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Youth on the move? The selectiveness of temporary mobilities from a life course perspective

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ABSTRACT

Temporary youth mobility includes stays whose motives may be educational (e.g. linguistic stays), related to work (e.g. internship or volunteering) or cultural (e.g. with the objective to discover new cultures such as backpacking trips). Such stays are becoming increasingly popular among young adults. The lack of statistical data usually prevents studying temporary youth mobility beyond the specific case of mobile university students. This article fills that gap by analysing a dataset that covers a large part of the 18–20 year old population in Switzerland. It measures the prevalence of temporary youth mobility and assesses its selectiveness – or inequalities – according to a wide range of factors related to the life course. Our study confirms some results of the literature: Young adults from privileged social backgrounds, students in higher education and women are more mobile than average. We identify additional factors such as young adults' familial constellation, and their linguistic region. We also highlight the importance of a mobility capital (language skills, knowledge of other countries, etc.) that can be transmitted by parents (e.g. if they themselves were mobile temporarily) or accumulated by young adults themselves (e.g. their previous mobility experiences).

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Temporary youth mobility;
inequality; life course;
mobility capital

1. Introduction

Temporary youth mobility includes a variety of stays whose motives may be educational (e.g. linguistic stays), related to work (e.g. internship or volunteering) or cultural (e.g. with the objective to discover new cultures such as backpacking trips). These stays, limited in time and with a planned return, have grown in popularity in the past twenty years (King and Raghuram 2013; Smith, Rérat, and Sage 2014). The academic literature has focused on particular types of temporary mobility, such as backpackers (Mohsin and Ryan 2003), or student mobility (Van Mol and Timmerman 2014), but it lacks a general vision of the diversity of stays, as this type of mobility exemplifies some key issues in mobility studies.

Previous research shows the inequalities of temporary mobility and the importance of social background (Findlay et al. 2012; King et al. 2011; Waters and Brooks 2010). They have also contributed to our understanding of this form of mobility

such as the motivations and barriers (Haldimann et al. 2021; Loker-Murphy 1997). However, most studies have focused on specific populations such as mobile university students (Findlay et al. 2012). While there are several qualitative studies on various forms of temporary mobility (mostly of backpackers or students), quantitative approaches are lacking. Data are indeed scarce as many temporary mobilities are not recorded in censuses or other large-scale surveys. This article fills that gap with a comprehensive picture of the factors contributing to the selectiveness of temporary youth mobility and by showing how they are interrelated, including the diversity of experiences.

Mobility can be conceptualised as composed of three intertwined dimensions (Cresswell 2010): physical movement, meaning and experience. While this paper addresses primarily the propensity of being temporary mobile (physical movement), the importance of addressing inequalities in temporary mobility also refers to the other two dimensions.

The experience of being temporarily mobile is associated with a range of benefits. Young adults may improve their linguistic and informal skills (Lulle, Janta, and Emilsson 2019), develop their autonomy and self-understanding (Bagnoli 2009; Frändberg 2015), increase their professional outlook (Baláž and Williams 2004; Waibel, Petzold, and Rüger 2018) and develop a more cosmopolitan worldview (Waters et al. 2011; Weichbrodt 2014) and cultural understanding (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Maunaye 2013). Temporary mobility is a way to acquire skills and transnational social practices that can be defined as “mobility capital” (Gerhards 2017; Murphy-Lejeune 2003). Mobility capital facilitates future mobility experiences but can also be mobilised in other spheres of the life course (such as employability).

Temporary mobility is increasing and is said to play an important role in the normalisation of the transnationalisation of societies (Weichbrodt 2014). It has become a rite of passage in the transition to adulthood for some parts of the young adult population (Frändberg 2015). Temporary mobility is also seen as an asset when entering the labour market and a way to obtain economic resources and stability (Flipo 2013) as it may be perceived positively by employers (sign of flexibility, independence, cultural openness, etc.). Some authors are however critical towards what is seen as a social injunction to be mobile (Mincke, Montulet, and Kaufmann 2019).

In this article, we aim to address the following research question: *What are the factors that explain the varying propensity of temporary mobility among young adults?* Our approach is inspired by the life course perspective from Bailey (2009) which focuses on sequences of events and transitions in individual biographies as we consider that temporary mobility relates to several spheres of young adults' lives. We analyse data from the *Swiss Federal Survey of Adolescents* (FORS 2020) dataset that consists of an almost entire cohort of 18 to 20 years-old young Swiss men (N = 40,503) and a representative sample of young Swiss women (N = 2,126). This dataset is unique by its size and enables to go further than existing literature by (1) capturing young adults, mobile or not and from all social strata and educational curricula, (2) measuring the prevalence of (past and future) temporary mobility organised by educational institutions as well as those rarely captured by statistics (e.g. backpacking), and (3) considering a large array of factors related to individuals' life course to explain the inequalities of temporary mobility. It also includes detailed information about the stays, such as the destination and the length.

2. Theoretical discussion

To unfold the selectiveness of temporary youth mobility, we are inspired by the life course approach (Bailey 2009).¹ We regard temporary mobility not as a specific event but as being in relation with the individuals' life course, which is complex sets of events and transitions in different spheres of life. To understand the reasons for this (non-)mobility, it is necessary to take into account three interdependencies, embedded in life course studies (Heinz, Huinink, and Weymann 2009): that between past, present, and future; that between the different spheres of action (family, education, etc.); and that between individual action and political, economic, social, and cultural contexts. Our conceptual framework decomposes the life course into three intertwined trajectories (Rérat 2014) – sociofamilial, educational and professional, mobility. The literature review on temporary mobility is organised along these trajectories which may explain the varying propensity to be temporarily mobile.

