

# Short- and Long-Distance Moves of Young Adults During the Transition to Adulthood in Britain

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## Abstract

This paper examines spatial mobility of young adults in England and Wales in the 1990s and the 2000s. We investigate short- and long-distance moves of young people by cohort and gender adjusted for individuals' socioeconomic characteristics and changes in other life domains. We study how much employment, partnership and family changes explain variation in spatial mobility across birth cohorts and between males and females. We apply multistate event history analysis to data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). We move beyond a single-event-approach and analyse moving trajectories of young adults. The results show that the youngest cohort (born in 1985-90) leaves the parental home later than the two older cohorts (born in 1974-79 and 1980-84), but once they leave the parental nest, they exhibit elevated levels of spatial mobility. We find that females leave the parental home earlier than males; however, there are no gender differences in the levels of higher-order moves. By contrast, socioeconomic differences in spatial mobility are persistent; young people from advantaged backgrounds are spatially more mobile than those who come from disadvantaged families. Changes in educational enrolment and level, partnership status and economic activity explain only little of the differences in spatial mobility across cohorts and between males and females suggesting also the importance of other motives behind the moves. The results are similar for short- and long-distance moves, although the risk levels are higher for the former than the latter.

Keywords: spatial mobility; young adults; transition to adulthood; England and Wales; event history analysis; British Household Panel Survey

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## **1. Introduction**

Leaving the parental home is traditionally considered to be one of the significant markers of the transition to adulthood, together with the formation of a first union, completing education and entry into the labour market (Billari, 2001; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Liefbroer & Toulemon, 2010; Huinink, 2013). However, in the past few decades, these transitions have become less standardised and more individualised and 'protracted' (Liefbroer, 1999; Shanahan, 2000; Macmillan, 2005; Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Huinink, 2013). The expansion of higher education, professionalisation and feminisation of the labour market have led to a variety of trajectories and pathways to social and economic independence. Many young people stay longer in education, and postpone entry into the labour force and union formation (Corijn & Klijzing, 2001; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010). Another important recent development is that an increasing number of young people who stay longer in the parental home are forced to move back after graduation (so called 'boomerangs') (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2014).

There is a growing body of literature investigating the complexity and variety of transition to adulthood (Holdsworth, 2000; Shanahan, 2000; Berrington, 2001; Iacovou, 2002; Settersten & Ray, 2010; Huinink, 2013). However, residential mobility of young people have not been studied, except moves directly related to leaving the parental home (Goldscheider, Thornton, & Yang, 2001; Mulder & Clark, 2000; Hochstenbach & Boterman, 2017). This paper examines spatial mobility of young people in England and Wales in the 1990s and the 2000s. Our contribution is threefold. First, we analyse moving trajectories instead of one/first move to improve our understanding of the patterns of spatial mobility of young people. We examine changes in spatial mobility by birth cohort (born in 1974-79, 1980-84 and 1985-90) and by gender. Second, we investigate residential changes in relation to changes in other life domains, such as employment, education and partnership histories, which are important determinants of residential changes. Third, we distinguish between short- and long-distance moves to gain a better understanding of how education, employment, and family life shape spatial mobility of young people.

## **2. Spatial mobility over the early stage of the life course**

Young people are one of the most mobile group of population in the UK (Duke-Williams, 2009; Champion & Shuttleworth, 2016a). Young people's migration careers begin once they move out of the parental home. However, many studies have shown that often young people return

or ‘boomerang’ to their parental home throughout the early stage of the life course (Da Vanzo & Goldscheider, 1990; Goldscheider, Thornton, & Young-DeMarco, 1993; Jones, 1995; Mulder & Clark, 2002; Sage, Evandrou, & Falkingham, 2013; Stone et al., 2014). Therefore, the holistic life course approach towards migration careers has become popular in demographic research (Clark, 2013; Clark & Huang, 2003; Falkingham, Sage, Stone, & Vlachantoni, 2016; Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999; Mulder & Wagner, 1993). The life course approach suggests that any decision in life, in particular a decision to move or to stay, is connected to other life domains (‘linked lives’), such as education and employment careers, partnership and family histories (Giele & Elder, 1998). Research has also shown that it is important to look at moves as a continuity process, actively involving human agency at all stages of decision-making and the realisation of intentions (Halfacree & Boyle, 1993; Kley & Mulder, 2010; Kley, 2011).

## **2.1. Leaving the parental home**

There is a large body of literature on ‘pathways into independent living’ studying the relationships between leaving the parental home and marriage, work or education (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1989; De Jong Gierveld, Liefbroer, & Beekink, 1991; Berrington & Murphy, 1994; Holdsworth, 2000; Berrington, 2001; Iacovou, 2002; Settersten & Ray, 2010; Huinink, 2013). Studies also demonstrate that moving decisions are taken under the constraints of welfare state provision, housing policies and family financial support (Cavalli & Galland, 1995; Jones, 1995; Corijn & Klijzing, 2001; Cook & Furstenberg, 2002; Billari, 2004). The decision to move out of the parental home is based on personal preferences, beliefs or aspirations as well as on socially accepted normative timetables for different life stages (Neugarten, Moore, & Lowe, 1965; Hogan & Astone, 1986; Holdsworth & Morgan, 2005; Billari & Liefbroer, 2007). Research has shown that parental expectations on ‘leaving the nest’ as well as their willingness and opportunity to support their children in the future have a large effect on the timing and destination of the first move (Whittington & Peters, 1996; Goldscheider et al., 2001; Settersten & Ray, 2010; Hochstenbach & Boterman, 2017).

The British pattern of the transition to adulthood is usually described as ‘accelerated’ with an early transition from school to work followed by heterogeneous household and family formation (Cavalli & Galland, 1995; Bynner, 2001). These transitions vary according to class, gender and ethnicity (Coffield, 1995; Bynner, 2001, 2005) with parental socioeconomic resources playing a significant role in the timing and the destination of home leaving. Research shows that young people from advantaged backgrounds leave home earlier for education-

related reasons than those from disadvantaged families (De Jong Gierveld et al., 1991; Berrington & Murphy, 1994; Ermisch & Di Salvo, 1997; Holdsworth, 2000; Berrington, 2001; Furstenberg, 2008; Goldscheider, Hofferth, & Curtin, 2014). Leaving the parental home for educational reasons is thus an important step towards adulthood and independence among young adults whose parents have tertiary education (De Jong Gierveld et al., 1991; Holdsworth, 2004; Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005). However, leaving the parental home for further studies is not universal and not the only pathway into independent living. The decision to stay in the parental home might be a result of both unaffordability to start living independently as well as personal preferences (Da Vanzo & Goldscheider, 1990; Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005).

## **2.2. Reasons/motives for long- and short-distance moves**

### *2.2.1. Mobility 'triggers' and housing adjustments*

Residential changes can be triggered by a number of events, such as changes in occupation, relationships, family and partnership status (Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999; Clark & Huang, 2004; Clark & Whithers, 2007; Clark, 2013; Falkingham et al., 2016). Finding a job becomes a priority among young people who have recently finished their education regardless of their qualification. Therefore, a change in the economic activity status acts as an important trigger for mobility of young people.

