This association is positive but it grows at a decreasing rate, and with a potential reversal of the sign at later ages of leaving home. Leaving to go to college and leaving home after leaving college have also a positive association with employment and economic outcomes of American young adults, with the latter being on average slightly smaller. Moving back in with parents after a period of temporary independence is not associated with working full-time, but it has a negative association with working hours, job tenure and income from work. Importantly, taking into account the reasons behind the decision to leave home and the possibility of returning to live with parents does not change the relationship between the timing of the departure and our key labor market outcomes.

Multivariate Analysis on Income by Educational Attainment

The findings observed so far seem to show that there is an optimal age range to leave the parental home (i.e. between 18 and 22/23 years old). This range usually corresponds to the age interval in which young adults are enrolled in – and in some cases complete – a college degree. Given the strong and well-documented relationship between educational attainment

and subsequent employment opportunities and income (Harmon et al., 2003), but also the correlation between going to college and the decision to move out or not of the parental home, it might be that our results are purely driven by educational attainment. For this reason we repeat the multivariate analysis separating those with and without a college degree (or more). Only the analysis on income from work in 2010 is reported here³.

Table 6 and Table 7 report the results of the analysis on income from work, for young adults with and without a college degree (Junior/Associate degree⁴, Bachelor degree or more) respectively. These results seem to suggest that there is an education story behind the relationship between the age at leaving the parental home and subsequent earnings. Among those who obtained a college degree (N=2235, Table 6), the association between age at leaving home and income is no longer significant. The only key variable that maintains its strong and positive association with income is leaving home *to go to college*. Among those without a college degree instead, the main results resemble those found for the whole sample. The association between age at leaving home and income is positive and significant (coefficients range between \$4,000 and \$5,700). The quadratic term is still negative and significant, and leaving to go to college and after leaving college are positively associated with income at later ages. Also moving back in with parents maintains its negative sign and significance.

These new analyses tell us that educational attainment plays, as expected, a big role in how the age at leaving home is linked to subsequent economic and employment outcomes. Conditional on obtaining a college degree, it doesn't matter at what age individuals move out from their parents' home, but it matters if they do leave to go to college. Among those with

³ The analysis stratified by educational attainment focusing on working full-time, hours worked per week, and job tenure in 2011 show robust and consistent results.

⁴ A dummy variable for attainment of junior/associate degree versus a bachelor degree has been added to the model specification as a robustness check. Its coefficient is negative and (~ -10,000\$) significant but its inclusion does not modify our results and so it is not reported in the tables.

only a high school diploma or less instead, postponing the exit from the parental home is associated with better labor market outcomes later in life.

5. Discussion and conclusion

To be completed.

Results show an optimal age range for leaving home. Expectations are confirmed: leaving too early or leaving too late is detrimental for later employment and especially economic outcomes. Age at leaving home is relatively low in the U.S., so we only partially observe the negative side of leaving too late, but the results are consistent with the story in Southern Europe (where instead we observe the negative effect of leaving late but not the negative effects of leaving too early). Further research is necessary to look at different context where the age at leaving the parental home is at an intermediate level and we can observe both parts of the curve.

Tables and figures

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (weighted)	Whole Sample	Left Home
Mean Age, 2011	28.8	28.9
% Female	49.7	50.3
Race (%)		
<i>White</i>	67.4	68.4
<i>Black</i>	15.0	14.8
<i>Hispanic</i>	12.4	11.9
<i>Other race</i>	5.2	4.9
Years of Education, Average	13.9	13.9
% Ever enrolled in College	68.9	69.0
% With a College Degree	38.6	39.1
% Enrolled in school, 2011	11.9	11.8
Marital Status, 2011 (%)		
<i>Single</i>	34.8	32.4
<i>Cohabiting</i>	19.4	20.0
<i>Married</i>	40.0	41.5
<i>Separated, divorced or widowed</i>	5.6	5.8
Average # of children, 2011	1.0	1.0
Mean age at leaving parental home	20.1	20.1
% Ever left parental home	95.5	100.0
% Left to go to college	18.7	19.4
% Left after leaving college	20.5	21.5
% Ever moved back	42.4	42.4
% Working full-time	60.8	61.3
Mean age at first employment	16.3	16.2
If working:		
<i>Job tenure, average # of weeks</i>	192.9 (3.7	
<i>Average # of hours worked per week</i>	years)	191.7
<i>Income (from work) past year (\$)</i>	39.0	39.1
	35,382	35781.5
% House-owner	9.1	9.4
Number of Observations	6931	6553

Table 2. Logistic Regression Estimates - Working fulltime and age at home leaving, OR