2.1. The sociofamilial trajectory

The *sociofamilial trajectory* refers to the socioeconomic background and the familial constellation. Young adults from advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be more mobile than those from modest backgrounds (Findlay et al. 2012; King et al. 2011; King and Raghuram 2013; Waters and Brooks 2010). Three mechanisms explain how social background might relate to temporary mobility: first, temporary mobility requires financial support (or economic capital); second, it represents a way for privileged young adults to differentiate themselves from their peers and accumulate cultural capital (Gerhards 2017) and; third, privileged young adults have a wider access to higher education where temporary mobility is more widespread (see below).

More generally, according to the concept of “linked-lives” (Findlay et al. 2015), the selectiveness of temporary mobility may depend on the family environment and their attitudes towards mobility (Mulder 2007; Murphy-Lejeune 2003). Family who are or have been mobile help transmitting information about potential stays and contribute to the perception of mobility as a normal part of the life course (Beech 2015; Waters & Brooks, 2011).

Finally, women are overrepresented in the Erasmus program (European Commission 2019), regardless of the field of study (Böttcher et al. 2016). This gender difference could be in part explained by different motivations for temporary mobility. Men tend to focus on the utilitarian benefits (employability), while women have more, including hedonistic, motivations for temporary mobility (Deakin 2014; Haldimann 2022).

2.2. The educational and professional trajectory

Education is a major way to engage in temporary mobility (Smith, Rérat, and Sage 2014), that depends partly on the socioeconomic background, but also on young adults' own decisions. In Europe, education mobility is promoted by exchange programmes (Erasmus) and the harmonisation of higher education curricula (Bologna agreements). Transitions between semesters of higher education also provide time to engage in temporary mobility and this kind of experience, together with language skills, are well perceived

when entering the labour market (Waters and Brooks 2010). In contrast, even if some apprentices can accomplish (part) of their vocational training abroad, they have fewer opportunities and less time available for temporary mobility.

2.3. The mobility trajectory

The third trajectory is the *mobility trajectory*. Individuals learn to be mobile by accumulating different types of mobility experiences (Carlson 2013; Weichbrodt 2014). Some authors refer to a mobility capital (Murphy-Lejeune 2003), or transnational human capital (Gerhards 2017). This concept is also used in reference to other forms of spatial mobility, and goes by the name of spatial capital (Lévy 2014; Rérat 2018) or motility (Kaufmann and Widmer 2005). Both concepts consider an additional capital² that facilitates further mobility and could also be used in different contexts (e.g. employability). We consider this accumulation through various experiences (moves, number of foreign countries visited, migration, temporary mobility experiences), but also through language skills (which is part of the educational and professional trajectory).

Furthermore, this mobility capital can also be transmitted by parents (Kaufmann and Widmer 2005). Two ways are considered for this transmission: directly (e.g. by supporting financially or emotionally their children's mobility experience) or indirectly (e.g. by having accustomed their children to mobility through residential moves and holidays). Our definition of mobility capital also includes having family living abroad, parents' migration history and their experiences of temporary mobility. This mobility capital may partly depend on the sociofamilial trajectory, but it could also compensate for socioeconomic inequalities (e.g. by being mobile during education, which interacts with the educational trajectory).

Finally, the importance of temporary mobility varies depending on the place of residence. For example, it is more common in Southern than in Eastern Europe (Janta et al. 2019). By analogy, we consider geographical variations within Switzerland and examine the type of place of residence (urbanity gradient) and the linguistic region, which is a central cultural feature of Switzerland.

3. Context, data, and methodology

3.1. Case study

This study addresses temporary youth mobility in Switzerland, which is a particularly relevant case. It is a small country (8.5 million inhabitants) in the middle of Europe, well connected through its transport infrastructure, with a favorable economic situation.³ Its four linguistic regions⁴ and highly globalised economy require strong language and intercultural skills. Switzerland also has the advantage of allowing young people to be exposed to a different culture within the country between linguistic regions and exchanges between linguistics regions are a political objective (Tschopp 2021).

The share of the population with a university degree is low in a European perspective and vocational training is predominant (see below) as this education offers good job opportunities and salaries in Switzerland (Meyer 2018). While Switzerland does not have a tradition of a gap year as part of the transition to adulthood, Swiss university students

are more mobile than those from most other industrialised countries: 5.2% are enrolled abroad (8th rank out of the 35 OECD countries that have an average of 1.7%) (OECD 2018). Even though there is no nationwide initiative for temporary mobility in compulsory school,⁵ a similar pattern is likely to hold for the more general population of young Swiss adults for the reasons mentioned above.

3.2. Source and definitions

We use the data from the 2016/17 *Swiss federal survey of adolescents*, which focuses on young adults' life course and mobility experiences (FORS 2020). The word "adolescents" in the English survey title is somewhat misleading as the dataset represents mostly young adults aged 18 to 20. This age range falls in the middle of broader definitions of "youth" (Galland 2011) but is a particularly interesting period to study temporary mobility. Young adults have just attained their majority: they depend less on their parents, and a significant part of them do not yet have the responsibilities of adulthood, which facilitates temporary mobility.

