

# The Decision To Set Up Home Independently In Spain: Explanatory Factors

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## ABSTRACT

*Young people today are leaving the parental home; i.e., living independently at increasingly later ages. In Mediterranean Europe in particular, most males, and a large portion of females, continue to live in their parents' home until they are into their thirties.*

*In the case of Spain, in recent years, a series of economic and social changes have led to a rise in young people's uptake of non-compulsory stages of education, resulting in increasingly late arrival on the job market (with this extended education and also high youth unemployment), characterized by higher temporary employment rates and greater vulnerability in the process of joining the labor force than previous cohorts. As regards to living independently, despite a very large increase in housing stock over the past ten years, young Spaniards encounter increasing difficulties in gaining access to housing because of higher purchase prices and the structure of the rental market.*

*This paper will study the socioeconomic factors that have influenced the young Spanish population when deciding to leave the family home (i.e., becoming autonomous).*

**Keywords:** Young People; Independence; Leaving The Parental Home; Housing

## INTRODUCTION

Young people's leaving the parental home at later ages has a series of notable social and economic consequences. Setting up a new home is an economic decision in that it involves the emergence of new consumer centers and new decision-making units in the spheres of employment, consumption and investment. Young people need to consider whether the disutility of living with their parents (given the lack of autonomy and independence) is offset by the utility of the income and consumer goods that parents make available to their offspring when living together. Independent living is therefore a decision with costs (setting-up and housing) and benefits (freedom, autonomy, forming one's own home). An empirical analysis of the decision to leave home will take account of various personal characteristics and of the young person's environment (youth labor market and housing market in the area lived in) and of the psychological cost of living with one's parents (considering indicators of the relative permissiveness of the young respondent's parents and ideological differences between parents and offspring).

Two major changes that occur in the transition from adolescence to young adulthood are forming one's own independent home and joining the labor force (Colom Andrés et al., 2003).

Regarding this demographic trend, there is empirical evidence for Spain from the 90s. For example, Fernández Cordon (1997) shows with Eurostat data that in 1994, 64.8% of Spanish males aged 25-29 and 47.6% of females in the same age group continued to live with their parents due to the longer duration of education and the poorer conditions in which young people joined the labor force (higher unemployment rates than for older adults, increasing flexibility and insecurity in employment).

Years later, Jiménez et al. (2008) looked at the process of young people leaving home in Spain on the basis of a study prepared by the Spanish Sociological Research Centre (CIS) for 2005 (2006), concluding that if education raises expectations of getting a good job, young people are interested in getting more of it, but, in doing so, they join the labor force later and therefore set up home independently later.

Moreover, report 3/2002 by the Spanish Economic and Social Council (CES) also notes the fact that Spain is one of the countries in which young people's uptake of non-compulsory levels of education has most risen and that youngsters join the labor force, on average, at an increasingly advanced age, with higher temporary employment rates and more geographic mobility in these initial stages as compared to previous youth cohorts. Also, despite the large rise in new housing stock in Spain, young people face increasing difficulties in gaining access to such housing.

The objectives set on undertaking this study were to conduct a comparative analysis of the influence on leaving home of demographic characteristics (sex and age), labor force participation (in work as against not in work, active as against inactive), the personal cost associated with living in the parental home, etc.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In this study, the authors use the database from survey 2733 by the Spanish Sociological Research Centre (CIS) for 2007, a cross-sectional survey.

The field work was carried out on a representative sample of both sexes aged 15 to 29 that initially consisted of 1,500 interviews, of which 1,460 cases were valid and analyzed.

Survey 2733 gathers information on three areas of opinion: 1) how the elderly are treated in society today, 2) family climate (relationships with parents), and 3) economic and residential (in)dependence and issues of gender equality. Such questions canvassing opinions and other subjective questions will be supplemented with key socio-demographic characteristics, such as sex, age, nationality (and time of residence in Spain), marital status, educational level, type of education received, religion, employment situation (and, for those in work, main features of their job) and social class (approximately according to the educational level of both parents).

The database will be supplemented with two "environmental" variables: youth unemployment rate and temporary employment rate (ages 16-24) and average housing price (per square meter). The youth unemployment and temporary employment rates were taken from the micro-data in the labor force survey for the third quarter of 2007. Average residential prices were taken from the Housing Ministry website.