Y = Working fulltime	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age at leaving home	1.469***	1.372***	1.361**	1.365**
	1.221,1.768	1.138,1.654	1.128,1.641	1.120,1.665
(Age at leaving home) ²	0.992***	0.993**	0.994**	0.994**
	0.988,0.997	0.989,0.998	0.989,0.998	0.989,0.998
Female	0.588***	0.564***	0.562***	0.575***
	0.532,0.651	0.509,0.625	0.507,0.623	0.517,0.639
Race (Ref: white)				
Black	0.599***	0.654***	0.654***	0.742***
	0.532,0.675	0.579,0.738	0.579,0.739	0.652,0.844
Hispanic	0.872*	0.96	0.96	1.138
	0.763,0.997	0.837,1.100	0.837,1.100	0.977,1.325
Other race	1.02	0.992	0.999	1.076
	0.771,1.349	0.747,1.318	0.751,1.327	0.794,1.457
Age at interview, 2011	1.034	1.042*	1.043*	1.052**
	0.998,1.072	1.006,1.080	1.006,1.081	1.014,1.091
Left to go to college		2.129***	2.147***	1.922***
		1.835,2.471	1.849,2.492	1.645,2.245
Left after leaving college		1.700***	1.695***	1.577***
		1.468,1.967	1.465,1.962	1.357,1.833
Ever moved back			0.92	0.913
			0.828,1.022	0.819,1.017
Parents' years of education				1.032**
				1.011,1.053
Number of Siblings				0.957***
				0.935,0.980
Self Rep Health (Ref: Excellent)				
Very good				1.012
				0.895,1.145
Good				0.9
				0.783,1.034
Fair				0.758*
				0.590,0.973
Poor				1.002
				0.322,3.113
Constant	0.009***	0.014***	0.016***	0.009***
	0.001,0.083	0.001,0.124	0.002,0.143	0.001,0.091
N	6553	6553	6553	6307

Notes: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Table 3. OLS Estimates - Hours working per week in 2011 and age at home leaving

Y = Hours worked per week	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age at leaving home	3.222*** (0.927)	2.550** (0.919)	2.433** (0.920)	2.229* (0.966)
(Age at leaving home) ²	-0.066** (0.022)	-0.053* (0.021)	-0.051* (0.021)	-0.047* (0.022)
Female	-5.370*** (0.505)	-5.667*** (0.500)	-5.703*** (0.500)	-5.447*** (0.510)
Race (Ref: white)				
Black	-6.121*** (0.605)	-5.109*** (0.604)	-5.099*** (0.603)	-3.735*** (0.636)
Hispanic	-2.370*** (0.669)	-1.329* (0.667)	-1.327* (0.667)	0.646 (0.735)
Other race	-0.198 (1.385)	-0.51 (1.369)	-0.418 (1.369)	0.303 (1.437)
Age at interview, 2011	0.3 (0.178)	0.377* (0.176)	0.381* (0.176)	0.456* (0.178)
Left to go to college		7.936*** (0.703)	8.041*** (0.704)	6.702*** (0.734)
Left after leaving college		5.059*** (0.704)	5.020*** (0.704)	4.182*** (0.720)
Ever moved back			-1.136* (0.516)	-1.202* (0.524)
Parents' years of education				0.453*** (0.096)
Number of Siblings				-0.352** (0.116)
Self Rep Health (Ref: Excellent)				
Very good				-0.051 (0.594)
Good				-1.450* (0.679)
Fair				-1.995 (1.243)
Poor				-5.455 (5.580)
Constant	-11.853 (10.915)	-8.75 (10.846)	-6.839 (10.878)	-11.837 (11.473)
N	6553	6553	6553	6307

Notes: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Table 4. OLS Estimates - Job Tenure in weeks in 2011 and age at home leaving

Y = Job tenure, in weeks	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age at leaving home	18.258** (6.751)	15.202* (6.745)	14.108* (6.753)	15.929* (7.144)
(Age at leaving home) ²	-0.345* (0.158)	-0.287 (0.158)	-0.269 (0.158)	-0.31 (0.166)
Female	-15.693*** (3.680)	-17.044*** (3.672)	-17.374*** (3.672)	-15.939*** (3.770)
Race (Ref: white)				
Black	-44.919*** (4.408)	-40.555*** (4.430)	-40.457*** (4.428)	-34.695*** (4.704)
Hispanic	-13.228** (4.873)	-8.808 (4.896)	-8.782 (4.894)	-4.606 (5.437)
Other race	-14.925 (10.085)	-16.322 (10.046)	-15.467 (10.045)	-9.844 (10.635)
Age at interview, 2011	13.447*** (1.293)	13.768*** (1.289)	13.811*** (1.288)	14.438*** (1.315)
Left to go to college		33.538*** (5.159)	34.522*** (5.168)	31.472*** (5.430)
Left after leaving college		23.543*** (5.170)	23.180*** (5.169)	21.200*** (5.329)
Ever moved back			-10.582** (3.789)	-10.327** (3.877)
Parents' years of education				-0.813 (0.713)
Number of Siblings				-3.565*** (0.856)
Self Rep Health (Ref: Excellent)				
Very good				2.556 (4.395)
Good				-6.988 (5.027)
Fair				-9.635 (9.197)
Poor				-6.466 (41.287)
Constant	-444.430*** (79.491)	-427.896*** (79.605)	-410.096*** (79.819)	-427.958*** (84.883)
N	6553	6553	6553	6307