Family changes represent another group of mobility triggers, which may explain spatial mobility among young people. A large body of literature has focused on the effect of life events on mobility, such as entering cohabitation or marriage (Mulder & Wagner, 1993; Clark & Huang, 2003), divorce or union dissolution (Feijten & Van Ham, 2008; Mulder & Wagner, 2010), childbirth (Kulu, 2008; Kulu & Milewski, 2008; Michielin & Mulder, 2008; Kulu & Steele, 2013) as well on the interrelationships between mobility, employment and family trajectories (Courgeau, 1985; Clark & Withers, 2009).

Previous research has shown that short-distance moves are normally driven by housing adjustments, whereas long-distance moves are due to changes in employment (Detang-Dessendre & Molho, 1999; Mulder & Clark, 2000; Clark & Huang, 2003; Boyle et al., 2008; Kulu, 2008). However, given the increased diversity of life course transitions, family structure and living arrangements, recent research has shown that such a distinction cannot fully account for the complexity of moving decisions (Clark & Whithers, 2007; Smith & Finney, 2015). Bernard, Bell and Charles-Edwards (2016) showed that age profile of short- and long-

distance moves of young people in Britain are generally similar. Research in the UK, US and Nordic countries has found that a large share of long-distance moves are attributed to reasons other than employment-related (Clark & Huang, 2004; Lundholm, Garvill, Malmberg, & Westin, 2004; Clark & Whithers, 2007; Clark & Maas, 2012; Coulter & Scott, 2015).

### *2.2.2. Environmental and other reasons for moves*

Environmental factors have also shown to be important when considering young adults' residential mobility. The broad category of those reasons include changing living environment (i.e. moving closer to the nature or to the big city), moving away from the current life situation, moves motivated by personal development (Lundholm et al., 2004; Morrison & Clark, 2011; Niedomysl, 2011; Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2016).

Rabe and Taylor (2010) found that neighbourhood qualities influenced the residential mobility of young people in Britain. Research on 'studentification', 'gentrification' and city branding (Duncan and Smith 2006; Smith & Holt, 2007; Hochstenbach & Boterman, 2017) has significantly improved our understanding of young people's mobility, suggesting that some moves could be motivated by the search of self-identification and personal development.

The variety of living arrangements among young people, particularly the increased number of shared housing encourages to investigate non-economic aspects of residential mobility. Heath and Clever (2003) found that young people's experiences of shared housing have changed the meaning of home and increased the importance of housemates in the lives of sharers, which directly effects residential mobility. Other factors affecting the decision to move and moving distance include the proximity of peers, relatives and 'parental safety net' (De Jong Gierveld et al., 1991; Michielin, Mulder & Zorlu, 2008; Sage et al., 2013). The Internet and social media play a significant role in young people's perception of distance by reducing both the transaction costs of a move and the asymmetry of information during the pre-move phase (Dekker & Engberson, 2014). It has been argued that the Internet use might not be a driving force of migration itself, but rather seen as an 'enabler' or 'catalyst' in spatial mobility (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2013; Thulin & Vilhemson, 2014).

### **2.3. Gender differences**

Research shows that females move more often than males (Fielding & Halford, 1993; Faggian, McCann, & Sheppard, 2007). One of the main drivers of females' migration behaviour is traditionally considered to be family formation. On average, females enter cohabitation or marriage earlier than males, which for a long time was the single major factor explaining the

gender gap in the timing of leaving the parental home (Berrington & Murphy, 1994; Berrington, 2001). Research has shown that residential changes (including the first move) related to entry into marriage are more often short-distance moves (Mulder & Wagner, 1993; Detang-Dessendre & Molho, 2000). Research on family migration usually distinguishes between 'tied stayers' and 'tied movers' who are in most cases females following their partners to the location of their new job. This often has negative consequences on their careers (Boyle, Cooke, Halfacree, & Smith, 2001; Cooke, 2001, 2003; Smits, Mulder, & Hooimeijer, 2003).

The changing nature of gender-specific education and employment careers over time is also important. Professionalisation and feminisation of the labour market in Britain since the late 1980s increased the share of women who move for educational reasons. Fielding and Halford (1993) found that higher mobility among women is associated with moves between labour markets and may also lead to or be determined by upward social mobility. Boyle and Halfacree (1995) also observed higher mobility among some groups of women among service class, which was mainly attributed to the increase in women's career aspirations. Investigating the patterns in post-studies migration, Faggian et al. (2007) reached to the conclusion that "women use migration as a means of partially compensating for gender differences in the ease of accessing labour markets" (p. 538). Studies also show that dual career households tend to move less due to the complex nexus of career-family decisions (Bailey, Blake, & Cooke, 2004; Clark & Withers, 2009).

#### **2.4. Changes over time**

Various social and economic changes in Britain support both increased and decreased spatial mobility across the cohorts (Champion, & Shuttleworth, 2016a, 2016b). On the one hand, the expansion of higher education in Britain in the 1990s led to elevated levels of leaving the parental home, but postponed the age of the move as many had to complete A-levels first. Further professionalisation of the labour market has led to a qualification mismatch on the labour market (Chevalier & Lindley, 2009) and forced young adults to move to more attractive labour market areas, e.g. 'escalator regions' in the South East of England (Fielding, 1992; Smith & Holt, 2007; Faggian & McCann, 2009; Smith & Sage, 2014). During the recent decades cohabitation and 'living-apart-together' relationships have become more common among young adults, whereas the direct marriage rates have significantly declined alongside the increase in the age at marriage (Ermisch & Francesconi, 2000; Haskey, 2005; Sobotka &

Toulemon, 2008; Ermisch & Siedler, 2009). The increase in cohabitation, separation and re-partnering levels suggests that young people move more often to adjust their housing conditions to changing partnership statuses; all these changes might lead to the increase in spatial mobility (Thomson, 2014; Hannemann & Kulu, 2015; Mikolai & Kulu, 2017).

By contrast, unaffordability of housing, introduction of tuition fees and the subsequent economic hardship could be obstacles on the way of gaining independence for some groups of young adults. The residualisation of the social housing sector and increased barriers to home ownership led to the increase in the private renting sector and change of living arrangements among young people (Clapham, Mackie, Orford, Thomas, & Buckley, 2014; Berrington & Stone, 2014). The introduction of tuition fees in 1998 and their subsequent increase has raised the levels of student debt, which may be a barrier to financial and residential independence of young people (Stone, Berrington, & Falkingham, 2011). Hence, many young people tend to stay in their parental home longer or move back after graduation (Ibid., 2011). The increase of dual career households and 'living-apart-together' (LAT) relationships could lead to the decrease in 'tied' female migration and postponement of family formation and thus reduce spatial mobility (Cooke, 2001).

Another factor affecting young peoples' mobility trajectories is the type of residential context. High prices and tight housing markets in big cities especially in London can be an obstacle for young people intending to change their living arrangements (Clark & Huang, 2004), including leaving the parental home (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2009). The general postponement of marriage and childbearing in London (Kulu & Washbrook, 2014) together with a large proportion of young singles living in shared housing might be another reason for the lower residential mobility.

