

# “Taking over responsibility” as a subjective transition marker from youth into adulthood.

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# Research focus

- **Youth** is a transition phase between **childhood and adulthood**
- **Developmental tasks:** Independency, autonomy, identity, change of status/roles (Havighurst, 1972; Hurrelmann, 2012)
- Societal **integration** and the construction of the **individual biography** (Mørch, 2003)



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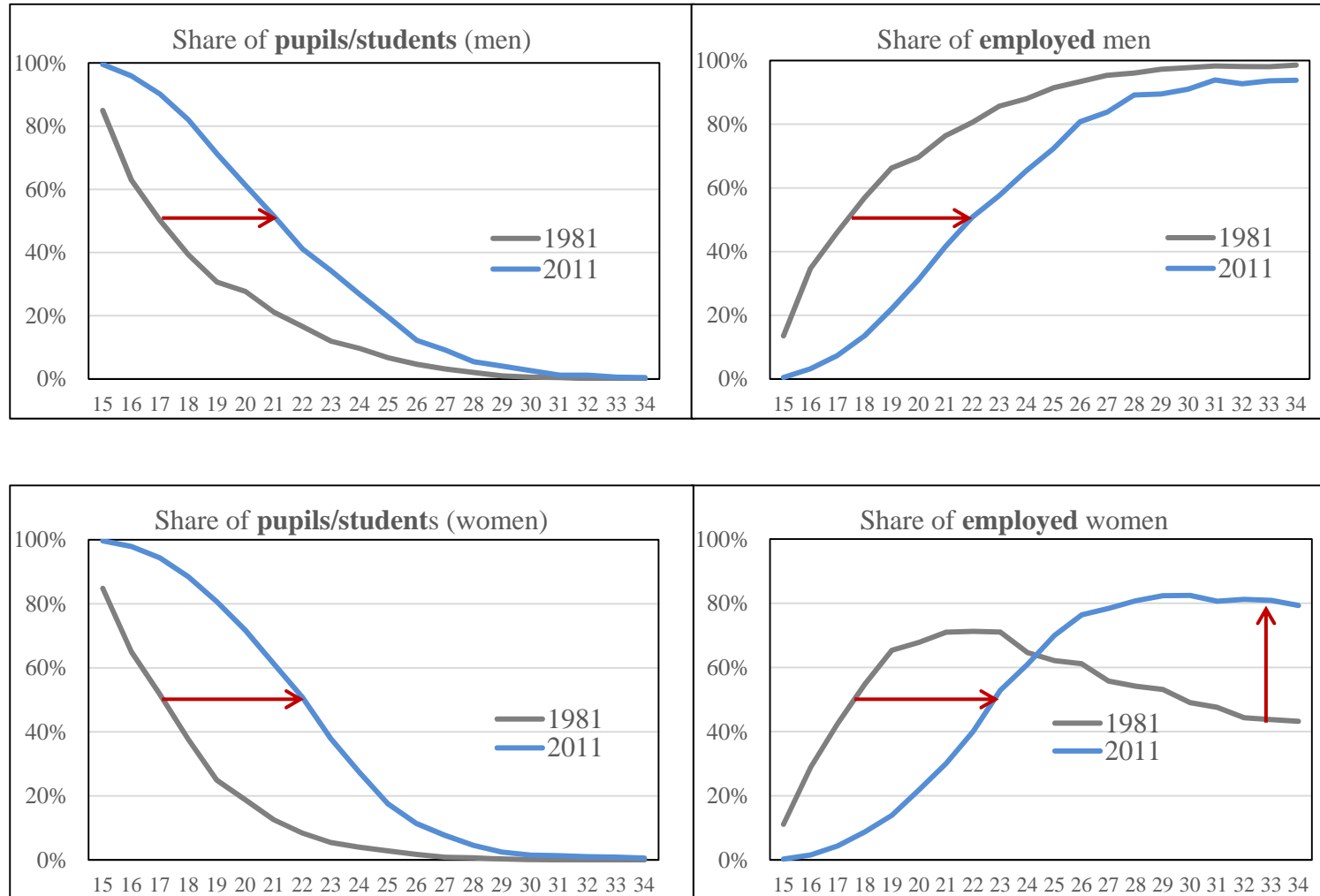
# Research questions

- A) What are the current trends and developments of young people's transition to adulthood?
- B) What are young people's subjective notions of (the transition to) adulthood?
- C) What does responsibility mean for young people in their transition into adulthood?