Notes: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Table 5. OLS Estimates - Income from work in 2010 and age at home leaving

Y = Work Income (USD) in 2010	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age at leaving home	7255.036*** (1208.273)	5933.232*** (1180.727)	5512.934*** (1179.565)	5389.534*** (1232.531)
(Age at leaving home) ²	-163.117*** (28.290)	-137.896*** (27.592)	-130.935*** (27.541)	-127.711*** (28.616)
Female	-9505.708*** (655.303)	-10101.314*** (639.736)	-10222.598*** (638.309)	-9446.475*** (649.236)
Race (Ref: white)				
Black	-12410.218*** (786.172)	-10494.430*** (772.795)	-10450.319*** (770.724)	-8646.530*** (812.028)
Hispanic	-6876.189*** (866.623)	-4932.532*** (851.797)	-4918.114*** (849.480)	-1457.155 (935.699)
Other race	5453.650** (1798.652)	4815.994** (1752.640)	5143.842** (1748.708)	5616.358** (1831.935)
Age at interview, 2011	1999.137*** (230.217)	2143.324*** (224.471)	2160.989*** (223.878)	2233.100*** (226.459)
Left to go to college		14792.362*** (897.071)	15161.331*** (896.711)	12365.760*** (932.969)
Left after leaving college		10064.413*** (901.627)	9934.423*** (899.428)	8386.796*** (918.821)
Ever moved back			-3976.854*** (658.706)	-3929.157*** (667.917)
Parents' years of education				786.720*** (122.795)
Number of Siblings				-539.599*** (147.657)
Self Rep Health (Ref: Excellent)				
Very good				-3263.871*** (757.084)
Good				-5647.197*** (865.483)
Fair				-9117.017*** (1581.575)
Poor				-4392.206 (7077.171)
Constant	-100545.858*** (14203.467)	-93770.738*** (13909.398)	-87028.729*** (13916.372)	-94753.693*** (14633.274)
N	6488	6488	6488	6246

Notes: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Table 6. Income from work in 2010 and ALH, COLLEGE GRADUATES

Y = Work Income (USD) in 2010	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age at leaving home	3245.588 (3054.593)	4193.306 (3120.567)	3943.77 (3122.418)	3634.887 (3190.237)
(Age at leaving home) ²	-78.576 (70.287)	-100.52 (70.962)	-96.691 (70.964)	-90.084 (72.383)
Female	-9285.968*** (1297.799)	-9274.307*** (1297.640)	-9305.666*** (1297.170)	-8471.049*** (1314.264)
Race (Ref: white)				
Black	-8129.051*** (1690.777)	-7702.969*** (1695.576)	-7751.162*** (1695.024)	-6455.982*** (1795.842)
Hispanic	-7141.229*** (1943.835)	-6729.708*** (1954.400)	-6664.443*** (1953.863)	-5012.248* (2077.646)
Other race	5667.757* (2799.607)	5658.459* (2795.400)	5831.464* (2795.880)	6243.567* (2937.171)
Age at interview, 2011	2896.321*** (453.889)	2949.659*** (454.024)	2982.619*** (454.209)	2982.371*** (456.852)
Left to go to college		4405.697** (1599.377)	4713.789** (1608.378)	3985.691* (1629.803)
Left after leaving college		3333.485 (1977.691)	3268.675 (1977.135)	3557.546 (1987.659)
Ever moved back			-2354.157 (1350.088)	-2166.029 (1360.300)
Parents' years of education				92.338 (240.387)
Number of Siblings				-770.210* (371.162)
Self Rep Health (Ref: Excellent)				
Very good				-4541.388** (1428.816)
Good				-5002.581** (1882.484)
Fair				-13526.807** (4283.942)
Poor				-20431.301 (21173.506)
Constant	-71064.061* (34486.553)	-85427.757* (35917.898)	-82060.555* (35953.336)	-76192.646* (36938.116)
N	2235	2235	2235	2182

Notes: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Table 7. Income from work in 2010 and ALH, WITHOUT A COLLEGE DEGREE