During the last few decades, socioeconomic and cultural changes, particularly expansion of higher education and professionalisation and feminisation of the labour market, have led to increased difficulties in decision-making especially in the early stage of the life course (Francesconi & Golsch; 2003; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Liefbroer, 1999; Mills & Blossfeld, 2003). These changes have led to the increased divergence in life careers between young people from more advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds and prompted the emergence of a variety of living arrangements, individualisation of migration and family trajectories, and pathways to social and economic independence (Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007; Huinink, 2013; Macmillan, 2005). This may have increased polarisation among young adults by migration

trajectories; those who prolong staying in the parental home due to economic reasons or personal preferences and those whose migration careers begin earlier and are less structured. The increased individualisation of the life course is also reflected in the increased importance of environmental and personal motives behind the decision to move among young people.

## **2.5. Hypotheses**

As our literature review shows, a decision to move is motivated by two groups of factors. The first group includes life course events, such as changes in occupation, family and partnership status. The second group includes reasons, which are harder to measure, such as environmental factors, neighbourhood preferences, importance of proximity of friends and parents, and search for a better quality of life. Various societal changes support both increased and decreased mobility among young people. Based on previous research we first expect to observe the postponement of leaving the parental home among the youngest cohort (H1). However, we do not expect lower overall spatial mobility among this cohort. Hence, an interesting question is how much polarisation in migration behaviour we will observe among young adults in Britain. Second, we expect young women to show higher spatial mobility than men (H2). Third, we expect young people from more advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds to leave the parental home earlier than those who come from disadvantaged families (H3). Fourth, we expect young people in London to leave the parental home later and show lower spatial mobility later than those living outside of London (H4). Fifth, we expect similar patterns for short- and long-distance moves among young adults, although the risk levels are higher for the former type of moves than the latter (H5). Finally, we expect changes in educational enrolment and level, partnership status and economic activity to explain some of the cohort and gender differences in long- and short-distance moves (H6). However, an interesting question is how much variation in spatial mobility across birth cohorts and between males and females is left after accounting for changes in these life domains.

## **3. Data, variables and method**

### **3.1. Sample**

The British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) is an annual panel survey consisting of a nationally representative sample of about 5,500 households recruited in 1991, containing a total of approximately 10,000 individuals. The BHPS provides a good opportunity to investigate spatial mobility and other life course trajectories of young people. It contains detailed annual information about residential and housing changes, educational and employment changes,

union formation and dissolution, and the birth of children. Respondents are also asked to provide the year and month of a move. However, short-term temporary changes in living arrangements between the waves cannot be identified because only one move per wave is reported. The place of residence is recorded at each panel; we use information on the local authority districts (LAD) of the respondents' place of residence. LAD is a generic term used to cover London boroughs, metropolitan districts, unitary authorities and non-metropolitan districts in England; unitary authorities in Wales; council areas in Scotland; and district council areas in Northern Ireland (ONS, 2016). Our sample includes data from 274 LADs.

Because information on the moves was collected at each panel wave (and not retrospectively), we followed only persons who reached the age of 16 between 1991 and 2006 in England and Wales, for whom the data was collected prospectively. Only respondents present at least two consecutive waves were included.

The final sample contains 2,562 individuals from three birth cohorts: 1974-79, 1980-84 and 1985-90, observed over the period of 1991-2008. We observed individuals from age 16 and followed them until their last interview date. Calculating panel attrition for such samples is not straightforward (Stone et al., 2014). We calculated the proportion of individuals who participated at least in five waves or more (not necessarily subsequently). According to this approach, 90% of respondents in the 1974-79 cohort participated on average in at least in five waves; these proportions are 83% for the 1980-84 cohort; and 80% for the youngest 1985-89 cohort. The dataset has a few other limitations, e.g. temporary migration out of Britain ('gap year' or exchange studies abroad, including a move to Northern Ireland) was coded in the same way as a missing wave due to other reasons; the reasons of moving have not been recorded explicitly; for many cases answers are missing.

During the data preparation, we had to address the issue of missing months for major events, such as moves or changes in employment, education and partnership status. In order to minimise the error we assumed events with missing month to happen in July. Life events that were reported in the same month were ordered in the following way: union dissolution (beginning of the month - 0) – change in employment and education spell (middle of the month - 1/2) – move (7/12 of the month) – cohabitation (2/3 of the month).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Additionally, sensitivity analysis showed that coefficients for the order and type of move, cohort, gender, parental SES and residential context did not change regardless of whether we had assigned the move to 1/3, 7/12 or 7/8 of the month.

## **3.2. Variables**

### **Distance of move**

We distinguished between short- and long-distance moves. There are two ways of defining short- and long-distance moves. The first method uses the distance of move, and normally defines a move of more than 50 km as a long-distance move (Boyle, 1995; Boyle, Cooke, Halfacree, & Smith, 2001; Clark & Huang, 2004; Champion & Shuttleworth, 2016a). Another way is to use functional labour market areas to distinguish between moves within and between labour market areas as short- and long-distance moves, respectively (Clark & Huang, 2003; Kulu & Washbrook, 2014).

In this study, a move is considered to be short-distance if it occurred within a labour market area (LMA), and long-distance if an individual moved to a different LMA. The advantage of this approach over the distance-based approach is that it distinguishes better the moves within the individuals' daily 'activity spaces' from those between them. A LMA consists of an urban centre and the surrounding local authority areas, if at least 15% of the area's employed population commuted to the urban centre in 2001. The areas were created by using 2001 Census commuting flow data.<sup>3</sup> Our sample covers information from 218 labour market areas in Britain, with the London region made up of 33 smaller local districts. The ways of defining urban thresholds are widely discussed in migration literature (Coombes, 2000; Hugo, Champion, & Lattes, 2003). Kulu and Washbrook (2014) showed a high consistency of fertility levels by applying 15%, 20% and 30% thresholds.

### **Order of move**

We distinguished between first moves (leaving the parental home), second moves and higher order moves.

### **Parental socioeconomic status**

Parental occupational class was used to control for socioeconomic background. The panel contains information on respondent's mother's and father's occupational status, which is available from the household grid. We used data from the wave where respondents became 16. In case the occupational class of the mother and the father was different, priority was given to the information about the father's occupational status. The categories were coded

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<sup>3</sup> The current ONS criteria for defining Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs) is that generally at least 75% of an area's resident workforce work in the area and at least 75% of the people who work in the area also live in the area.

using the Goldthorpe social class schema, distinguishing between service, intermediate and working class (Goldthorpe, Llewellyn, & Payne, 1980; Goldthorpe, 1983).

### **Educational level**

The minimum school-leaving age in Britain for all individuals in our sample was 16 years. The variable is based on the self-reported question about the highest qualification degree obtained at the time of the interview and is therefore time-varying. We specified three levels for this covariate: (1) compulsory school education (GCSE or equivalent); (2) post-compulsory education (“A-levels”, “Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Diploma (HND)”, “Teaching qualifications” and other professional certificates); (3) bachelor’s degree or higher (“Higher Degree” and “1<sup>st</sup> Degree” categories).