# 1) Transition to adulthood in the age of individualization

- Youth phase has **extended**, age limits are hard to define (12...30+)
  - «post adolescence» (Galland, 2003); «emerging adulthood» (Arnett, 2000)
- Entry into adulthood marked by **five objective transition makers**:  
(1) completing school, (2) leaving home, (3) career start (4) getting married, (5) becoming a parent
- **Prolongation, de-standardization, reversibility** of the transition to adulthood (Walther, 2006)
- “[...] adolescence today is characterised by **status insecurity** [...] it has **lost the notion of a secure and safe transition** from one social position to another.” (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2013)

## 2) Postponement of school-to-work transitions



Census, 2011

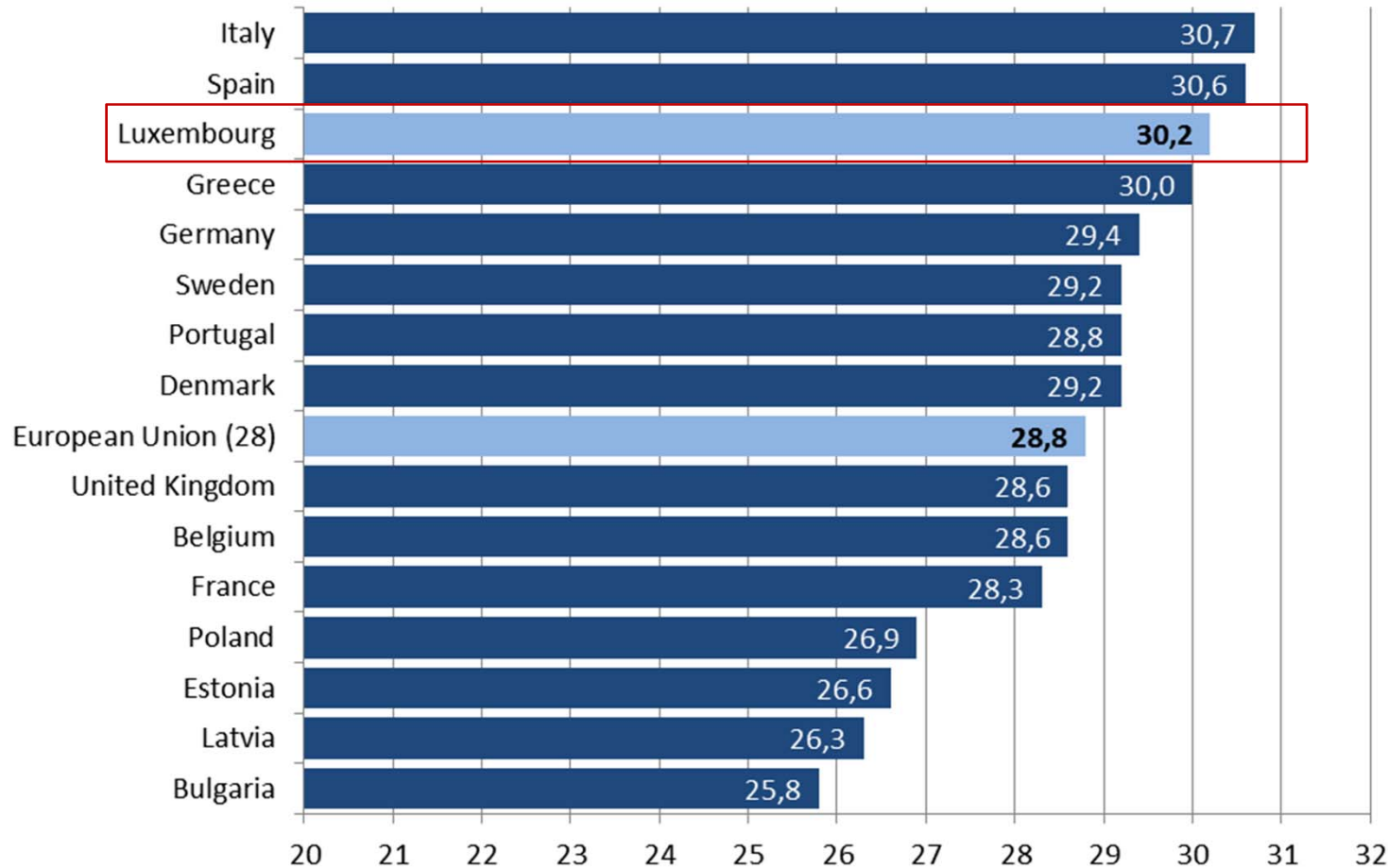
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### 3) Late timing of parenthood