Y = Work Income (USD) in 2010	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age at leaving home	5654.268*** (1136.916)	4542.049*** (1129.194)	4107.045*** (1126.717)	4312.976*** (1193.198)
(Age at leaving home) ²	-126.566*** (26.808)	-106.593*** (26.572)	-99.171*** (26.489)	-103.755*** (27.869)
Female	-12163.884*** (673.246)	-12284.062*** (666.363)	-12428.323*** (663.983)	-11892.194*** (685.998)
Race (Ref: white)				
Black	-9247.139*** (793.214)	-8869.920*** (784.856)	-8809.592*** (781.616)	-8131.788*** (825.750)
Hispanic	-1858.973* (860.876)	-1541.968 (851.784)	-1583.004 (848.226)	129.765 (945.667)
Other race	706.398 (2215.400)	625.96 (2189.660)	1056.968 (2181.597)	2029.593 (2299.559)
Age at interview, 2011	1557.161*** (235.234)	1619.322*** (232.598)	1620.020*** (231.619)	1705.710*** (237.453)
Left to go to college		9709.382*** (1354.158)	9950.209*** (1349.041)	8475.613*** (1383.904)
Left after leaving college		7514.878*** (969.969)	7498.753*** (965.890)	6632.896*** (994.176)
Ever moved back			-4126.309*** (678.884)	-4288.493*** (697.234)
Parents' years of education				395.974** (137.740)
Number of Siblings				-334.974* (142.479)
Self Rep Health (Ref: Excellent)				
Very good				-2271.042** (823.922)
Good				-4313.031*** (884.907)
Fair				-6303.950*** (1508.111)
Poor				12.614 (6549.419)
Constant	-76900.795*** (13607.158)	-66604.508*** (13503.594)	-59145.887*** (13502.637)	-66030.678*** (14432.822)
N	4253	4253	4253	4064

Notes: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Figure 1. Age at leaving the parental home, N= 6,553 (378 never left)

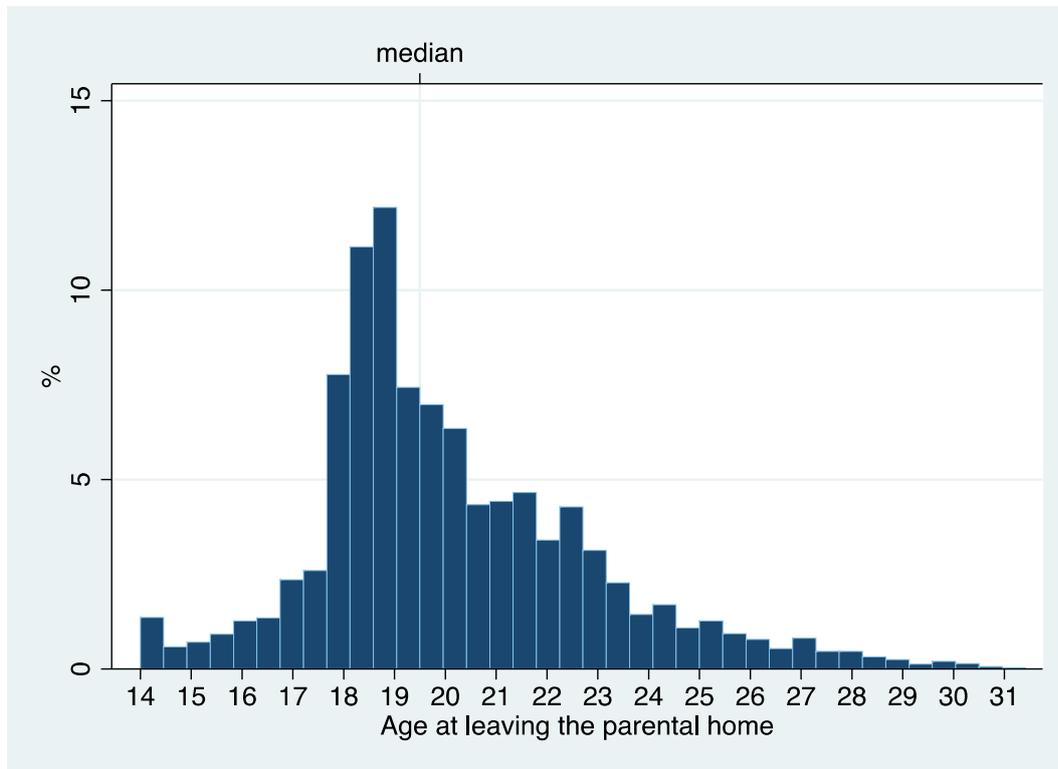


Figure 2. Age at leaving the parental home, by “Ever Moving Back in with Parents”