### **Partnership status**

Information on partnership histories is available both from the panel and from the marital and union histories which were collected additionally in waves 2, 11 and 12, respectively (Pronzato, 2010). The dataset contains information on the type of union (cohabitation or marriage), starting and ending date of the union and how the union ended (divorce or widowhood if were married; separation or marriage if were cohabitating).

### **Additional control variables**

We additionally controlled for a time-varying economic activity status which included categories: (1) working full-time; (2) working part-time; (3) full-time students; (4) unemployed; (5) others or missing. We also accounted for the area type of residence, distinguishing between London, other urban areas, and towns and rural areas.

## **3.3. Method**

We used multistate event history analysis to examine spatial mobility of young adults. Each individual in the sample is at the risk of moving several times. Moves are treated as repeated events and we distinguish between short- and long-distance moves, treating them as competing events. This approach has proved to be a powerful tool for investigating complex moving trajectories (Kulu, 2008; Kulu & Steele, 2013). We specify a piecewise constant exponential model, which can be formalised as follows:

$$\ln \mu_{im}^{SD}(t) = \ln \mu_0^{SD}(t) + \sum_k \alpha_k^{SD} x_{imk} + \sum_j \beta_j^{SD} w_{imj}(t) + \varepsilon_i^{SD},$$

$$\ln \mu_{im}^{LD}(t) = \ln \mu_0^{LD}(t) + \sum_k \alpha_k^{LD} x_{imk} + \sum_j \beta_j^{LD} w_{imj}(t) + \varepsilon_i^{LD}$$

where  $\mu_{im}^{SD}(t)$  and  $\mu_{im}^{LD}(t)$  denote the risk of the  $m$ th short(SD)- and long(LD)-distance move for individual  $i$ ,  $\mu_0(t)$  denotes a piecewise constant age baseline (age or time since previous move for second and higher order moves),  $x_k$  represents time-constant variables and  $w_j(t)$  represents time-varying variables. Since residential episodes are nested within individuals, an individual-level error term  $\varepsilon_i$  was added to the equation to control for the clustering and unobserved determinants of residential changes (Cleves, Gutierrez, William, & Marchenko, 2010; Putter, Fiocco, & Geskus, 2007).

First, we analyse the hazard of moving by the order of move, cohort and gender. We then include the covariates and fit separate models for all, first, second, and higher order moves to further investigate whether there are differences by cohort and gender in spatial mobility patterns throughout the early stage of the life course. Next, we fit models with three-way interactions between cohort or gender, order and distance of move to investigate whether the trends in short- and long-distance moves differ from each other. We compare the results for the interaction models, containing all time-varying covariates to those with only fixed covariates to investigate how much the changes in educational enrolment and level, partnership status and economic activity account for in spatial mobility across birth cohorts and between men and women.

#### **4. Results**

First, we analyse the risk of a move among all cohorts. Table 1 provides information on the number of events (moves), number of person-years, hazard rates, and the median age at move by order of moves. In our sample, 50% of respondents have left the parental home by age 22. A half of those who left home moved for the second time within approximately 2 years. The annual rate of moves for the sample is 189 moves per 1,000 person-years. The rates for the second and higher order moves are higher than that of first moves.

(Table 1)

Table 2 provides an overview on the median age at first move by cohort and gender. The median age of leaving the parental home among the youngest cohort is approximately one year higher than for the other two cohorts (22.5 years for the 1985-1990 cohort, 21.4 and 21.6 for the 1974-1979 and 1980-1984 cohorts respectively). The question arises as to whether this signals the postponement of moves or rather is a marker of reduced mobility (or eventually

both). Among all cohorts, females leave the parental home earlier than males. Together with the general postponement of first moves, the gender gap increased from 1.2 to 2 years between the cohorts 1974-79 and 1985-90.

(Table 2)

Next we analysed the hazard rates for all moves and by order of moves for each cohort. Figure 1 shows that the hazard rates for all moves decrease across cohorts. Rates for the youngest cohort are significantly lower for all and for first moves, which supports the postponement of moves among the youngest cohort. However, the analysis also demonstrates that spatial mobility levels among those who left home is higher for the youngest cohort than for the two older cohorts.

(Figure 1)

In order to investigate cohort and gender differences in spatial mobility, we fitted separate models with a three-way interaction term between distance, order of move, and cohort or gender. Figure 2 provides relative hazard rates of first, second and higher order short- and long-distance moves by cohort. Young adults from all three cohorts are more likely to move short than long distance, as expected (e.g. Mulder & Clark, 2000). However, for the first moves the differences in mobility levels by distance of move are the smallest, suggesting that an increasing number of young adults are long-distance home-leavers. A tendency (although not statistically significant) towards higher order mobility among the youngest cohort can be attributed mostly to short-distance moves.

(Figure 2)

Figure 3 shows the intensity of moves throughout the early stage of the life course separately for males and females. Females from all cohorts move out of the parental home earlier than males, both for short- and long-distances. The majority of moves are short-distance among both males and females. For higher order moves (3<sup>rd</sup>+) gender differences in the risk of a move disappear both in short- and long-distance moves.

(Figure 3)

Figure 4 shows the results for the standardisation of first moves by educational level, partnership status and economic activity. By including education, employment and partnership as time-varying covariates into the model we account both for the influence of a status change (event-‘trigger’) as well as for the differences in mobility levels depending on current

education, partnership status and economic activity. For instance, moves due to the change of educational level from 'post-compulsory' to a 'degree' level (meaning finishing education and moving) as well as moves of highly educated persons will appear in the model under the same category. However, we believe that this ways of measurement will not bias the analysis, as the main question is whether the cohort and gender differences persist after adjusting for compositional factors. Future research could explicitly distinguish between variation 'within individuals' and 'between individuals'.<sup>4</sup> After including control variables into the model, the coefficients only slightly changed. This suggests that little (if any) of the cohort differences in mobility can be explained by the changes in educational enrolment and level, partnership status and economic activity. Figure 7A in the Appendix illustrates the same analysis for second and higher order short-distance moves supporting the findings for the first moves.

(Figure 4)

Figure 5 shows that gender differences in first moves persist after controlling for all time-varying covariates of interest for both types of moves. They are significant across all three cohorts in short- and long-distance moves. Figure 6A in the Appendix shows the effects of partnership status and educational level on hazards for the second and higher order short-distance moves as they show some fluctuation compared to the long-distance moves. Gender differences in second moves became slightly larger after controlling for partnership status, but its inclusion has little impact on third and higher order moves. After controlling for educational level, the coefficients for both males and females decreased and became insignificant. Therefore, it can be concluded that both cohort and gender differences in short- and long-distance moves showed only little changes after controlling for all covariates of interest.