Mean age of women at birth of first child (2014)



Eurostat, 2014

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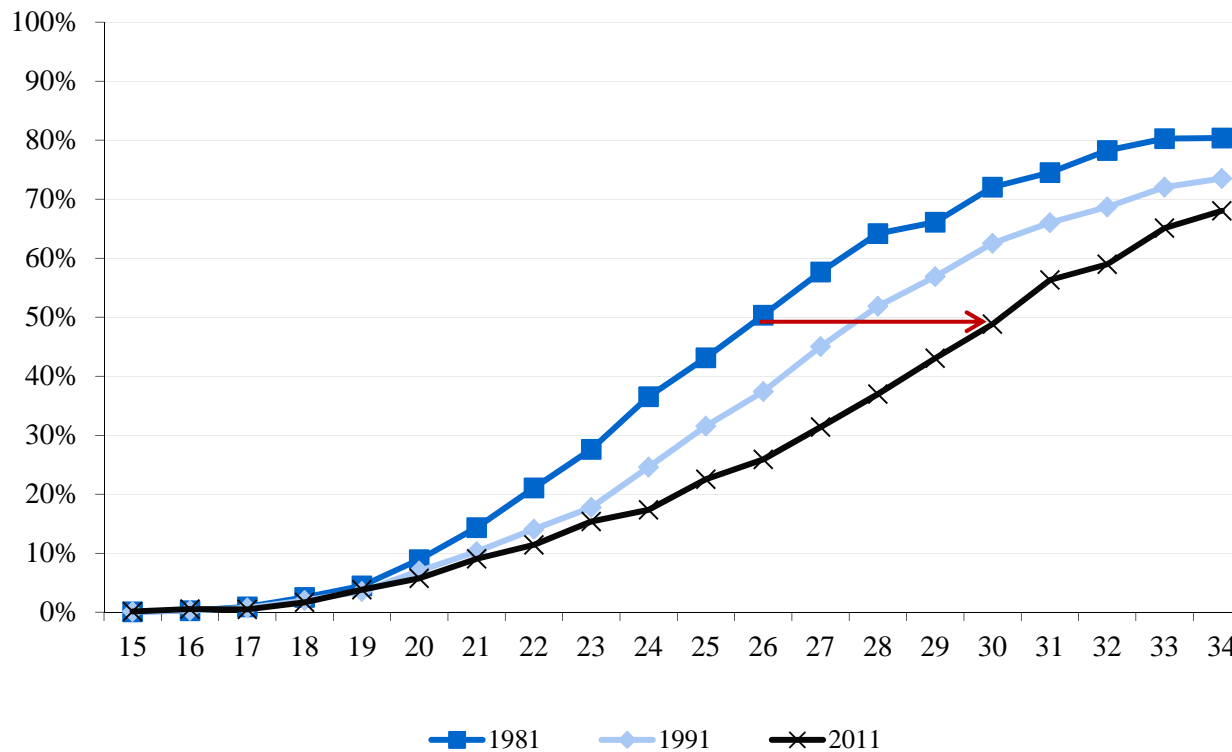
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# 4) Postponement of parenthood

