

# **The changing pattern of entering adulthood. The first events of affective, sexual, working and family life among Italian cohorts 1937-1988**

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## INTRODUCTION

In this paper we show how the events that mark the adulthood have changed throughout the Italian cohorts. These events concern the *family life* (leaving the parental home, first cohabitation, first marriage, first birth) the *working life* (end of school, first job) and the *affective and sexual life* (first masturbation, first petting experience, the beginning of first affective relationship, first sexual intercourse). For the first time in Italy, it is possible to analyze the interconnection between these aspects of personal biography for an extended number of cohorts.

## DATA

We use the data of the new Italian Survey on Sexual Behavior, collected during 2006, where a representative sample of 3,000 people aged 18-69 were interviewed. Consequently, it is possible to describe the cohorts of men and women born in 1937-88, i.e., the people protagonist of the deep social, cultural and demographic changes occurred in Italy during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## METHOD

Since the events here considered are not repeatable, for each event and each cohort of males and females we calculate some simple indicators of the distribution by age: the first quartile, the median age, the proportion of people who experienced the event before some birthdays (15, 20, 30, 40). The same indicators may be calculated also for some groups of people (low educated vs. high educated; religious vs. not religious; born in Central Northern regions vs. born in the Southern regions...), in order to study the diffusion of changes over population.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS (see figure and table)

(1) for both males and females the delay of entering family life and working life is clearly confirmed (see the increasing median age at leaving school, first job, leaving the parental home, marriage, first birth). For the events marking the family formation, the age-difference between males and females persists, cohort after cohort: men leave the parental home, get married, and have their first child about 4-5 years later than women.

(2) On the contrary, we note an increasing similarity of affective, sexual and working life for males and females. For the youngest cohorts, we note few gender differences for age at leaving school, first job, first affective relation, first petting and first sex. Only first masturbation maintains large gender differences also for people born during the 1980s, although the age interval is slowly closing.

(3) For men, the independence between sexual and reproductive life is already defined for the first cohort. For the following cohorts, the interval between first sex and first birth widens for both males and (mainly) females:

	Males	Females
cohort 1937-46	10.7	3.2
1957-66	15.0	9.4

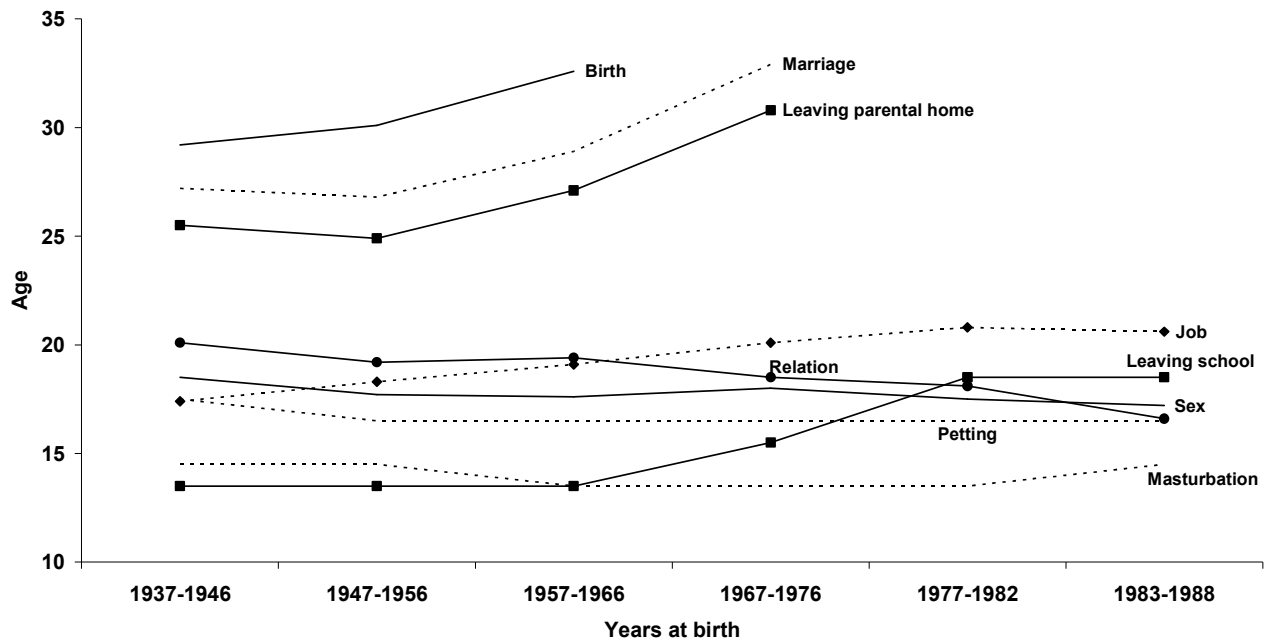
**Median age (K-M estimator) of some events for Italian people born in 1937-1988**