(Figure 5)

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<sup>4</sup> In line with the order of life events which we ascribed to the simultaneous events (described in the section 3.1), moves of individuals with the reported partnership status "cohabiting" refer to the moves of those already living together with their partner, whereas moves of those who start living with a partner (and therefore the move happens at the same time as the cohabitation spell begins) would fall under the moves of single or separated (depending on the union order). The coefficients are especially sensitive in the models for the first moves, as the category "cohabiting" and "married" include a few cases when individuals started living together under their parents' roofs and therefore were more prone to move out. The coefficients for the economic activity status should be interpreted following the same logic. For example, moves of unemployed individuals are related to both moves of unemployed and moves due to becoming unemployed.

Finally, Table 3 contains information on the effect of control variables. As expected, young people from advantaged socioeconomic background leave the parental home earlier than those who come from disadvantaged families. Young people from the two older cohorts who were living in London at age 16 left the parental home later than their counterparts outside of London. For the risk of a higher order of move, the differences between London and the rest of the country became less pronounced for all cohorts. There were no geographical differences for the youngest cohort.

(Table 3)

## **5. Conclusion and discussion**

In this paper we analysed order-specific moves of young people in Britain during the transition to adulthood. We investigated cohort and gender differences in short- and long-distance moves among young adults since age 16. The analysis of spatial mobility by cohort supported our hypothesis on the low risk of a first move among the youngest cohort (H1). We found evidence for the postponement of leaving the parental home among the youngest cohort by approximately a year compared to the older cohorts, supporting the overall trends towards 'protracted' youth transitions (Liefbroer, 1999; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010). Despite the observed general decline in mobility, we found a tendency towards higher levels of second and higher order moves among the youngest cohort. The results for both short- and long-distance moves showed that changes in educational enrolment and level, partnership status and economic activity explained little (if any) of the differences in spatial mobility across cohorts (H6), which suggests the increasing importance of other motives behind the moves of young people (e.g. environmental and social reasons, personal preferences, family ties and cultural norms). The tendency towards elevated levels of second and higher order moves among the youngest cohort may provide support for the growing polarisation between the 'stayers' (those who prolong staying in the parental home) and the 'movers' (those who move out and show a relatively high mobility rate). This observation is in line with previous findings of higher spatial mobility among those who moved at least once (repeat-movers) (Clark and Huang, 2004; Clark and Whithers, 2007).

Our analysis of gender differences in spatial mobility among young people supported that females leave the parental home earlier than males among all cohorts (H2). It is likely that some of these gender differences are due to females' earlier entry into partnership as well as a reflection of the reverse gender gap in education observed in Britain since the beginning of the

1990s. After controlling for partnership status and educational level, gender differences in first moves still persisted, but they disappeared for higher order moves. This finding contradicts our expectation (H2) on women's higher mobility during the transition to adulthood. The convergence of mobility patterns by gender supports the tendency towards similarity in life transitions among young people (Winkler-Dworak & Toulemon, 2007; Stone et al., 2014), resulting from a longstanding process of the changing role of women in British society (Falkingham et al., 2016).

Our analysis supports that young adults from more advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds leave the parental nest earlier among all cohorts (H3). The polarisation by spatial mobility observed among young adults contributes to the general discussion of the increased divergence in life careers between young people from more advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds in Britain (Coffield, 1995; Berrington, 2001; Bynner, 2001, 2005; Ekert-Jaffe, Joshi, Lynch, Mouglin, & Rendall, 2002; Stone et al., 2011). The analysis also supported the hypothesis regarding later leaving of the parental home among Londoners for all cohorts, although, we did not find any evidence for lower mobility in London compared to other urban areas (H4). Overall, the results were similar for short- and long-distance moves, although the risk levels were higher for the former than the latter (H5).

In this paper we mostly analysed cohort and gender differences, by considering the influence of changes in other life domains, namely education, employment and partnership careers. We found that the youngest cohort postpones leaving the parental home, but there is a tendency towards elevated levels of second and further moves, which might be a sign of polarisation in spatial mobility. We found that females leave the parental home earlier than males, but afterwards the patterns in spatial mobility among males and females converge. Further research is needed to determine to what extent the polarisation among cohorts, if true, is driven by the increased economic precarity among young people (high tuition fees, lower level of labour market security and limited affordability of housing) or by other factors. A more detailed analysis of the effects of each transition in education, employment and partnership careers might provide further insights into the spatial mobility patterns among young people. Another question remains as to whether the convergence of gender mobility patterns could also be a result of self-selection among the more mobile young people.

Research on young adults' complex transitions and changing values further supports the idea of thinking beyond the simple economic rationality behind the moves, which might as well

contribute to our understanding of mobility polarisation. After controlling for the effects of some of the migration events-triggers, such as changes in employment, relationships and family size, the cohort differences in spatial mobility persisted, suggesting the importance of other factors. These motives include among others changing living environment, neighbourhood quality and specific preferences, personal development, proximity to the parental home and peers (living in shared housing) as well as other family ties. The concept of 'lifestyle migration' (Walford & Stockdale, 2015) and the 'new mobility paradigm' (Sheller & Urry, 2006) propose further meaning of movements as an active practice rather than simply the goal-oriented adjustment process and therefore might be seen as an alternative explanation for young people's movements. Further research is needed to investigate the reasons behind the increased mobility of 'movers' and investigate as to whether this is a sign of establishment of a new 'social norm' in mobility linked to the 'age of migration' and transformed cultural meaning of shared housing or whether this is driven mostly by the environmental and social factors.

Applying multistate models to longitudinal data from Britain, this study showed significant differences in spatial mobility among young adults by birth cohort, gender and socioeconomic background. The future research should combine individual histories from the BSPS and the Understanding Society study (UoS) to study life histories of the youngest cohort; and also apply qualitative methods. Further the suggested approach could be applied to data from other industrialised countries to improve our understanding of how much changes in educational level, partnership and economic activity status explain changes in spatial mobility and reasons for moving among young people in industrialised countries. Given the increased cross-national heterogeneity in the timing and sequencing of events during the transition to adulthood an important question is whether spatial mobility patterns among young adult increasingly vary across countries.

