

# Timing of transitions, their patterns, and antecedents from emerging to established adulthood in the context of a changing society

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on life transition patterns and their psychosocial antecedents in a cohort of established adults who grew up during major macrosocial changes in the Czech society. The Generation 2020 longitudinal study followed former university students since 2007. The first wave occurred when the students were 18–32 years old; the second wave occurred when they were 29–43 years old. In the first wave, they completed questionnaires on identity styles, emotional control, and self-efficacy (in terms of perceived control). In the second wave, they completed the Life History Calendar, focusing on the timing of major life transitions: moving from the parental home, entry into cohabitation, marriage, parenthood, and regular employment. Latent class analysis revealed four patterns of life transitions: work-oriented singles, normative timing, family-oriented, and work-oriented group with delayed partnership and family. Further analysis showed that emotional control and self-efficacy were not related to any pattern of life transitions, but several identity styles were significant predictors, particularly for patterns related to the early timing of marriage and family. The results indicate a certain change in the patterns of life transitions compared to older age cohorts and the importance of self-concept for later psychosocial functioning.

**Keywords:** identity, control, life transition, macrosocial change, established adulthood

## Časovno pojavljanje življenjskih prehodov, njihovi vzorci in napovedniki med prehodom v odraslost in odraslostjo v kontekstu spreminjajoče se družbe

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**Povzetek:** Študija se osredotoča na življenjske prehode in njihove psihološke napovednike v kohorti odraslih, ki so odraščali v času velikih makrosocialnih sprememb v češki družbi. Vzdolžna študija Generation 2020 je sledila nekdanjim študentom od leta 2007. Prvi zajem podatkov je potekal, ko so bili udeleženci stari med 18 in 32 leti, drugi zajem pa takrat, ko so bili stari med 29 in 43 leti. V prvem zajemu so udeleženci izpolnili vprašalnike o identitetnih slogih, nadzoru nad čustvi in samoučinkovitosti (v smislu zaznanega nadzora). V drugem zajemu so izpolnili Koledar življenjske zgodovine, ki se je osredotočal na časovno pojavljanje večjih življenjskih prehodov, kot so odselitev iz gospodinjstva staršev, začetek sobivanja s partnerjem, poroka, starševstvo in redna zaposlitev. Analiza latentnih razredov je odkrila štiri vzorce življenjskih prehodov: na delo osredotočeni samski posamezniki, normativno časovno pojavljanje, osredotočeni na družino ter osredotočeni na družino z zakasnjanim partnerstvom in oblikovanjem družine. Nadaljnje analize so pokazale, da nadzor nad čustvi in samoučinkovitost nista bila povezana z nobenim od vzorcev prehodov, so pa bili pomembni napovedniki različni identitetni slogi, še posebej pri vzorcih prehodov, povezanih z zgodnjim pojavljanjem poroke in oblikovanja družine. Rezultati kažejo na nekatere spremembe v vzorcih življenjskih prehodov v primerjavi s starejšimi kohortami in na pomembnost samozaznav za kasnejše psihološko delovanje ljudi.

**Ključne besede:** identiteta, nadzor, življenjski prehodi, makrosocialne spremembe, odraslost

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Experiencing major life events and transitions is an important aspect of adult functioning that can have an impact on many areas of human life. However, in contemporary society, the postponement of mature adult commitments often occurs under the influence of characteristics of emerging adulthood, particularly under the influence of a prolonged psychosocial moratorium and exploration of identity (Arnett, 2012, 2015). In particular, this has implications for the next period of life, which psychologists have labelled as established adulthood (Mehta et al., 2020). Therefore, this study focused on the timing of important life transitions during emerging and established adulthood and their psychosocial antecedents from emerging adulthood related to identity and the level of emotional and perceived control that could have shaped their complex patterns. Furthermore, all this was studied within the broader framework of macrosocial changes (i.e., political and cultural) that have occurred during the youth of current established adults growing up in the changing Czech society (Klicperová et al., 1997; OECD, 2017).