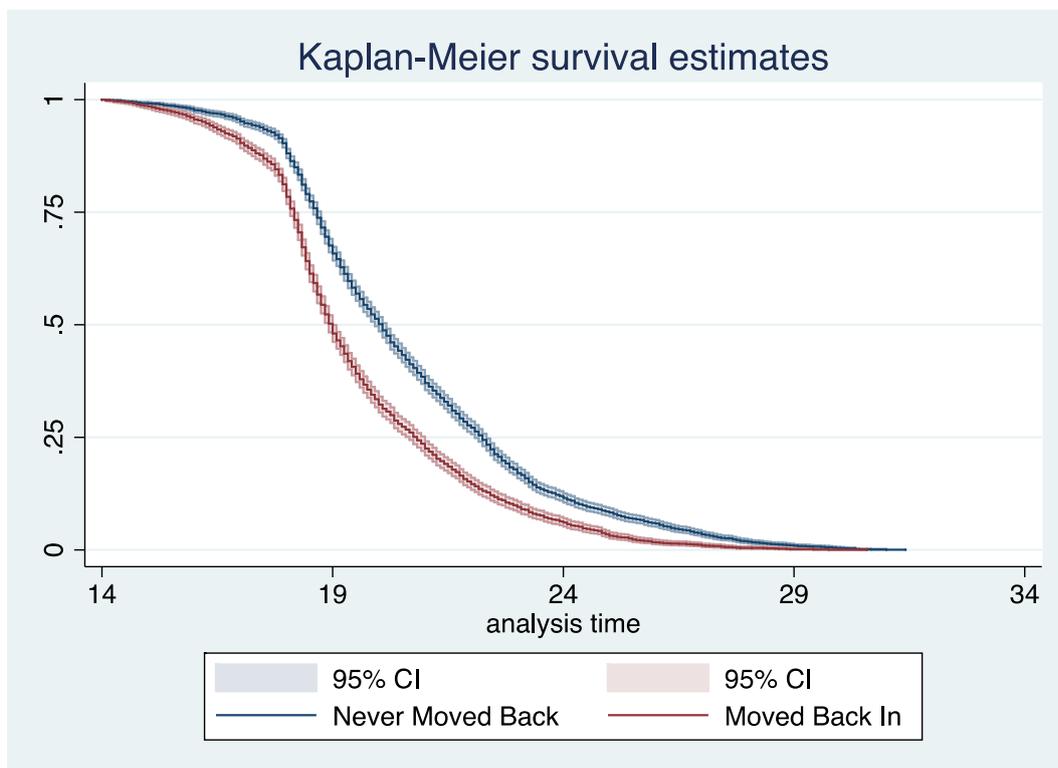


Figure 3. Age at leaving the parental home and % working fulltime, 2011

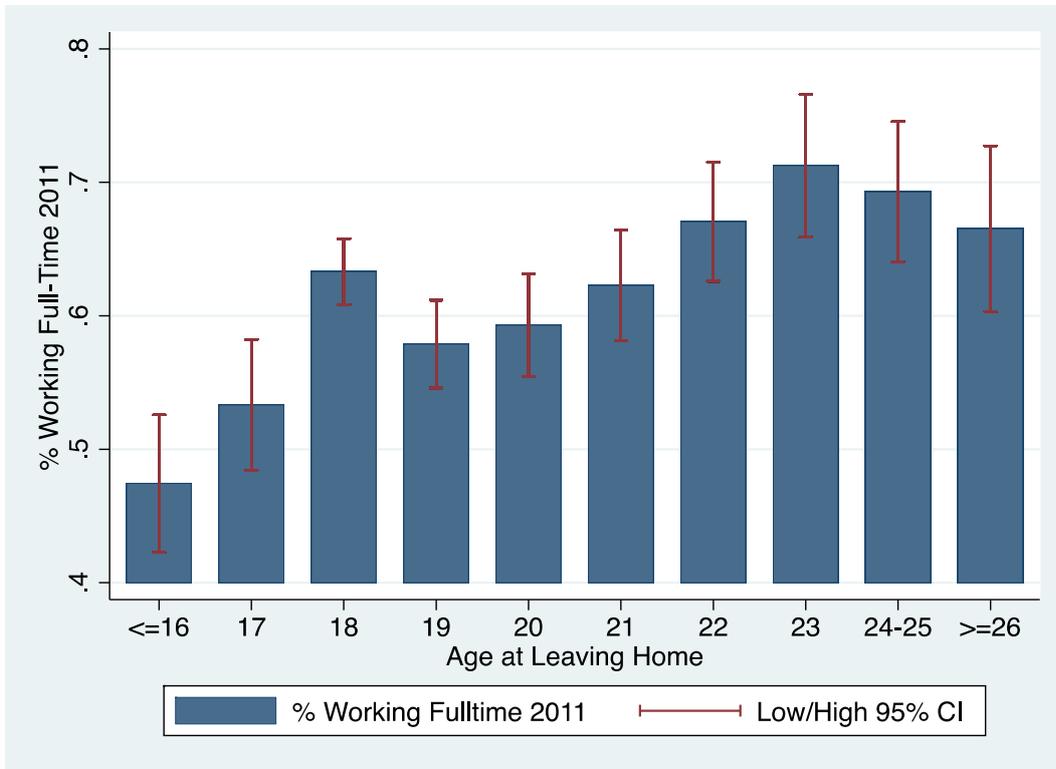


Figure 4. Age at leaving the parental