The authors will give particular attention to variables relating to economic and residential (in)dependence and local labor market conditions, residential prices and family climate. Family (in)dependence is described in terms of socio-demographic characteristics (employment situation, educational level) and local ones (unemployment rate and temporary employment rate, residential prices, home size, etc.). These and family climate indicators (measured by parental permissiveness and ideological rapport between parents and offspring) will be linked to variables identifying residential (in)dependence.

## **EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

In the empirical analysis, the authors seek to link residential independence with three sets of explanatory factors:

1. Socio-demographic (human capital, sex and employment situation)
2. Environmental (labor and residential markets)
3. Psychological cost of living or cohabitating with parents

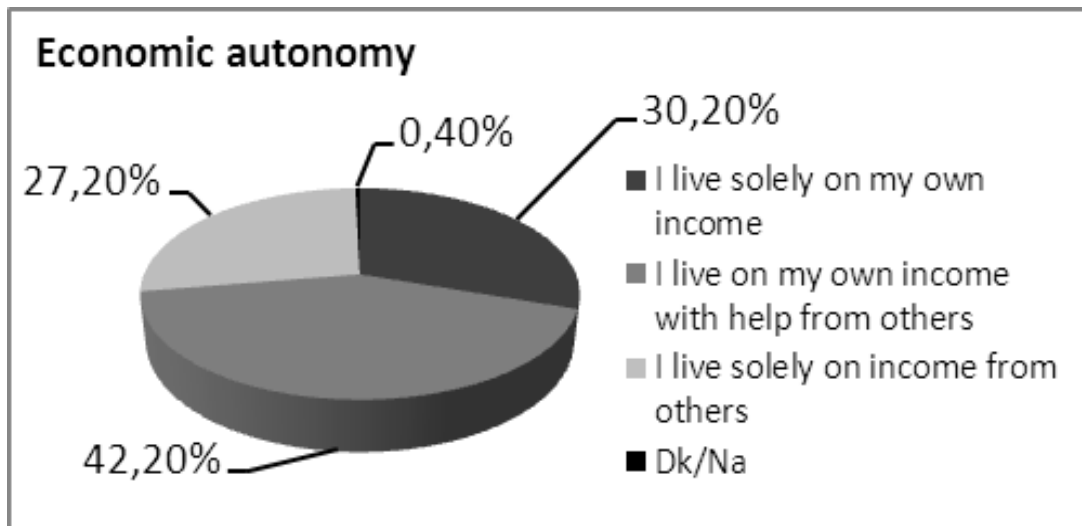
From the data collected in Table 1, the authors conclude that the valid cases were 51.30% males and 48.70% females, that most of the respondents were aged between 25 and 29, that most of them (37.4%) had completed post-compulsory secondary education, that 13.0% were foreign, 28.8% inactive, 10.0% unemployed, and the remaining 61.2% employed.

**Table 1:** Population By Sex, Age, Educational Standard, Nationality Or Employment Situation

		<b>Percentage</b>
Sex	Male	51.30%
	Female	48.70%
Age	15 to 19	25.70%
	20 to 24	32.50%
	25 to 29	41.80%
		<b>Percentage</b>
Educational standard	Illiterate	0.50%
	Primary	11.60%
	Compulsory secondary education	34.20%
	Post-compulsory secondary education	37.40%
	Undergraduate higher education	8.70%
Nationality	Postgraduate education	0.40%
	Spanish	86.80%
	Foreign	13.00%
Employment situation	Don't know/no answer (Dk/Na)	0.10%
	Inactive	28.80%
	Unemployed	10.00%
	Employed	61.20%