The data collection took place amongst two populations and was, therefore, administered in two parts. The first concerns men and takes place during the military recruitment which is compulsory for all young Swiss men⁶ to determine a potential fit for a four month military service.⁷ This provides a unique opportunity to survey an almost full cohort of young men (N = 40,503). Despite the recruitment context, we do not expect bias. Participants are informed by military-independent survey administrators that their answer would only be accessible to researchers and that they do not interfere in any way with the recruitment. In order to complete the data obtained on young men, a second part of the survey concerns a representative sample of N = 2,126 young Swiss women⁸. The same questionnaire as men is administered to a certain number of young women, determined to be geographically representative from official registry (Ferrez and van den Hende 2019). The opportunity to reach out to an almost full cohort of young men is extraordinary; the sample of more than 2,000 women is also substantial (5% of the target population, which is a high share in comparison with usual polls and surveys) and completes the picture of temporary mobility experiences among young adults. In the analyses, we first focus on the population of men. Then a comparison is made with the female sample by weighting the male population to obtain a similar size (however, this reduces the precision of the results) and using logistic regressions to control for the other variables.

A limitation of both parts of the dataset is the exclusion of foreigners who represent 22% of the 18–19 year-olds in Switzerland (OFS 2017). However, our data includes many Swiss with a migration background: 37% of the respondents have at least one parent born abroad.

The definition of temporary mobility is based on the original survey (FORS 2020): a sojourn without the parents abroad or in another Swiss linguistic region. Stays in a different linguistic region are taken into account as they usually imply learning a new language and discovering a different culture. The motive of the stay has to be educational, professional or cultural; respondents were asked to exclude stays with purely touristic purposes.

The survey distinguished non-mobile⁹ young adults from those who did a short (one to three weeks) or a long stay (more than three weeks). The survey also includes long stays planned in the next three years (the time limit was designed to address more concrete

projects) and allows identifying three categories: “yes”, “I don’t know/it’s possible”, and “no”. If the interviewee has completed a short and a long stay, we consider only the long one. Intentions and actual practices may differ given unexpected constraints or opportunities; yet, intention is considered as an indicator of the appetite towards temporary mobility. Past stays provide tangible information, while planned stays make it possible to know the person’s intention at the time of the questionnaire.

3.3. Methodology

The population (Table 1) is composed mainly of 18 and 19 years old. Almost all respondents were born in Switzerland but more than a third have at least one parent born abroad. They are mostly in secondary professional and secondary general education. Two thirds have good knowledge of at least two languages. Very few live without their parents.

Our analysis consists of two steps. First, we provide descriptive statistics about the prevalence of stays, as well as their destinations and motives. Then, we apply multinomial logistic regressions to measure the impact of all explanatory variables on temporary mobility (past or planned). All stays independently on the reason (education, work, culture) are considered together as detailed analysis showed very similar trends between them (significant differences are mentioned in the results). All variables were tested to verify the absence of multicollinearity, and several robustness tests were carried out to control the dependent variables and some independent variables (education, country of birth, family living abroad, financial situation in childhood, urbanity gradient). The regressions identify statistical links between variables (but no causality) that are interpreted against the background of the literature.

Model 1 refers to past temporary mobility and compares respondents having carried out a long or a short stay to the non-mobile (reference group). We comment mainly on long stays (> three weeks) as they represent a more intense cultural immersion.

Model 2 refers to planned mobility; young adults who do not plan a temporary mobility represent the reference group to which respondents who do not know yet if they will leave and those who plan a temporary mobility are compared. We comment on the latter category, which is the most relevant.

Both models are also estimated for a dataset consisting of the sample of women and a same-sized sample of men that has been obtained by weighting the male population. This allows assessing potential gender-differences.

The analysis only includes individuals with information on all variables. Concerning the analyses on men, Model 1 includes $N = 35,373$ individuals for past stays and $N = 35,151$ for planned stays (87% of the male population). The analysis of gender includes both models with the female sample and the weighted male sample ($N = 4,252$).¹⁰ By excluding cases with missing responses, the analysis of past stays contains $N = 3,774$ individuals and that of planned stays contains $N = 3,753$ individuals (88% of the full population). The eliminated observations are similar to the full population except for a bias towards less educated individuals, which is common in surveys (Porter and Whitcomb 2005).

The explanatory variables are operationalised along the three life course trajectories (Table 1). The sociofamilial trajectory accounts for the socioeconomic background measured by the highest educational degree achieved by any parent (cultural capital) and respondents’

Table 1. (Continued).