The timing of important *life transitions* is based not only on individual decisions but also on society and the changes that occur there. These apply mainly to meeting developmental tasks, experiencing life events that form their development in adulthood, and changes in their timing in life. Timing of life transitions is a key aspect of the life course approach (Elder, 1998), which deals mostly with the timing of transitions in emerging adulthood, entry into marriage, parenthood, entry into regular employment, moving from the parental home and finishing studies. Settersten (2007) described them as the *five main life transitions*. Current research shows significant changes in their timing, which demonstrate themselves in increasing age when they occur (Arnett, 2015). An important factor in postponing the entry into life transitions is macrosocial, especially the economic conditions of a specific country. Life of each individual is, according to life course theory, anchored in a historical and social environment, which influences their decisions, experiencing transitions, and course of trajectories (Elder, 1998). Society expectations, habits, or norms of behaviour can accelerate or slow them down and even lead to significant changes throughout life course. In this framework, Shanahan (2000) describes the anchorage of an individual's activities in a wider environment (bounded agency), Elder (1998) describes (dis)harmony of transitions and trajectories in a wider environment (goodness of fit). Important social changes can thus influence the life course and timing of life transitions in a very significant way (Juang & Silbereisen, 2001; Schulenberg & Schoon, 2012).

In this context of rescheduling important life transitions, Mehta et al. (2020) recently introduced a new developmental model of *established adulthood* as a psychosocial, macrosocially embedded construct that describes the consequences of postponing adult commitments in emerging adulthood among people between 30 and 45 years of age. In the area of psychosocial functioning, this period, in general, shows the postponement of adult commitments that is typical for the earlier period of emerging adulthood. These include, in particular, the higher age of establishing one's own family, the later entry into regular employment associated with more frequent university studies that are typical for the current generation of young people under 30 years of age (Arnett,

2015). The postponement is reflected in the characteristics of established adulthood that distinguish it from the original conceptions of early adulthood, emerging adulthood and middle adulthood. In contrast to emerging adulthood (people aged 18 to 29), it is a period of greater stability of life (especially in partnership, family and work domain), of more extensive focus on other people, of more stable perception of developmental status (i.e., considering oneself an adult), of solidifying identity, of closing possibilities in certain life domains (i.e., work, partnership, and family), and of a period of prominent work-family conflict (Mehta et al., 2020; Reifman & Niehuis, 2022). Compared to the classical conception of early adulthood, which refers to a relatively broad age range from 20 to 40 years and encompasses the diverse manifestations of adulthood ranging from entry into adulthood to the so-called true adulthood (Arnett, 2012; Levinson, 1986), established adulthood refers only to the second half of early adulthood, which is characterised by a greater stabilization of adult commitments in general (Mehta et al., 2020). In contrast to traditionally understood middle and older adulthood (40-65 years; Lachman, 2004), more distinctive biological changes associated with ageing have not yet emerged; on the contrary, in many areas of psychosocial functioning, established adulthood can be considered as an imagined "peak of life" (Mehta et al. 2020). In terms of cultural and historical embeddedness of established adulthood, macrosocial aspects play an important role as the requirements of each society change over time (Elder, 1998; Mehta & LaRiviere, 2022). This is especially applicable for this study, as it focused on patterns of life transitions based on their timing and their antecedents in the generation of current Czech established adults growing up when significant macrosocial changes in the Czech society (i.e., political and cultural changes during the late 1980s and at the beginning of 1990s related to downfall of communism; Klicperová et al., 1997; OECD, 2017; for more information, see Current Study) occurred.

*Identity* is an important condition for assuming adult roles (Erikson, 2002). In the period of emerging adulthood, which directly precedes established adulthood and influences its level of adult commitments (Reifman & Niehuis, 2022), identity exploration is one of the key features that contributes to the psychosocial moratorium and postponement of adult commitments (Arnett, 2015). Therefore, characteristics related to one's own identity could be considered as key aspects associated with psychosocial functioning. In this research, Berzonsky's (2011) social-cognitive model of identity was used. It describes three identity styles (i.e., informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity) and identity commitment. Different identity styles lead to an emphasis on different intra- and interpersonal characteristics, social situations, and life values (Smits et al., 2011). In the framework of personal maturity, informational identity is associated with cognitive complexity and an achieved or moratorium identity status; normative identity is related to foreclosed identity status, a limited tolerance for uncertainty, and a strong need for structure and closure; and diffuse-avoidant identity is connected to diffusion identity status (Berzonsky et al., 2011, 2013).