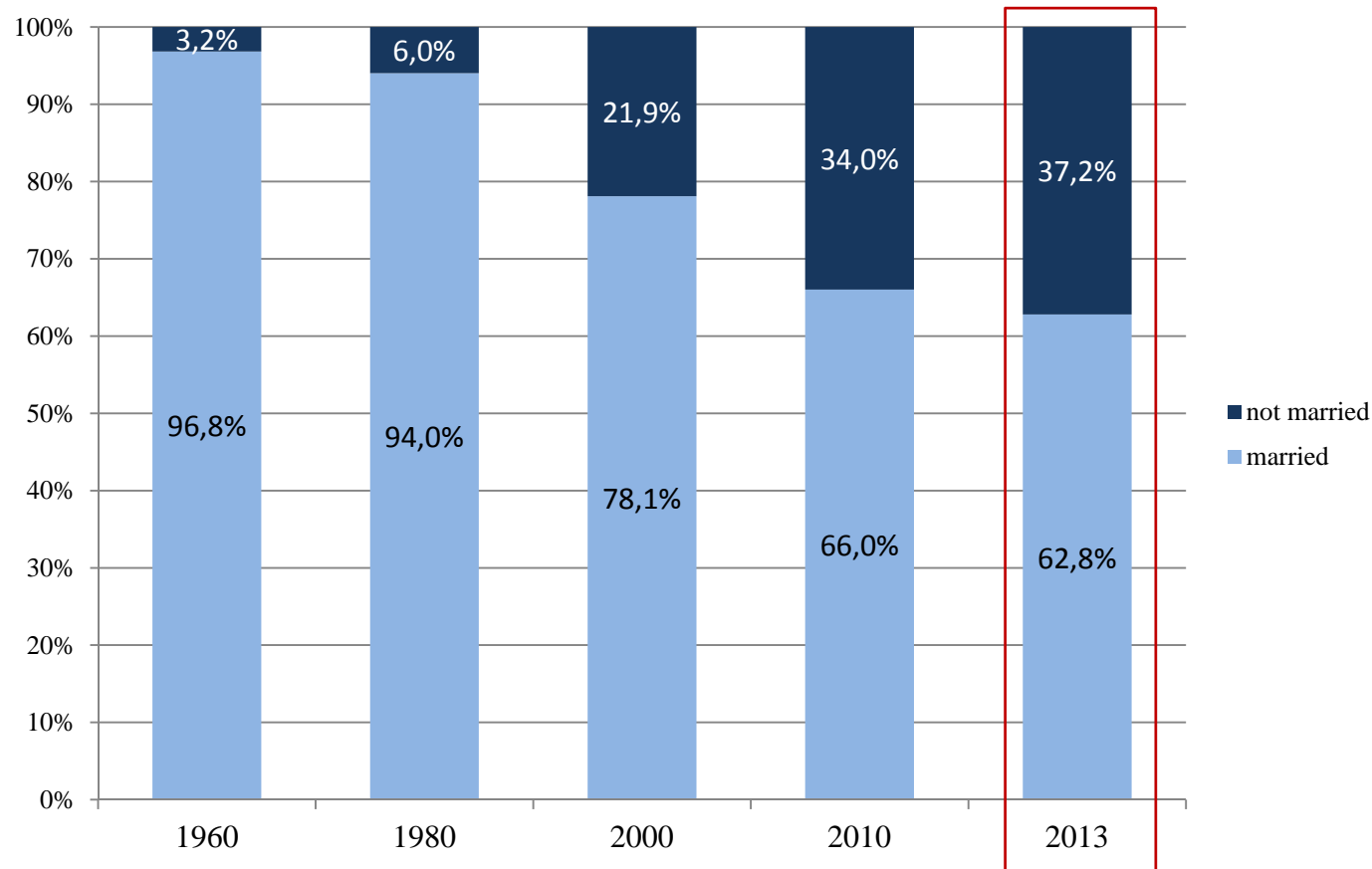
Share of women with one or more child(ren) in Luxembourg, by age (1981-2011)