	Non-mobile		Short stays		Long stays		Total	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Mobility trajectory								
Country of birth								
Working, not in education	8%	3%	3%	1%	2%	1%	12%	5%
In education, not working	16%	15%	15%	26%	8%	14%	39%	54%
Not in education, not work	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	5%	3%
Switzerland	57%	40%	24%	37%	13%	20%	95%	97%
Europe	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%
Other	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	4%	2%
Both Switzerland	38%	30%	17%	28%	8%	15%	63%	74%
At least one abroad	21%	11%	9%	10%	6%	6%	37%	26%
None	23%	15%	8%	14%	4%	7%	35%	36%
In same canton	29%	21%	13%	19%	7%	9%	49%	49%
In another canton	6%	4%	3%	4%	2%	3%	11%	10%
In/from another country	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	5%	5%
None	5%	10%	0%	1%	0%	1%	6%	12%
Number of foreign countries visited								
1-2	23%	38%	5%	14%	2%	5%	31%	56%
3-5	22%	36%	12%	30%	6%	14%	40%	81%
6-10	9%	14%	8%	18%	7%	16%	23%	48%
10+	37%	29%	14%	23%	7%	23%	58%	23%
No	17%	11%	10%	13%	7%	8%	34%	32%
Yes	6%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	8%	3%
Parent studied/worked abroad								
Don't know	49%	29%	20%	24%	10%	13%	80%	67%
German-speaking	7%	10%	4%	12%	3%	7%	14%	29%
French-speaking	4%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	7%	4%
Italian-speaking	17%	15%	6%	12%	3%	7%	26%	34%
Rural municipalities	27%	16%	13%	16%	7%	8%	47%	40%
Periurban and suburban areas	7%	6%	3%	4%	2%	3%	11%	14%
Small towns and regional centres	9%	4%	5%	5%	3%	3%	16%	13%
Big and medium cities	23%	38%	5%	14%	2%	5%	31%	56%
Total	21,141	784	9,154	728	5078	405	35,373	1917

Note: Due to rounding the total may not be 100%. S.D. refers to Standard Deviation.

perception of their financial situation during childhood (proxy for economic capital). The familial constellation refers to respondents' age and whether they cohabit with their parents, are in a relationship, have close or distant family abroad and have separated parents.

The educational and professional trajectory includes respondents' educational level and professional status. We consider *achieved* education for individuals having completed their education, future planned education for young adults doing a gap year and *current* education for the others. We also consider future education projects for young adults who are doing a transition year. Knowledge of non-native languages is included as it may increase the propensity to be mobile. As for some other variables, a reverse causality may be at work for past stays; this variable is included to ensure that the multinomial logistic regressions on past and planned stays are as similar as possible in order to compare their results.¹¹

The last trajectory captures mobility experiences. It refers to respondents' and parents' birthplace, moves according to the distance, the number of countries visited (including holidays), as well as parents' mobility experiences. Two measures refer to the residential context: a four-level gradient from urban to rural areas (OFS 2000) and a three-category measure for the linguistic regions.¹²

4. Varying propensions to engage in temporary mobility

4.1. An important minority of mobile youth

About 40% of the men and 59% of the women have been temporarily mobile (Table 1)¹³: 14% of the men have had at least one long mobility experience and 26% at least a short one. For women the prevalence is higher, 21% have experienced a long and 38% a short stay. A higher share of young men (30%) and women (48%) are planning a temporary mobility in the next three years. In addition, around a quarter (23% of both men and women) consider it a possibility.

Most long stays were spent abroad. English-speaking countries rank highest for men and women (UK: respectively 23% and 20%; USA: 18% and 12%; Canada: both 6%), followed by neighbouring countries (sharing a language with Switzerland): Germany (respectively 13% and 10%), France (12% and 10%) and Italy (6% and 3%). Only 13% of the men, but 29% of the women have been to another Swiss language region. The interest in other Swiss linguistic regions remains low for planned mobility for men and women (8%). 63% of men and 70% of women plan to go to another country while 29% of men and 22% of women do not know yet.

A majority of long stays are educational (62% for men; 71% for women), such as linguistic stays (within or outside the school context) or university mobility. Stays with a professional purpose (e.g. internship, volunteering) only account for 10% of men and 11% of women.¹⁴ Finally, 28% of men went on cultural stays, such as backpackers, while fewer women chose this type of stay (17%).

4.2. Predicting temporary mobility based on life trajectories

Now, we determine if the differences in Table 1 are statistically significant in predicting mobility when all variables are controlled for. Multinomial logistic regressions measure the influence of each variable in terms of odds ratios. An odds ratio represents the ratio of

the odds of an event (here a temporary mobility experience) occurring in one group compared to another. A value higher than one implies that the group is more likely to be mobile. An odds ratio below one implies a lower propensity.

The first logistic regression compares individuals who experienced a long stay, a short stay and the non-mobile. We first focus on men's long stays, then compare the results to those of the complementary analyses (short and planned stays) and finally elaborate on gender-differences (Table A1 in appendices).

While stemming from the same model, the results are presented in separate figures. The odds ratios are represented by black dots. The horizontal lines around the dots represent the 95% confidence intervals (CI). If the odds ratio of a modality of a variable is higher than one (at the right-hand side of the vertical line) the propensity to become mobile is higher compared to the reference category. If it is below one (at the left-hand side of the vertical line), the propensity is lower. If the CI crosses the axis, the modality does not differ significantly from the reference group.

A strong link is observed between the socioeconomic background and temporary mobility (Figure 1). Young adults' propensity to be mobile increases when their parents' education exceeds mandatory school, and when they had a good financial situation during childhood. Both cultural and economic capital are important: financial resources facilitate mobility and higher educated parents are likely to be more aware of the potential benefits of temporary mobility.

Each 1-year-increase in age rises the propensity to be mobile (Figure 2). Living without parents slightly increases the propensity while the opposite is found regarding divorced parents (which could imply fewer financial resources). Finally, we observe a strong positive relationship for individuals with close family abroad from whom they can potentially benefit or imitate by encouraging a temporary mobility elsewhere. Being in a relationship is not significantly related, which may be due to a time difference between the mobility experience and the survey.