In this study, *perceived control* was defined in terms of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs are related to the pursuit of life goals, persistence, and subjective belief that one can manage challenging life situations (Ziegelmann & Lippke, 2007). Emerging adulthood is generally considered to be a period of stress and instability caused by significant life events, such as graduating from the university, entering the labour market, moving from the parental home, or entering a partnership. Although young people are only beginning to choose their adult life goals and commitments during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2015), it is during this period that self-efficacy is generally quite high and gradually increases as people optimise their abilities and resources leading to the fulfilment of life goals and commitments in later life, i.e., established and middle adulthood (Caprara et al., 2003).

Similar to self-efficacy, *emotional control*, as a form of emotional regulation, is an important aspect of psychosocial functioning in emerging adulthood and the ability to cope with the demands of society. It can be viewed as ways people modify their emotional responses and encompass executive functions, cognitive complexity, and understanding emotions relevant to monitoring and evaluating their emotional reactions (Thompson, 2011). Unlike later stages of adulthood (i.e., established and middle adulthood), emotional stability is relatively lower, particularly during adolescence and emerging adulthood (Galambos et al., 2006). It is not only due to biological changes, but also because of the many life changes that take place in a person's life (see, for an overview, Brewer et al., 2016; Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2014). Therefore, emerging adulthood is considered a pivotal phase for the development of emotion regulation skills, as emerging adults experience a high dysregulation of negative emotions, and compared to established and middle adults, emerging adults display less adaptive emotion regulation for these negatively valenced emotions (Zimmerman & Iwanski, 2014).

### Patterns of life transitions

This study focuses on the timing of life transition patterns among people from emerging to established adulthood and their psychosocial antecedents. The timing of life transitions is one of their fundamental characteristics and is very often based on comparisons with the general population (in the context of normative approach; Havighurst, 1972; Neugarten, 1979). Life transitions can be experienced in the socially expected, usual age (so-called on-time transitions), or in earlier or later age (off-time transitions; Kokko et al., 2009; Millová, 2020 for overview). This classification is based on an analytical (microscopic) framework. On the other hand, patterns of life transitions are embedded in a holistic person-centred approach to the life course that follows complex paths of psychosocial trajectories and is more dynamic compared to an analytical approach focusing on single life transitions (Mayer, 2009). One of the very first researches following complex patterns of timing trajectories in early adulthood was an American study carried out by Osgood et al. (2005) who identified six patterns of life trajectories based on longitudinal data on education, employment, partnership, and parenthood. The largest identified group was made up

of *educated singles* who postponed entry to regular work, marriage, and parenthood due to a higher level of education. The second largest group, *educated parents* also postponed other transitions except for entry into partnership. However, lower levels of education together with absent employment were characteristic of *parents without careers* who established their families earlier than their peers. *Slow starters* postponed entry into all life transitions; *fast starters* entered them earlier compared to their peers. The smallest group, *working singles*, had lower education and started their work life earlier but delayed their partnership and parenthood. Similar groups have been described in studies from other countries (e.g., British study by Schoon et al., 2012; Australian study by Eisenberg et al., 2015), although some of them were without dominant type of pattern (Eliason et al., 2015).

### Predictors of the timing of life transitions

Several studies that observed predictors of the timing of life transitions in early adulthood focused on *demographic variables* and discovered that certain characteristics, such as the higher socioeconomic status of the family of origin, one's own higher socioeconomic status, higher level of education, male gender, and European or Asian ethnicity, lead to the later timing of life transitions such as moving from parental home, marriage, or parenthood (Hoffert & Goldscheider, 2010; Holden et al., 2018; Kokko et al., 2009; Oesterle et al., 2010; Ramos, 2018; Tang, 1997).