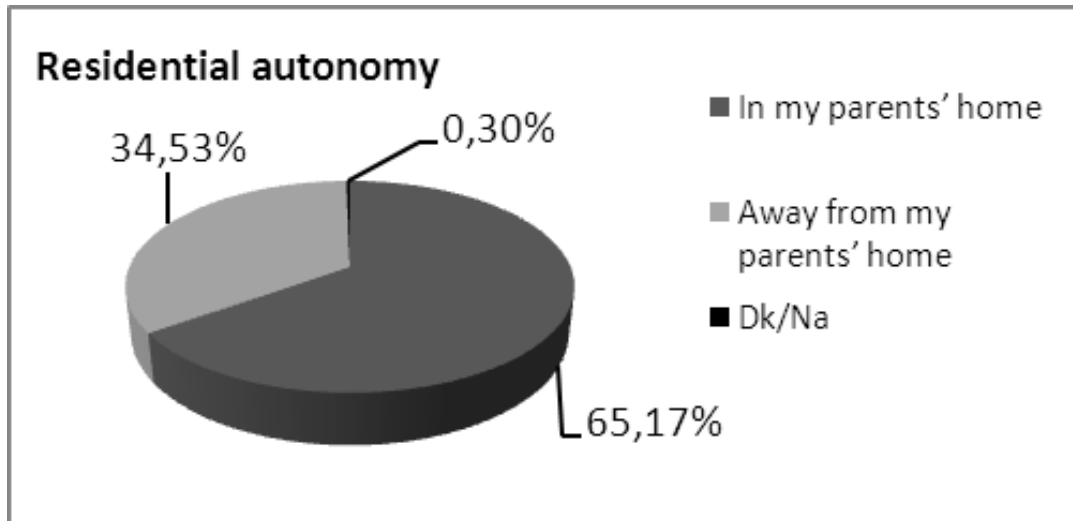
Source: Survey 2733, CIS

Figure 1, representing the “economic autonomy” variable, shows that a majority (42.2%) need both their own income and income from others in order to subsist. Figure 2, representing the “residential autonomy” variable, shows that most young people in the sample (65.1%) continue to live with their family of origin.