home and Hours worked per week, 2011

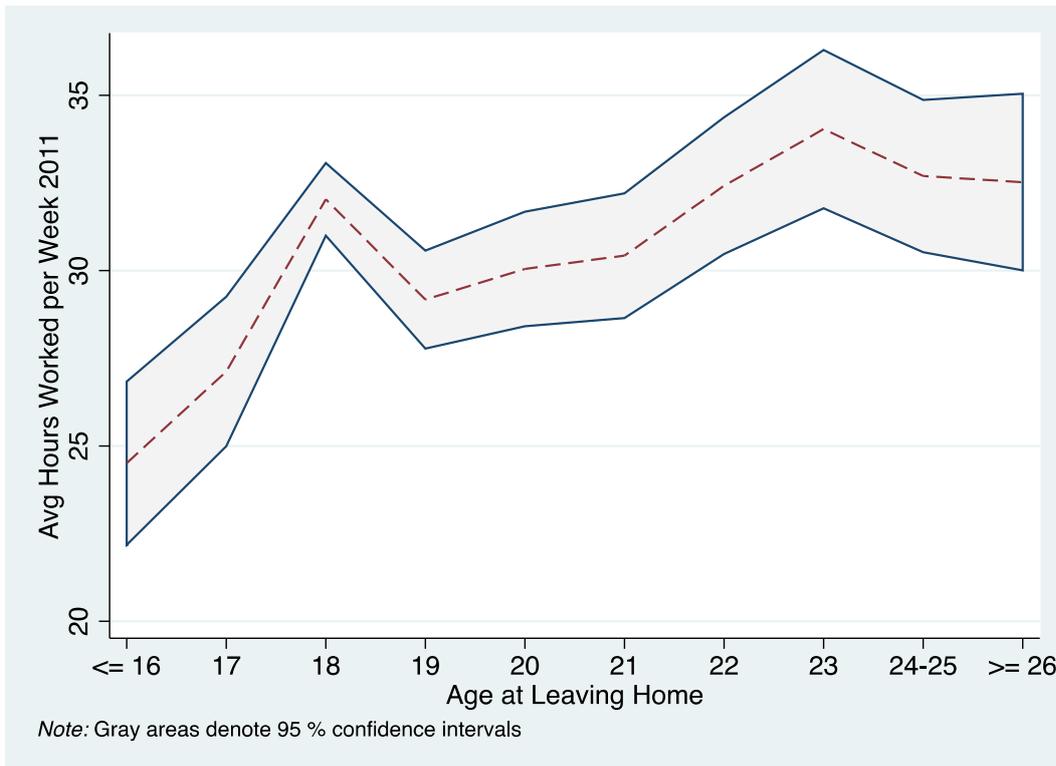


Figure 5. Age at leaving the parental home and Job Tenure, 2011

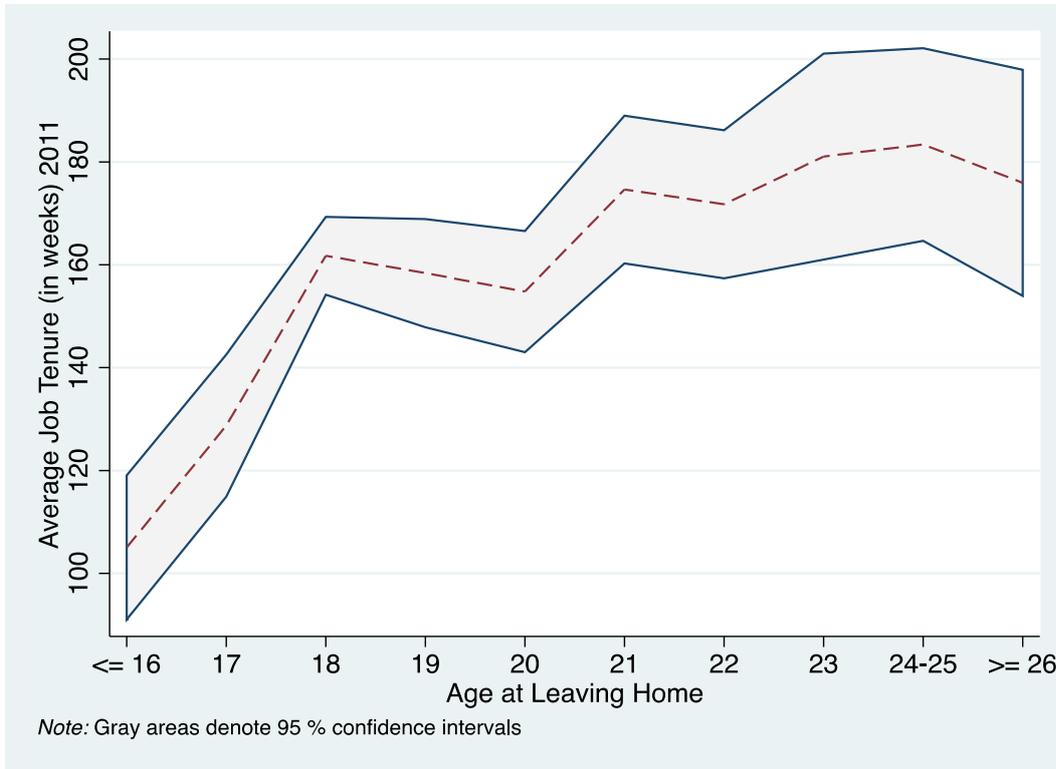