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## Tables and figures

**Table 1. Occurrence and exposure table by order of moves**

Move order	Person-years	Moves	Rate	Survival time		
				25%	50%	75%
1st move	12,108.48	1,358	0.112	19.3	21.8	26 (age in years)
2nd move	2,941.85	900	0.306	1	1.9	4.2 (time since 1 <sup>st</sup> move)
3rd+moves	4,660.26	1,470	0.315			
Total	19,710.58	3,728	0.189			

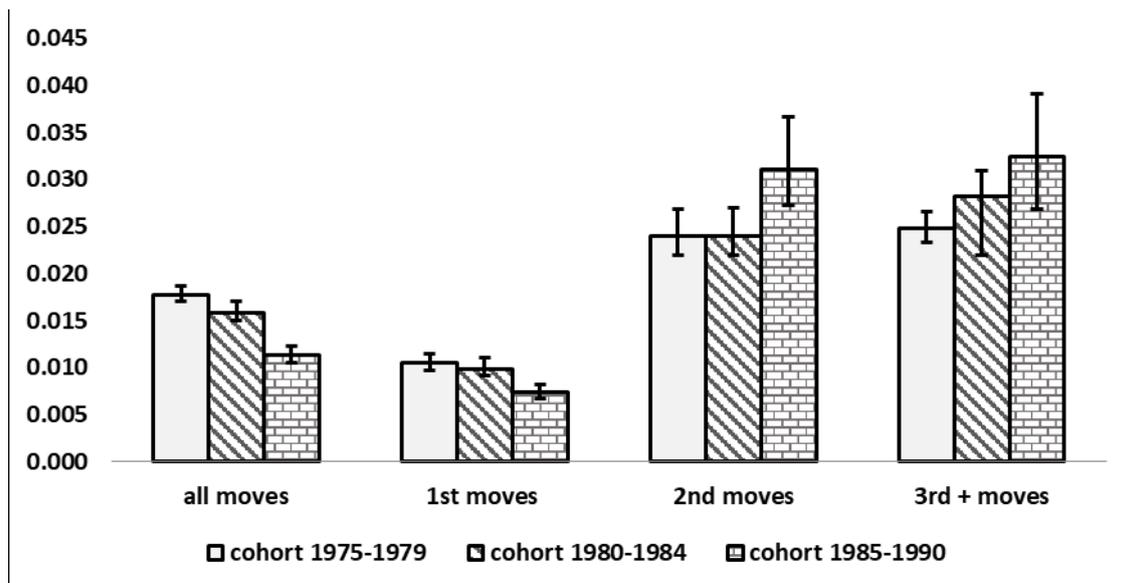
Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations

**Table 2. Median age at first move by cohort and gender**

Cohort	Gender	Age	Median age for both genders	
			Age	Gender gap
1974-1979	females	20.9	21.4	1.2
	males	22.1		
1980-1984	females	20.8	21.6	2.1
	males	22.9		
1985-1990	females	21.3	22.5	2
	males	23.3		
Overall	females	20.9	21.8	1.9
	males	22.8		

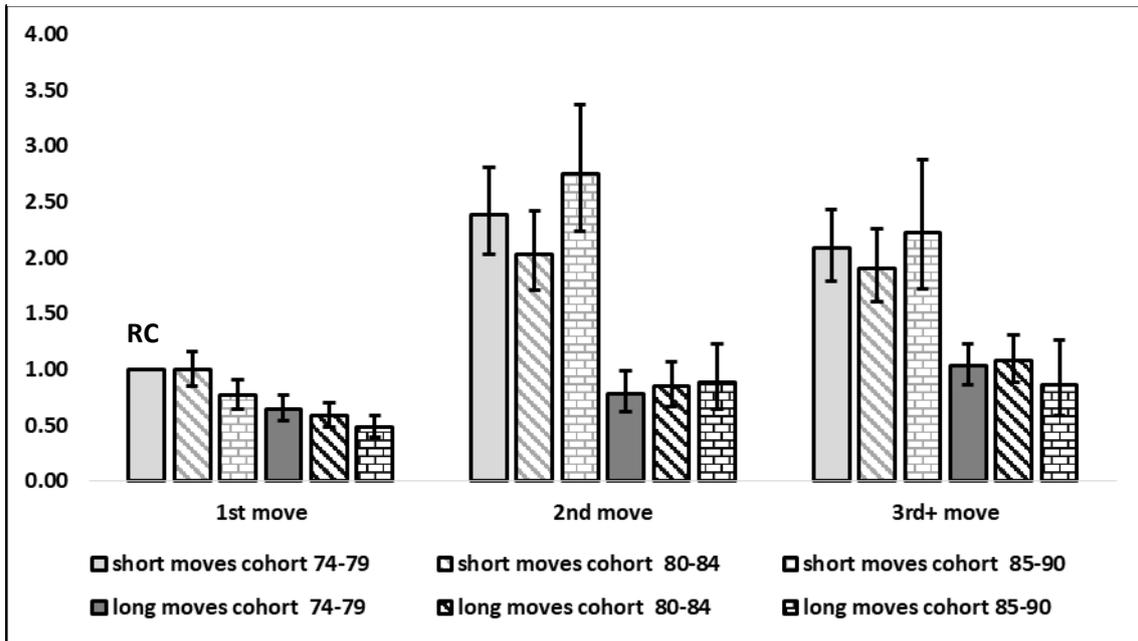
Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations

**Figure 1. Hazard rates for all moves by cohort and order of move**



Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations

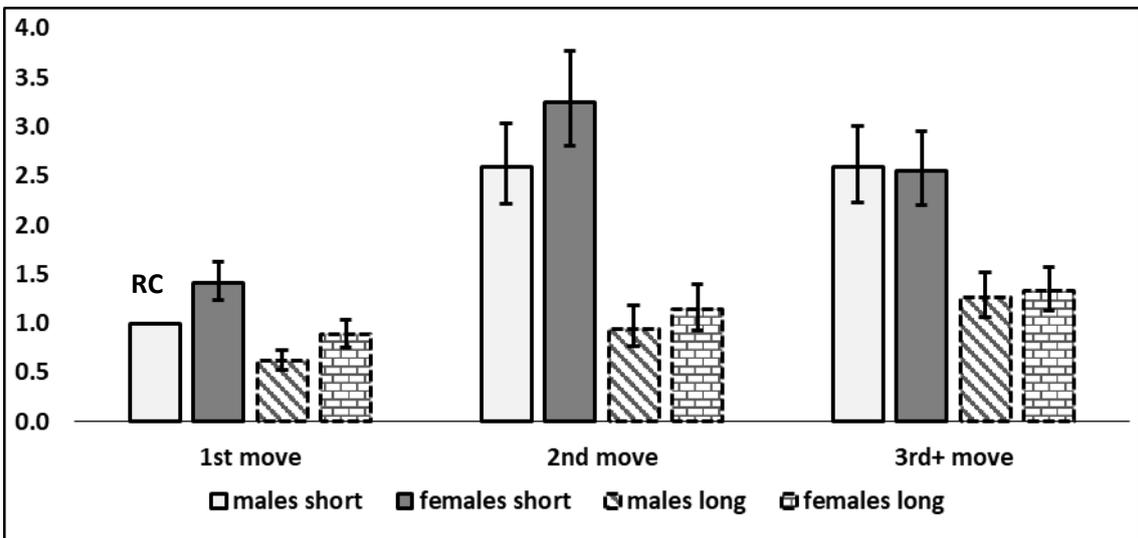
**Figure 2. Relative hazard of moving by order and type of move and cohort**



Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations

Note: The model is controlled for gender, partnership and economic activity status, parental SES, education level, area type. Young people from the 1974-79 birth cohort moving short distance first time were chosen as a reference category.