Fewer studies have focused on *psychosocial antecedents* of timing of life transitions; most of them examined personality traits and temperamental characteristics. These are especially relevant to various aspects of *emotional control* (such as neuroticism or low emotional control). Previous studies pointed to the link between these characteristics and the timing of parenthood, especially in men: A higher level of shyness in childhood and neuroticism in adolescence in these studies led to postponed fatherhood in adult men (Caspi et al., 1988; Kerr et al., 1996; Reis et al., 2011). Characteristics associated with emotional and social control can lead not only to speeding up or postponing life transitions, but also to their total absence. The results of a Finnish longitudinal study (JYLS; Räikkönen et al., 2011) also showed that less social activity in childhood was an important predictor of missing transitions in adulthood.

Although no systematic research has been conducted on the timing of life transitions in the context of *self-efficacy*, self-efficacy is generally associated with adaptive processes during demanding life transitions, such as transition from college to career or entering parenthood (Mortimer et al., 2016; Reich et al., 2008). Within the broader research of self-regulation, Wrosch and Freund (2001) suggested that normatively less expected life events (e.g., off-time transitions) require a greater degree of self-regulatory skills than the management of normative (i.e., on-time) events. Similarly, other studies also focused on more general regulatory personality characteristics. For example, Dennissen et al. (2008) found that people with a resilient personality type in school age underwent life transitions (such as moving from the parental home or entry into partnership) earlier compared to people

with an over-controlled or under-controlled personality type. The other observed predictors of timing of adult transitions were especially childhood and adolescent problem behaviour, such as low self-control or risk behaviour, which can be a significant source of off-time (early or late) timing of life transitions in adulthood (Juang & Silbereisen, 2001; Kokko et al., 2009).

*Identity* and its development are significantly related to the experience of important life events and transitions throughout life (Berntsen et al., 2011; de Moor et al., 2019). However, several existing studies (see, for an overview, Eliason et al., 2015) pointed to the ambiguity of the relationship between identity and life transitions. For example, Shanahan et al. (2000) found that some life transitions (especially those related to partnership and family) positively correlated with mature adult identity, while others (especially attainment-related, such as entry into full-time work) had no relationship with any form of identity. Other studies focus directly on expectancy of life transitions or on their timing in general and indicate that events that are outside the expected life script (not only unexpected but also off-time transitions) can have a significant impact on identity integration (e.g., Berntsen & Rubin, 2004).

## Current study

The present study focused on the patterns of transition timing in several domains of life from emerging to established adulthood: moving from the parental home, entering partnership, marriage, parenthood, and regular employment. Unlike previous studies, which focused on people living in relatively stable countries (in terms of political and cultural changes during the last quarter of the twentieth century) and their patterns of timing of transitions (e.g., Finland, US, Canada; Furstenberg et al., 2005; Räikkönen et al., 2011; Ravanera et al., 2004; Salmela-Aro et al., 2011), this study followed people growing up in the society after important macrosocial changes. According to the life-course approach, an individual life course is embedded in macrosocial characteristics, such as historical time and place (Elder, 1998). These characteristics can speed up or slow down the timing of life transitions and increase the variability of life course (Shanahan, 2000). Studies on the timing of transitions in changing societies are rather sparse. Juang and Silbereisen (2001) studied the timing of life transitions among women in reunited Germany. Shortly after reunion, the timing of life transitions occurred earlier in women from the eastern part of Germany compared to women from former West Germany. After a relatively short period of time, this changed and the timing of transitions became similar to that of former West Germany. Similar macrosocial changes occurred in the Czech Republic, where the downfall of communism in 1989 and the dissolution of former Czechoslovakia in 1993, followed by an economic and technological boom, resulted in significant changes in the timing of life transitions, i.e., higher levels of education and related higher age of graduation, delayed moving from the parental home, increased age of first marriage or parenthood in the short span of one generation (Klicperová et al., 1997; OECD, 2017). The current study

focused on people proceeding from emerging to established adulthood. From a historical point of view, it is a unique age cohort, as the current generation of people mainly in their 30s, born in the 1980s, is actually the first generation in the Czech Republic that grew up in a democratic society. That also significantly influenced the patterns of timing of their adult transitions, which are characterised by significant changes compared to previous generations (i.e., postponement of life commitments), even though some aspects of society structure have not changed to a great extent (e.g., unpaid educational system; more on the topic, see Macek et al., 2016).