Individuals in secondary general or tertiary education are more mobile than those in secondary professional education (apprenticeship) (Figure 3). Respondents' professional status has weaker links with temporary mobility but confirms that the least mobile are those working and studying (mostly apprenticeship). This result confirms the importance of young adults' educational pathways which are partly independent of their parents' education.

Several factors explain the temporary mobility differential across educational levels. Young adults in secondary general or tertiary education have access to more opportunities (e.g. programmes), their mobility experiences may be more rewarded in the labour market and they have more time (e.g. between academic years).¹⁵

Finally, we observe a strong link between mobility and the number of spoken languages (not shown; the odds ratio for speaking more than four languages is 4.4). However, the causality may be two-directional. Sojourns may contribute to linguistic skills while mastering a language facilitates temporary mobility as we will see for planned mobility.

Temporary mobility is influenced by other mobility forms (Figure 4). Young adults born outside Europe and those with at least one parent born abroad are less mobile than those born in Switzerland. This may be explained by the diversity of migration in terms of

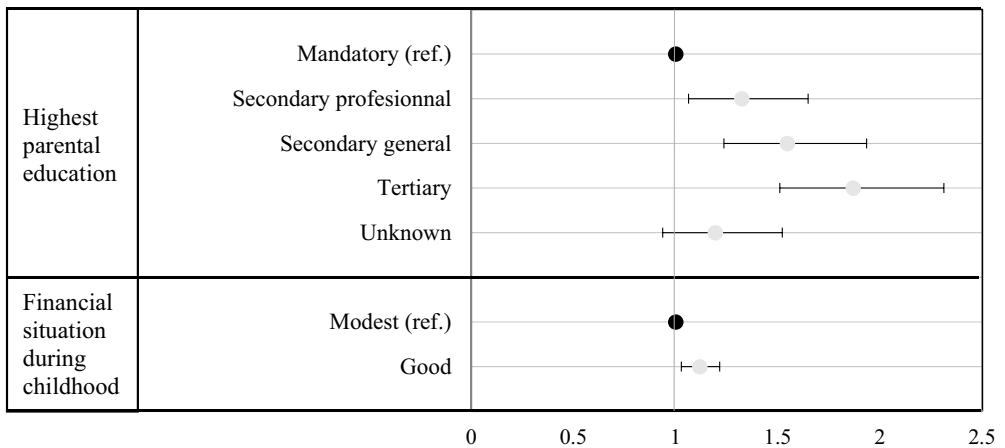


Figure 1. Influence of socioeconomic background on the propensity to experience a long stay (Model 1).

distances and ease to travel (as shown by the absence of a difference between individuals born in Switzerland or in Europe) or a lower socioeconomic status (not entirely taken into account by the indicators of socioeconomic background).

Having moved in the past (particularly long distances), having visited many countries (Figure 5), having parents who were themselves temporarily mobile and having a close family member living abroad relate to experiencing a long stay. This reveals a reproduction of mobility and points towards an accumulation of a mobility capital that is, at least partly, independent of young adults’ families’ economic and cultural capital. We have tested an interaction between parental education and the number of countries visited to assess the extent to which the relationship between the number of

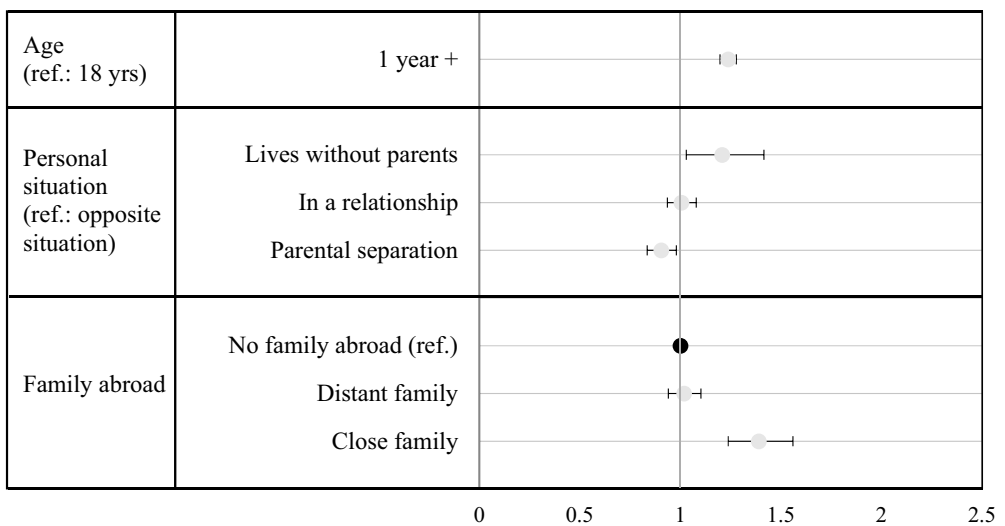


Figure 2. Influence of the family constellation on the propensity to experience a long stay (Model 1).