Figure 6. Age at leaving the parental home and Average income (USD) in 2010

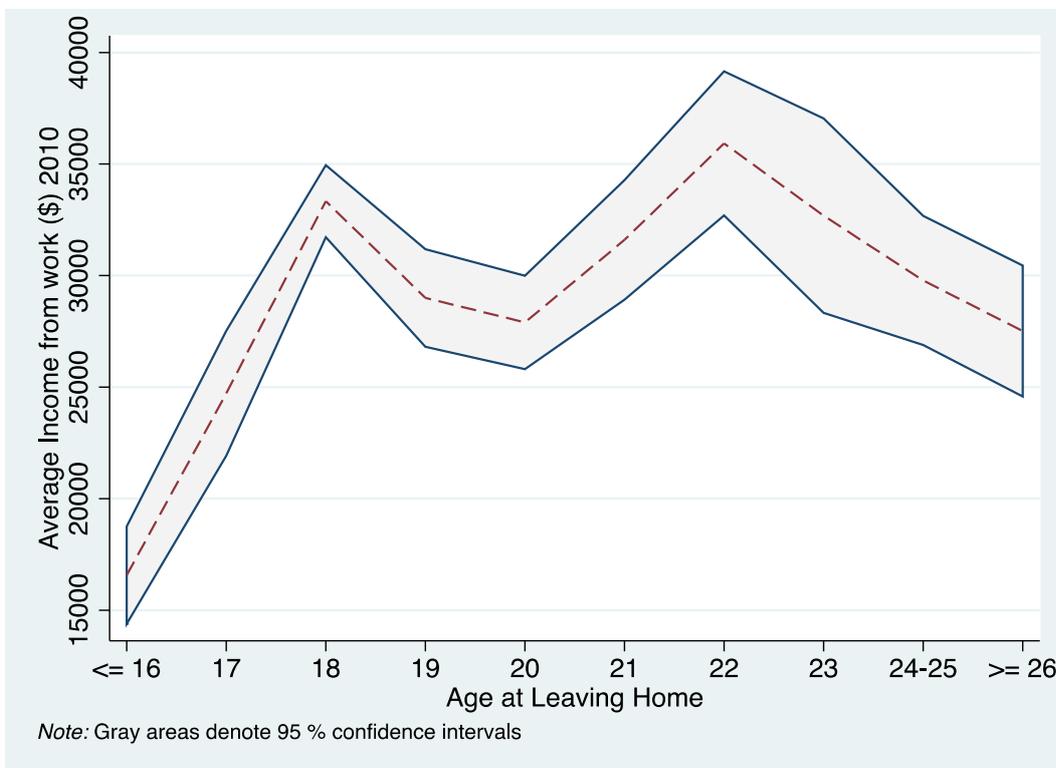


Figure 7. ALH and Income (USD) in 2010, if moved back in with parents