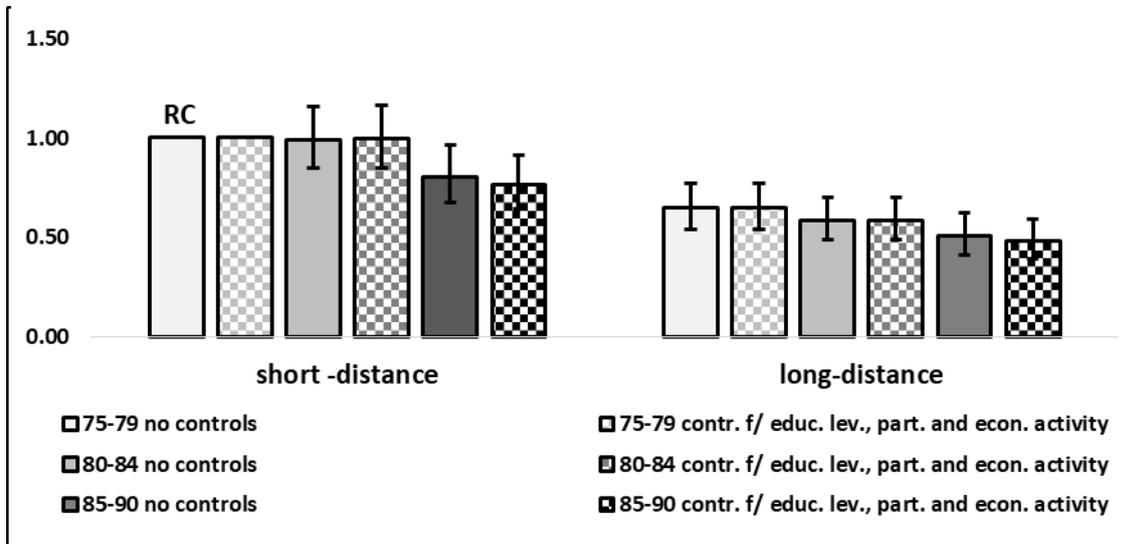
**Figure 3. Relative hazard of moving by order and type of move and gender**



Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations

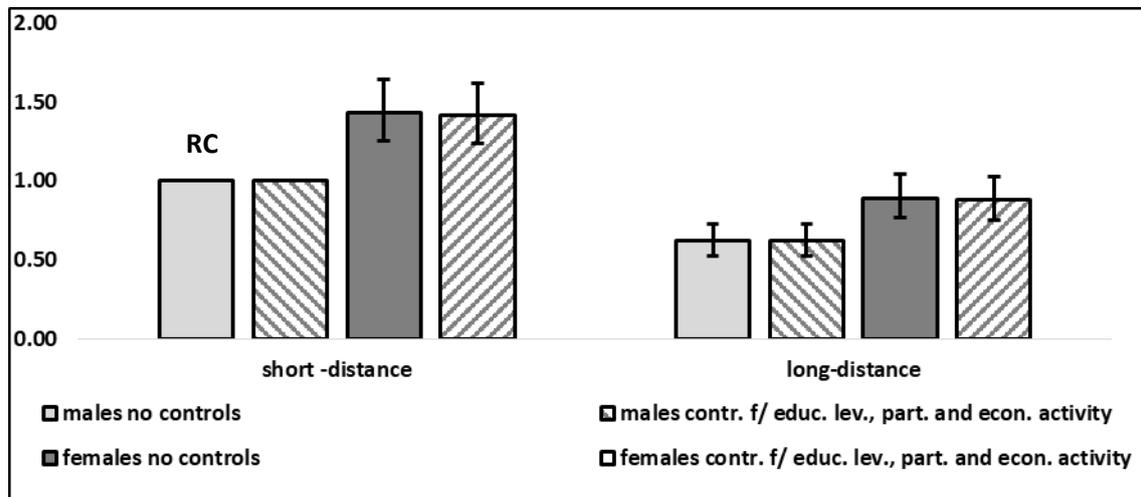
Note: The model is controlled for cohort, partnership and economic activity status, parental SES, education level, area type. Males moving short distance first time were chosen as a reference category.

**Figure 4. Standardised cohort differences in 1<sup>st</sup> short- and long- distance moves (by educational level, partnership and economic activity status status)**



Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations. Note: Young people from the 1974-79 birth cohort moving short distance first time were chosen as a reference category.

**Figure 5. Standardised gender differences in 1<sup>st</sup> short- and long- distance moves (by educational level, partnership and economic activity status status)**



Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations. Note: Males moving short distance first time were chosen as a reference category.

**Table 3. Hazard ratios for all moves and by order of move**

Variables	All moves		First moves		Second moves		Third and higher order moves	
	Haz. Ratio	Sig	Haz. Ratio	Sig	Haz. Ratio	Sig	Haz. Ratio	Sig
<b>Age</b>	<b>Baseline hazards</b>							
16-17	0.002	***	0.002	***				
18-20	0.005	***	0.005	***				
21-23	0.005	***	0.004	***				
24-26	0.004	***	0.004	***				
27+	0.003	***	0.003	***				
<b>Time since previous move</b>	<b>Baseline hazards</b>							
First move	1							
0-1 years	1.79				0.009	***	0.012	***
1-3 years	2.54	***			0.012	***	0.018	***
3-5 years	1.90	***			0.009	***	0.013	***
5 + years	1.55	***			0.006	***	0.011	***
<b>Adjustment for the 3<sup>rd</sup>+ moves</b>	0.97							
<b>Sex</b>								
Males	1		1		1		1	
Females	1.20	***	1.36	***	1.23	**	1.04	
<b>Cohort</b>								
1974-1979	1		1		1		1	
1980-1984	0.94		0.97		0.95		1.06	
1985-1990	0.87	**	0.75	***	1.15		1.21	*
<b>Parental occupational class</b>								
Service class	1		1		1		1	
Intermediate class	0.87	**	0.86	**	0.77	**	0.86	*
Working class	0.93		0.90		0.97		0.86	*
Missing	0.92		0.96		0.81		0.88	
<b>Partnership status</b>								
Single	1		1		1		1	
Cohabiting	0.97		4.22	***	1.26		0.88	
Married	0.79	**	2.82	***	1.03		0.67	*
Separated	1.49	***	1.67	**	1.09		0.94	
<b>Educational level</b>								
Compulsory school education	1		1		1		1	
Post-compulsory education	1.37	***	1.65	***	1.16		1.01	
Bachelor's degree or higher	1.85	***	2.27	***	3.54	*	0.90	
<b>Economic Activity Status</b>								
Full-time employed	1		1		1		1	
Part-time employed	0.81	**	0.96		1.02		0.85	
Full-time student	1.15	**	1.22	**	1.12		1.27	**
Unemployed	1.25	***	1.40	**	1.24		0.95	
Others/Missing	0.91		0.87		1.00		0.76	*
<b>Area type</b>								
London	1		1				1	
Other urban	1.31	***	1.50	***	1.19		1.14	
Small towns and rural areas	1.36	***	1.56	***	1.22	*	1.15	*
<b>Type of move</b>								
Short-distance	1						1	
Long-distance	0.51	***					0.51	***

Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations. Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