Census, 2011

# 5) Parenthood, disconnected from marriage

Share of newborns by mother's marital status (1960-2013)

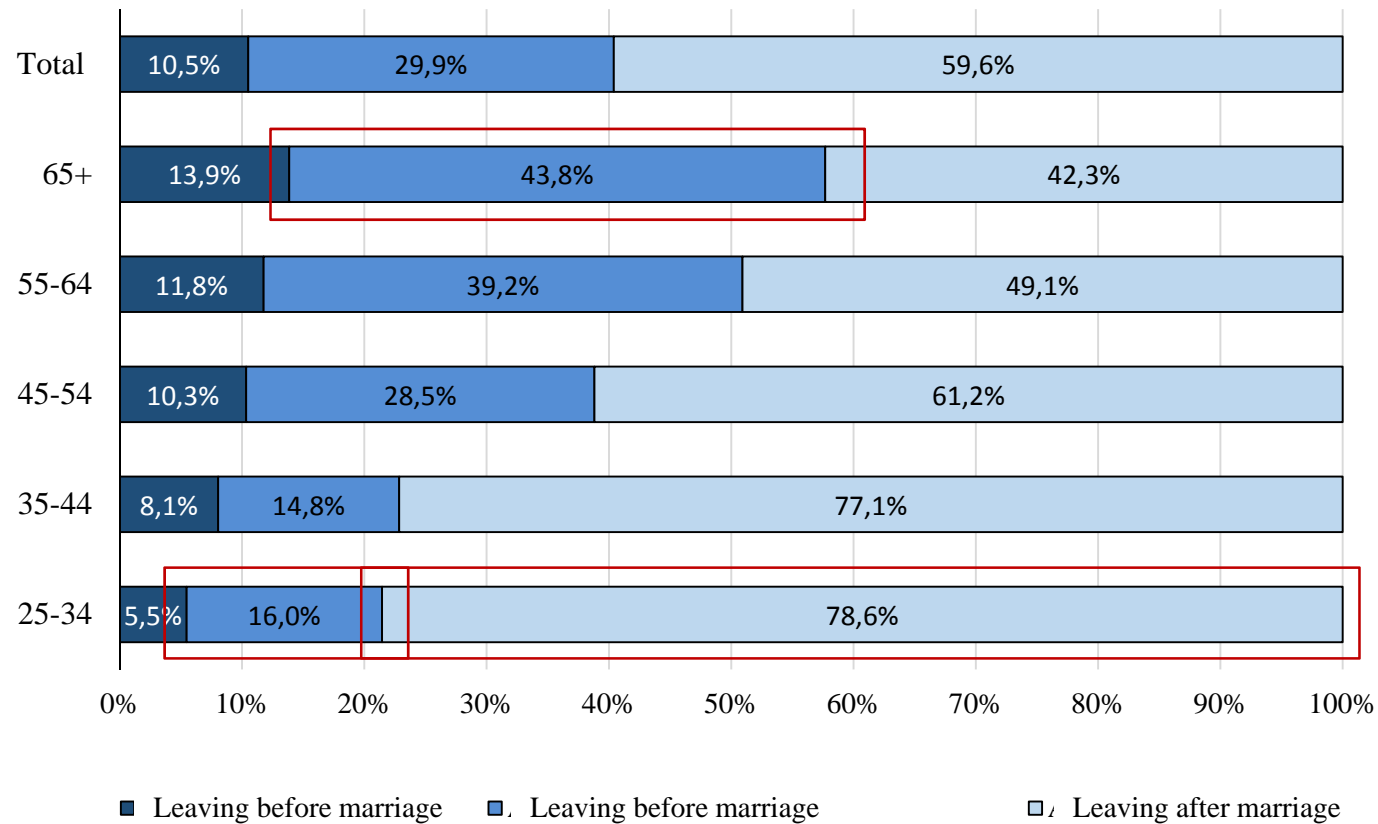


Census, 2011



# 6) Leaving parental home, disconnected from marriage

Share of people by marital status and leaving parental home (2013)