Cohort	Working life		Affective and sexual life (first events)				Family life		
	Leaving school	First job	Masturbation	Petting	Affective relation	Sex	Leaving parental home	First marriage	First birth
<b>Men</b>									
1937-1946	13.5	17.4	14.5	17.5	20.1	18.5	25.5	27.2	29.2
1947-1956	13.5	18.3	14.5	16.5	19.2	17.7	24.9	26.8	30.1
1957-1966	13.5	19.1	13.5	16.5	19.4	17.6	27.1	28.9	32.6
1967-1976	15.5	20.1	13.5	16.5	18.5	18	30.8	32.9	(*)
1977-1982	18.5	20.8	13.5	16.5	18.1	17.5	(*)	(*)	(*)
1983-1988	18.5	20.6	14.5	16.5	16.6	17.2	(*)	(*)	(*)
<b>Women</b>									
1937-1946	10.5	28	(*)	19.5	19.4	21.3	22.5	23.6	24.5
1947-1956	13.5	22.3	(*)	18.5	18.3	19.5	22.3	23	25.3
1957-1966	13.5	21	21.5	17.5	17.5	18.7	23.1	24.8	27.3
1967-1976	15.5	22.3	21	17.5	17.6	18.9	26.4	28.3	(*)
1977-1982	18.5	22.3	20.5	17.5	17.8	18.7	(*)	(*)	(*)
1983-1988	18.5	21.3	20.5	16.5	17.2	18.7	(*)	(*)	(*)
<b>Difference (years) between men and women</b>									
1937-1946	3	---	(*)	-2	0.7	-2.8	3	3.6	4.7
1947-1956	0	-4	(*)	-2	0.9	-1.8	2.6	3.8	4.8
1957-1966	0	-1.9	-8	-1	1.9	-1.1	4	4.1	5.3
1967-1976	0	-2.2	-7.5	-1	0.9	-0.9	4.4	4.6	(*)
1977-1982	0	-1.5	-7	-1	0.3	-1.2	(*)	(*)	(*)
1983-1988	0	-0.7	-6	0	-0.6	-1.5	(*)	(*)	(*)

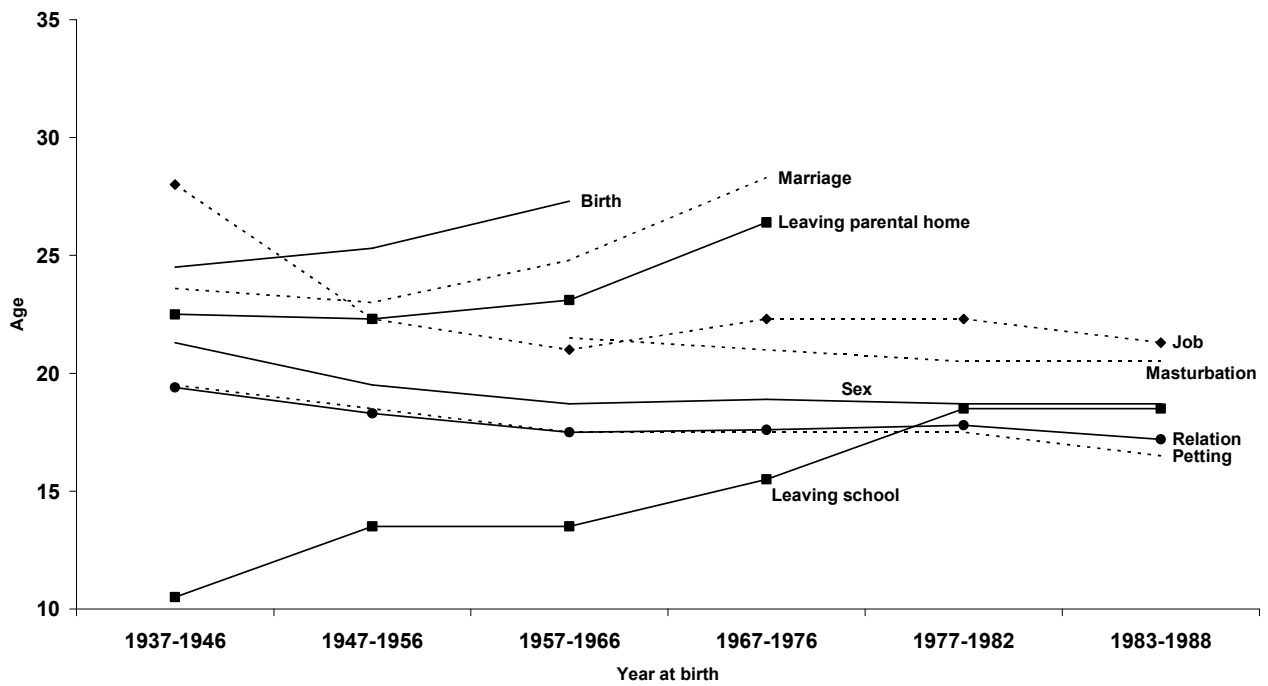
(\*) less than 50% of respondents experimented this event

The changing pattern of entering adulthood. The median age at the first events of affective, sexual, family and working life among Italian cohorts 1937-1988

(a) Men



(b) Women



(Continue)

(c) Differences (in years) between men and women