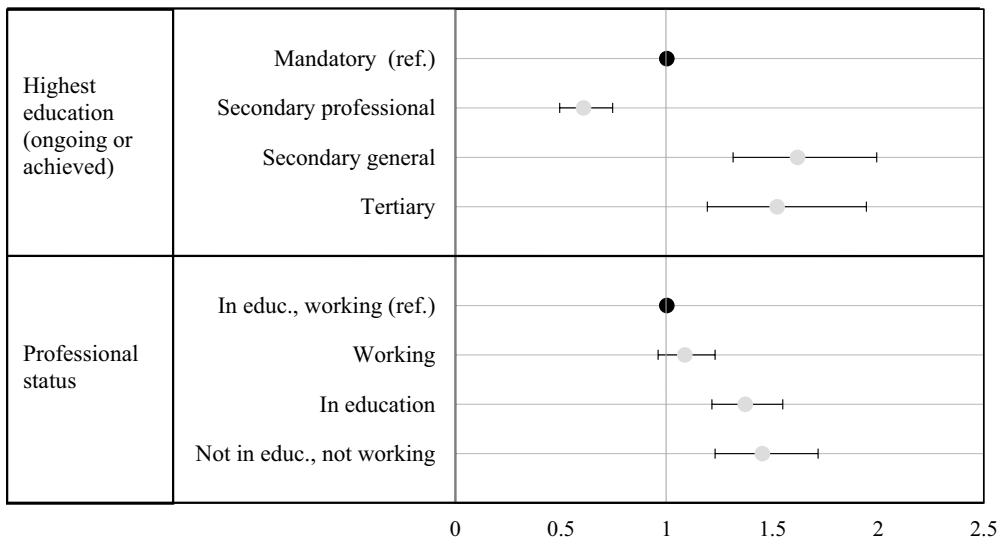


Figure 3. Influence of educational and professional trajectory on the propensity to experience a long stay (Model 1).

countries visited depends on cultural capital. The hypothesis was that there was a positive relationship between the two variables. However, young adults who have parents with tertiary education but have visited fewer than three countries are less likely to be temporarily mobile than those who have parents with primary education but who have visited more than ten countries. Hence, individuals with lower levels of cultural capital can develop a mobility capital that can foster temporary mobility experiences, and the opposite is also true: individuals from a privileged background who have not developed a mobility capital are less mobile.

Turning to the residential context (Figure 6), no difference is found according to the urbanity gradient. Young adults from the French-speaking part are more mobile than those from the German-speaking part but the latter do not significantly differ from those in the Italian-speaking part. This may be explained by the greater incentive for French-speakers, as a minority compared to German-speakers, to speak a foreign language. Such an incentive is not observed for the Italian-speakers – who are an even smaller minority – as far as past stays are concerned. This is certainly due to the fact that they finish high school at an older age than respondents in the other cantons. However, they are more likely to become temporarily mobile in a near future (see below) as it is even more crucial for them to speak other (national) languages to enter the labour market.

4.3. Short stays are more accessible

Model 1 also reveals some interesting observations regarding short stays. Short stays are more easily accessible in terms of time and costs and the selectiveness is weaker. The socioeconomic background is significant through parental education but not through

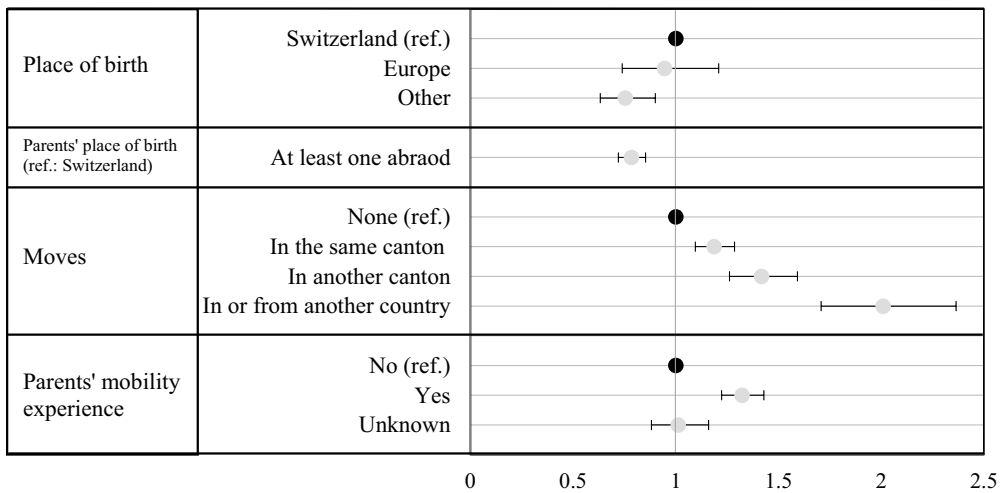


Figure 4. Influence of mobility trajectory on the propensity to experience a long stay (Model 1).

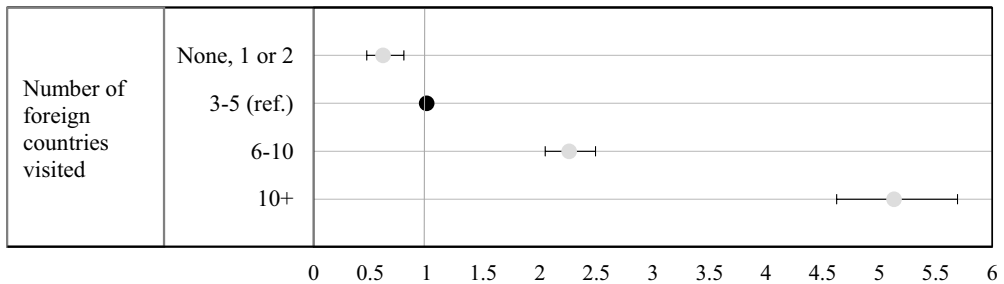


Figure 5. Influence of the number of foreign countries visited on the propensity to experience a long stay (Model 1).

respondents' financial situation during childhood. Short stays can be less expensive financially and therefore more accessible. The propensity to have made a short stay increases for employed individuals, as short stays are more easily accessible during vacations. A reproduction of mobility is also observed but to a weaker extent: having family abroad is not significant.