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## 7) Increased importance of «subjective markers»

- **Subjective markers** as the “new” markers (Shanahan, 2005; Furstenberg et al., 2004)
- **Cognitive, emotional and behavioral requirements** for adulthood (Arnett, 1997, 2001)
- (1) accepting **responsibility** for one’s self, (2) making **independent decisions** (Arnett, 1998)
- “Successful functioning in adulthood is marked by [...] the acceptance of **responsibility for others as well as oneself.**” (Zahn-Waxler, 1996, p.571)

## 8) Notions of adulthood: Young people's ideas about becoming an adult

- Objective transition markers play an important role (having a secure job, moving out, starting a family)
- However, young people associate becoming adult with changes in **lifestyle, inner attitude, autonomy and responsibility** (e.g.):



# Research questions

A) What are young people's subjective notions of (the transition to) adulthood?

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C) What does responsibility mean for young people in their transition into adulthood?

- responsibility for oneself
- responsibility for others

## 9) Taking over responsibility for oneself

- Taking over responsibility for oneself is related to the development of autonomous decision making
- «since I am 18 years old, I take all my decisions on my own. I made mistakes...., I passed some hard times : no fix job, no driving license, no partner... but **I always tried to manage my problems on my own** and looked ahead, focusing on the future. That's why I consider myself as an adult » (Jeanne, f, 33 years)

..... responsible behaviour

- «with 18 years, you are **responsible for your own actions**, not your parents» (Joana, f, 28 years)
- «to assume responsibility for my own actions and **not to blame someone else for it**» (Henri, m, 32 years)
- «there is **nowbody who is solving my problems** for me» (Angela, f, 34 years)
- «I became self-employed with 25. From that moment on, **I went out less and I took more care about my appearance and image (...)**» Claudine, f, 34 years

# 10) Taking over responsibility for oneself

Taking over responsibility for oneself is also related to the feeling of independency from the parents

- «to **manage money** and to do the shopping» (Amélie, f, 22 years)
- «to **do things on my own**, sign papers, gain practical and life experience» (Marta, f, 18 years)
- «to get up in the morning (...), to realise that the food does not grow in your fridge» (Rebecca, f, 29 years)
- « to find out if someone is an adult or not, is to **check if he has a a washing machine**. I have a washing machine» (Tiago, m, 25 years)
- ...

# 11) Taking over responsibility for others

- Responsibility for others, means mostly for children (parenthood)

«...being responsible because of work...the house and **the child**.» (Françoise, f, 30 yrs)

«Also a family and seriousness, and responsibility. Well, I have responsibilities already, but further responsibilities...for **children**.» (Lara, f, 22 yrs)

«Yes, I can be adult since I'm here and I have children. And I have a responsibility for them and all the decisions I take with my husband have **consequences not only for us but also for others** that's growing up.» (Angela, f, 34 yrs)

...is related to the concept of maturity

«If I wouldn't have had my children [...], I wouldn't have developed the **maturity** I have today.» (Maria, f, 27 yrs)

...and change of priorities

«For me, it's since I have children, since they were born, than you must become adult [...]  
You **feel different** you know that we **have other priorities now than going out**. We have to take care about our children, that nothing happens to them. (Patricia, f, 29 yrs)



## 12) Conclusion

- The study indicates that besides the objective markers, **subjective markers** are important in order to understand and conceptualize the transition from youth into adulthood
- The importance of subjective markers (e.g. autonomy, responsibility) reflects the **individualized** and **de-standardized** transition from youth into adulthood; the „**inconsistency** as hallmarks of modern adolescence” (Hurrelmann & Quenzel, 2015)
- Responsibility for oneself is highly related to the notion of adulthood and is important for **identity** and **personality** development, it “reflects the current values of the Western culture [...] that emphasize individualism” (Arnett, 2002)
- Responsibility for others is related to new commitments (e.g. responsibility for children) in order to assure **social integration and societal reproduction.**



**Thank you for  
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