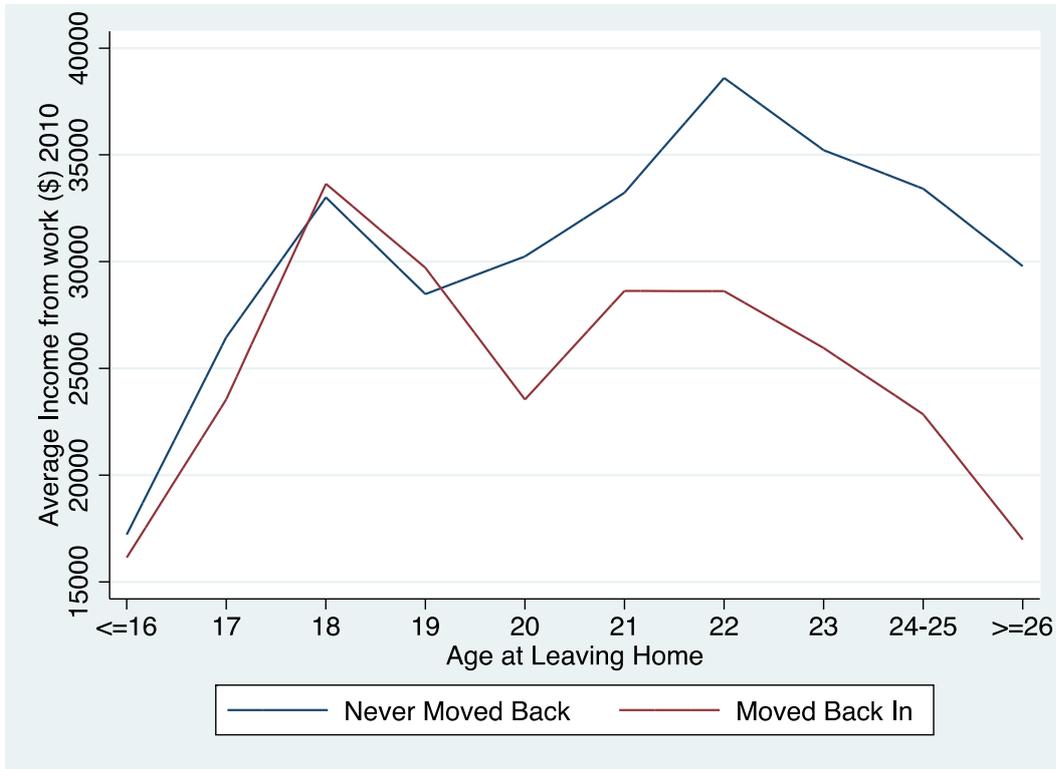
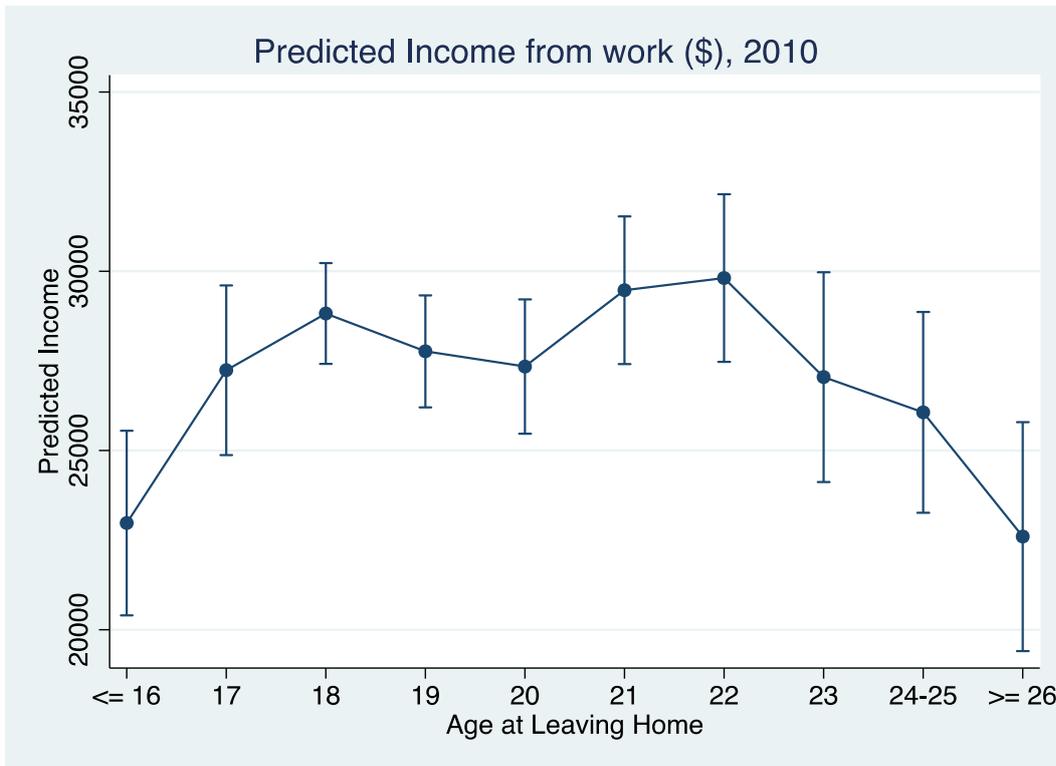


Figure 8. Predicted Income from Work (\$) in 2010, by Age at Leaving Home



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