4.4. The selectiveness of mobility aspirations

Model 2 analyses planned temporary mobility (Table A1 in appendices). The influence of the socioeconomic background is weaker for planned than for past stays. The difference across parental educational levels is less pronounced, and the financial situation in childhood is insignificant. This may be because financial barriers are not concrete yet or that more opportunities exist. There is no significant difference depending on whether young

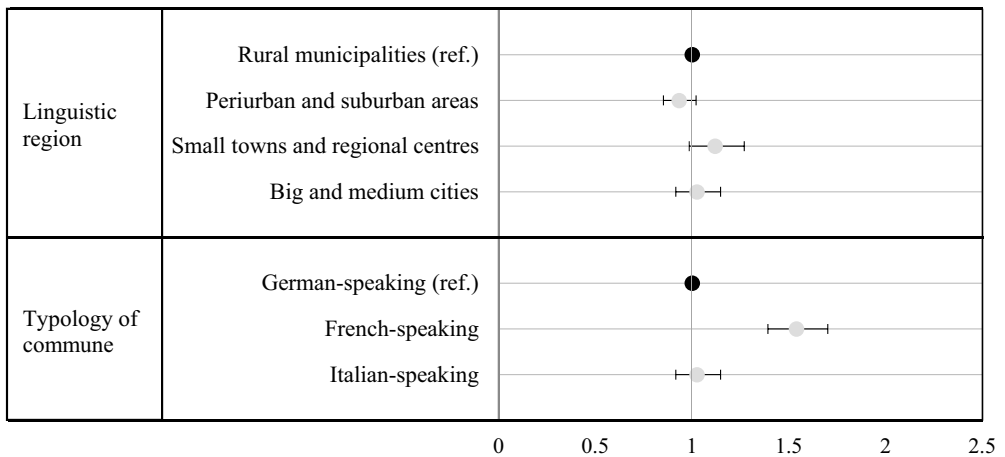


Figure 6. Influence of the residential context on the propensity to experience a long stay (Model 1).

adults live with their parents and whether their parents are divorced. In contrast, being in a relationship represents a barrier. The same is observed for age; respondents are likely to take on professional and family-related responsibilities.

There is a stronger impact of education on planned than on past mobility: (future) university students have more opportunities and time and higher anticipated career returns.

For the mobility trajectory, the only difference compared to past stays is the absence of a link with having moved houses. The importance of mobility capital is again revealed and reinforced by the observation that past mobility positively influences planned mobility. Italian-speakers are most likely to plan a mobility, suggesting that temporary mobility is crucial for linguistic minorities.

4.5. Gender and temporary mobility

To assess potential gender-differences, the models were also tested for the dataset including men and women. Women are more mobile than men, all other things being equal (Figure 7). This holds for long, short and planned stays.

This gender-difference could be explained by several factors that cannot be tested with the data source. Women could have more diverse motivations than men, as suggested by the literature. In Switzerland, the compulsory military service for men may contribute to

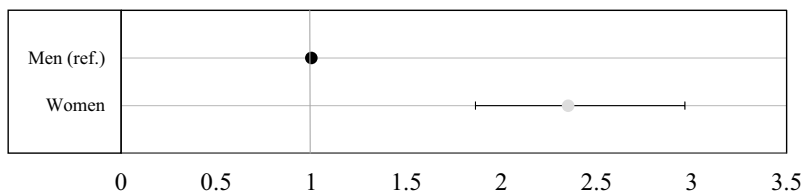


Figure 7. Influence of gender on the propensity to experience a long stay.

reducing their propensity for temporary mobility while women have more time. Motivations and participation by gender may also differ depending on the type of stay: more men than women went on cultural stays.

Finally, the results for the three life course trajectories follow the above-described patterns, i.e. the coefficients point in the same direction. However, due to the smaller sample size, the significance for parental education decreases and other factors (age, being in a relationship and having family abroad) are no longer significant.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Due to the lack of large-scale data, little is known about the prevalence and the underlying varying propensity of temporary mobility among the young adult population. Our study overcomes this shortcoming by drawing on a large Swiss sample and aimed at identifying a large array of factors across three intertwined life trajectories, enabling or inhibiting temporary mobility. The rise of this phenomenon is emblematic of the growing importance of mobility in society, of its valorisation (e.g. employability) but also of the inequalities generated by the selectiveness (Cresswell 2010). While it becomes a norm for some young adults (39%/61% of young Swiss men/women have been temporarily mobile, 30%/48% plan a mobility), temporary mobility is also selective, and reinforces existing social inequalities.

Our results extend a literature that often focuses on specific types of temporary mobilities (Mohsin and Ryan 2003) or specific types of population (such as university students). We propose an approach based on the life course (Bailey 2009) and the resulting interdependencies of past, present and future events in the various spheres of life (family, education and work, previous mobility experiences, etc.) (Heinz, Huinink, and Weymann 2009). This approach allows us to account for a large number of discriminating factors relating to the various dimensions of the life course.