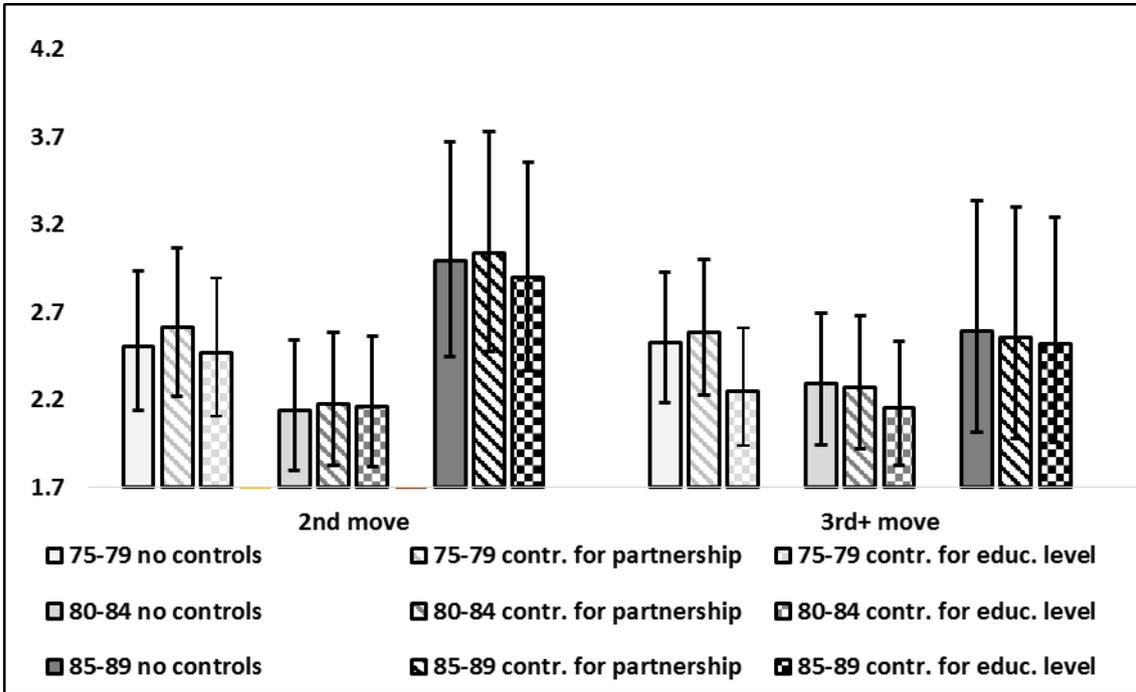
## Appendix

**Table 4A. Person-months at risk and number of events by covariates**

<b>Covariate</b>	<b>Risk-time (person-years)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Events</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Order of move</b>				
1 <sup>st</sup> move	12108.48	61.4	1358	36.4
2 <sup>nd</sup> move	2941.85	14.9	900	24.1
3 <sup>rd</sup> + move	4660.26	23.6	1470	39.4
<b>Type of move</b>				
Short-distance			2472	66.3
Long-distance			1253	33.7
<b>Cohort</b>				
1974-1979	8570.08	43.5	1834	49.2
1980-1984	6518.75	33.1	1264	33.9
1985-1990	4621.75	23.4	630	16.9
<b>Sex</b>				
Males	10050.75	51	1669	44.8
Females	9659.83	49	2059	55.2
<b>Parental occupational class</b>				
Service class	7354.92	37.3	1642	44
Intermediate class	5608.33	28.5	924	24.8
Working class	4990.58	25.3	850	22.8
Missings	1756.75	8.9	312	8.4
<b>Educational level</b>				
Compulsory school education	12238.17	62.1	1601	42.9
Post-compulsory education	5761.08	29.2	1476	39.6
Bachelor's degree or higher	1711.33	8.7	651	17.5
<b>Partnership status</b>				
Single	15544.36	78.9	2579	69.2
Cohabiting	2196.46	11.1	576	15.5
Married	1192.95	6.1	238	6.4
Separated	776.82	3.9	335	9
<b>Economic Activity Status</b>				
Full-time employed	8159.92	41.4	1785	47.9
Part-time employed	1473.42	7.5	240	6.4
Full-time student	6304.08	32	1035	27.8
Unemployed	1441	7.3	327	8.8
Others/Missings	2332.17	11.8	341	9.1
<b>Area type of residence</b>				
London	2711.81	13.7	429	11.51
Other urban	7917.59	40.2	1537	41.23
Small towns and rural areas	9081.18	46.1	1762	47.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>19710.58</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3728</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations

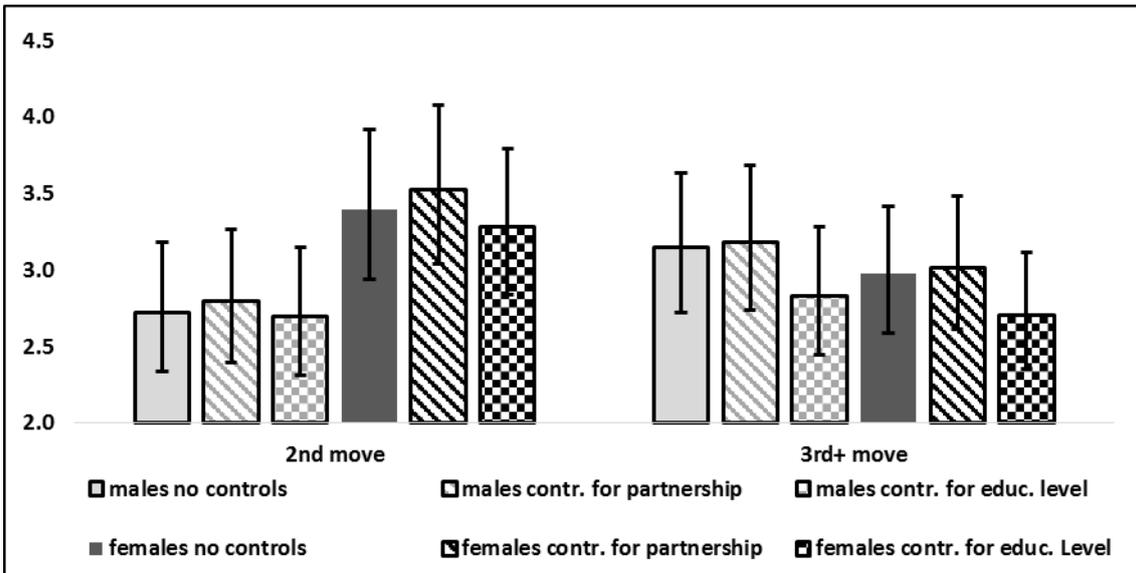
**Figure 7A. Standardised cohort differences in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3+ short-distance moves (by educational level and partnership status)**



Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations

Note: 1<sup>st</sup> moves for the birth cohort 1975-79 is the reference category.

**Figure 6A. Standardised gender differences in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>+ short-distance moves (by educational level and partnership status)**



Source: BHPS waves 1-18; own calculations

Note: 1<sup>st</sup> moves for males is the reference category.