Survey 2733, CIS

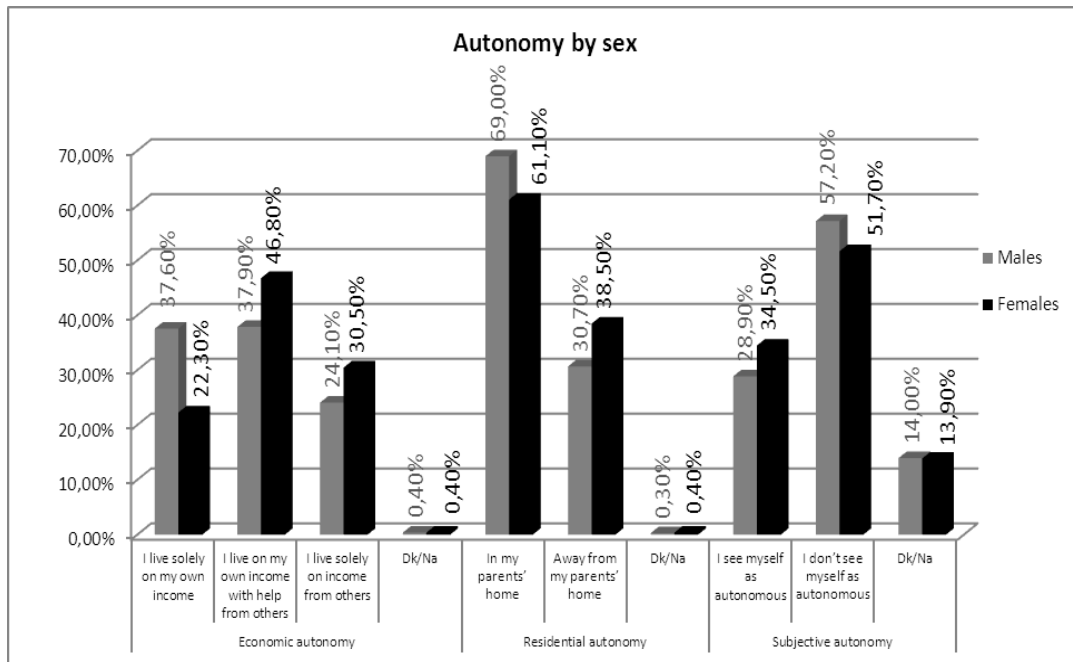
**Figure 1:** Economic Autonomy



Source: Survey 2733, CIS

Figure 2: Residential Autonomy

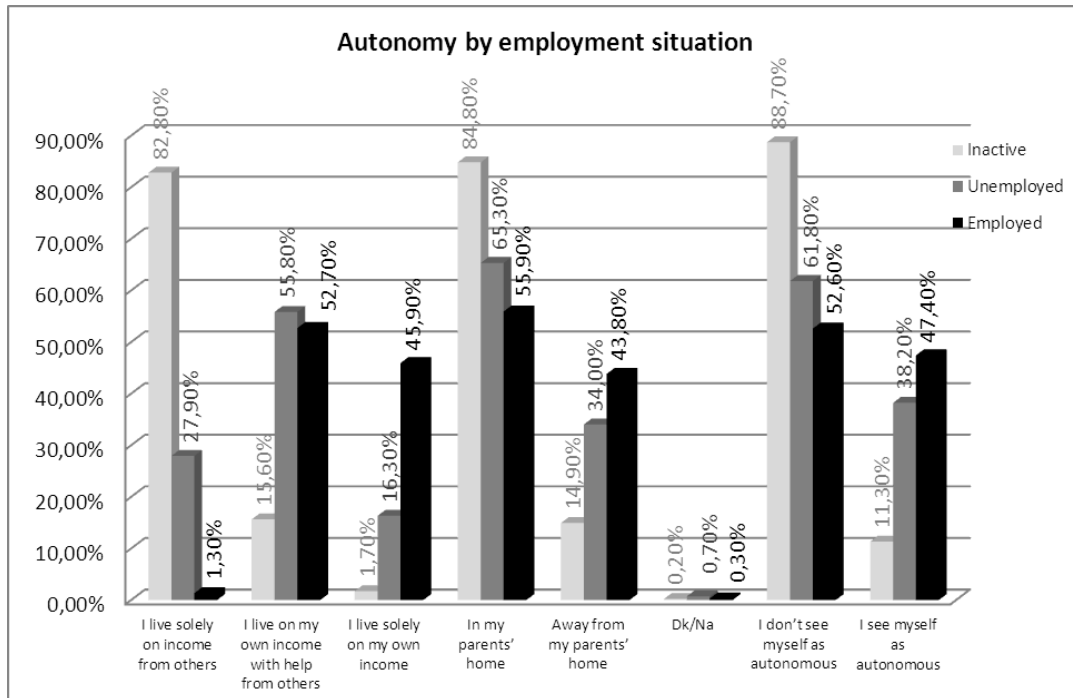
Figure 3, representing the autonomy variable sex, shows that, in the case of men, the majority (69%) still live at home with their parents, 37.90% of men live on their own income with help from others, and 57.20% are not considered autonomous. In women, 61.10% of them live with their parents, 46.80% live on their income with help from others, and 51.70% are not considered the same so autonomous.



Source: Survey 2733, CIS

Figure 3: Autonomy By Sex

Figure 4, the most inactive, unemployed and active live in their parents' house and don't see themselves as autonomous. On the other hand, most of the inactive live solely on their own income while unemployed and employed live on their own income with help from others.



Source: Survey 2733, CIs

Figure 4: Autonomy By Employment Situation

**CONCLUSIONS**

Regarding residential autonomy, the authors find that 38.5% of females live away from the parental home as opposed to 30.7% of men. Accordingly, the authors may say that women start to live on their own income together with that of others (their husband or partner) and away from their parental home before men do.

As to the correlation between employment situation (employed, unemployed or inactive) and autonomy, the authors find that active persons become autonomous before inactive ones and that within the active population, those in work become autonomous (in all senses) before those who are unemployed.

The authors also find that 28.9% of males see themselves as autonomous, as against 34.5% of females, and that 57.2% of males do not see themselves as autonomous, as against 51.7% of females. The percentage of young people who don't know whether to see themselves as autonomous is very similar in both sexes - about 14%. From the data, they deduce that young Spanish women, though economically less independent than men, leave the parental home earlier than the latter and see themselves as more autonomous. So for women, economic independence is not as an important a determinant of residential and subjective independence as for men.

Regarding labor force participation (the correlation between being active or inactive and autonomy), the authors find that active people become autonomous before inactive ones and that within the active population, those in work become autonomous (in all senses) before those who are out of work.

Accordingly, the study has served to explore the possible characteristics influencing young people's independence, to ascertain the limited influence of environmental aspects and, by contrast, the large influence that may be had by the drawbacks of the lack of freedom and autonomy involved in young people living with their parents.

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**NOTES**