Temporary mobility is more common for individuals with a privileged background (as identified by the literature; e.g. Findlay et al. 2012; King et al. 2011), but also depends on young adults' educational pathways. Although a better economic background may encourage temporary mobility, higher education has a main driving role that can be explained by more opportunities and time as well as a higher value conferred on temporary mobility in the economic sectors employing university graduates. The latter implies that it could also be a strategy for young adults to boost their CV (Frändberg 2015; Gerhards 2017; Janta et al. 2019).

Our study highlights the role of previous mobility experiences, including practices and skills that, taken together, constitute a mobility capital (Gerhards 2017; Kaufmann 2016; Lévy 2014; Murphy-Lejeune 2003; Rérat 2018). Young adults learn to be mobile and previous mobility experiences (including holidays and residential moves) and skills (e.g. languages) increase temporary mobility. In the light of the literature and our results, it is likely that this capital is also useful for other types of mobility, yet further studies should investigate this issue. Our study also highlights the transmission of this mobility capital between family members (Kaufmann and Widmer 2005; Mulder 2007). The role of the family context does not only refer to financial means (as shown by the socioeconomic background) and social ties (e.g. being in a relationship decreases future mobility) but also to mobility experiences. A close family member living abroad and

parents who studied or worked abroad foster temporary mobility through advice, information, encouragement or imitation. Finally, our study has analysed the role of mobility capital alongside cultural capital: a favourable socioeconomic background increases the probability to become mobile, but this requires specific conditions. An individual with fewer financial resources but who has experienced different types of mobility (such as travel for holidays or moving) has a higher propensity to engage in a temporary mobility.

Several statistics indicate that women are more mobile than men (Böttcher et al. 2016; European Commission 2019). In our study, the influence of gender is controlled for all the dimensions of the life course and shows that, all other things being equal, women are more mobile. Therefore, this difference cannot be explained by other characteristics. Several aspects may explain this result, including the Swiss context with the obligatory military for men or different motivations to engage in temporary mobility depending on gender. The factors explaining gender-differences and motivations require more research, particularly between hedonism and temporary mobility.

Despite its advantage of including a wide range of factors for a large population of young adults', there are limits of a quantitative approach. We have identified statistical relations between variables. Qualitative and ethnographic research is necessary to deepen the understanding of these relations and their underlying mechanisms (notably in terms of gender and the way a mobility capital is accumulated and transmitted) and on the motivations and barriers stated by young adults. Moreover, the Swiss context is particularly favourable for temporary mobility. It would be interesting to carry out a similar analysis in less economically favourable contexts.

Finally, from a policy-making perspective, our results show the importance to consider the selectiveness of temporary mobility and to guarantee equitable access. Some young adults are excluded from an increasingly important phenomenon notably because of their social background, education curriculum, or lack of previous mobility experiences. Given the benefits of temporary mobility on interculturality (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003) and the importance of promoting exchanges between linguistic regions in Switzerland, policy makers should increase the possibilities for young adults to have a first experience of mobility that could lead to others later in the life course, allowing them to accumulate a mobility capital. In particular, policies should incentivise and increase the possibilities for a wider range of young adults to become mobile and improve access to temporary mobility, particularly for apprentices.

Notes

1. A strict definition of the life course approach would imply observing the interactions between all the elements of the life course. Here, we are inspired by it and reconstruct the trajectories according to the factors that are likely to influence the propensity for temporary mobility and data availability.
2. The term capital refers to Bourdieu (1979). He considers individuals as possessing varying amounts of capital which, in turn, determines their position in social space. He characterizes economic capital as financial assets; cultural capital as education and knowledge; and social capital as networks and relations.
3. For example, in 2017, 8% of young Swiss people were unemployed, compared to an average of 14.7% in Europe (Eurostat 2021).

4. 70.6% of the Swiss population is German-speaking, 24.8% French-speaking, 4.3% Italian-speaking and 0.3% Romanche-speaking.
5. The Swiss school system is organized at the cantonal level and is not aligned at the national level.
6. Except those with specific double nationalities, those with severe disabilities and those in prison.
7. The military service does not start at the end of the recruitment, but take places in the following month. Young men unfit for the army join the civil protection; those who are fit for the army can alternatively apply for the civil service.
8. Women who participate in the recruitment do so voluntarily; hence, they represent a specific population and are excluded from this study (N = 263).
9. Young adults who are categorized as temporarily non-mobile may be mobile in another context (tourism, moves, etc.).
10. We assign a weight of 0.052 for each male response to a weight of 1 for each female response.
11. We have estimated the model without the variable and find similar results.
12. Romanche-speakers are matched according to the language of the questionnaire (most German, some Italian).
13. For respondents indicating a short and a long stay, the latter is considered.
14. The shares increase for planned stays: professional stays then account for 30% of women's and 18% of men's stays.
15. The reported indicator combines achieved with current education (see above). A sensitivity test was performed which only includes achieved education. The results confirm the main findings, except that tertiary education is non-significant, which is probably due to the small number of individuals who have finished tertiary education.
16. The International Standard Classification of Education (UNESCO) is the international reference classification for organizing education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields.

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Data availability statement

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