Changes in the timing of life transitions are also related to characteristics of entry into adulthood, typical of which is the postponement of important life transitions. This is often linked to university students (Arnett, 2015; Macek et al., 2016; Salmela-Aro et al., 2011), on whom this study focused. In the Czech Republic, the percentage of people between 25 and 34 years of age with university education has increased substantially compared to Western Europe, from 11.8% in 2001 to 34.9% in 2020 (Eurostat, 2022c). The mean age of life transitions, such as entry into parenthood or marriage, increased significantly. The mean age of women who gave birth to their first child has increased by more than 3 years since 2001, from 25.3 years to 28.5 years in 2020. The age of entry into first marriage has also risen considerably, from 25 years for women and 27.9 years for men in 2001 to 29.7 years for women and 32.4 years for men in 2020. The change in the structure of partnerships and families also occurred: the share of people between 25 and 34 years of age living in cohabitation has increased from 8% in 2001 to 37.5% in 2019. The proportion of children born outside of marriage increased from 23.5% in 2001 to 48.5% in 2020 (Eurostat, 2022a, 2022b, 2022d, 2022e). Paradoxically, sociological research shows that despite these societal changes, entry into marriage and consequent establishment of a family are still widely considered in the Czech Republic as a traditional way of life (Chaloupková, 2009).

The drawback of numerous existing studies on patterns of transitions and their antecedents is that they work with older birth cohorts (that is, people born before 1980), and therefore their life course and antecedents do not necessarily correspond with the characteristics of current people in their 30s (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2015; Eliason et al., 2015; Juang & Silbereisen, 2001; Krahn et al., 2018; Oesterle et al., 2010; Osgood et al., 2005; Räikkönen et al., 2012; Ravanera et al., 2004). In contrast, this study focused on people who were born in the 1980s.

## The aim of the study

The first aim was to *identify patterns of life transitions* experienced from emerging to established adulthood while focusing on early, on-time, late timing, or non-occurrence of five life domains: moving from the parental home, entry into regular employment, cohabitation, marriage, and parenthood. Since the people participating in this study were former university students, the age of graduation was not considered, unlike several previous studies working with the general population (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Eliason et al., 2015;

Räikkönen et al., 2012). Contrary to previous studies, this study focused on cohabitation and marriage separately due to demographic changes in the Czech society (cohabitation as an increasingly frequent form of partnership; Eurostat 2022d) and the results of previous studies indicated that married people differed slightly from cohabitating ones in several personality characteristics (see, e.g., Johnson et al., 2004). This could also affect the forms of identified patterns and their psychosocial antecedents.

The second objective of this study was to examine *the psychosocial antecedents* of these patterns. These antecedents were measured in emerging adulthood, ten years prior to the second wave of data collection. Previous studies focused particularly on personality traits and temperament connected to emotional control as antecedents (Caspi et al., 1988; Kerr et al., 1996; Reis et al., 2011); however, this study also followed less studied personality predictors, such as identity characteristics (Berntsen & Rubin, 2004; Berzonsky, 2011; Berzonsky et al., 2013; Eliason et al., 2015) and perceived control (self-efficacy; Kokko et al., 2009; Wrosch & Freund, 2001). Based on previous research on identity (as cited above), I expected that *people with normative identity in emerging adulthood would enter their life transition earlier compared to people with other identity styles. People with diffuse-avoidant identity would more often avoid entering adult commitments, especially those connected to partnership and family.* Moreover, in Czech society, there is still present an image of a usual 'traditional' trajectory, despite many societal changes described above (e.g., Chaloupková, 2009). Based on these results, I expected that *people oriented towards family (early or on-time entry into cohabitation, marriage and parenthood) would have higher levels of self-perception (identity) that match this perceived 'traditional' trajectory.* In terms of emotional and perceived control (*in terms of self-efficacy*), I expected that *people with a lower level of control in emerging adulthood would postpone their life transitions (for comparison, see also Dennissen et al., 2008; Kokko et al., 2009; Wrosch & Freund, 2001).*

A secondary objective of the study was to examine the *demographic antecedents* (i.e., gender and age) of these patterns. In terms of gender and age (for comparison, see Hoffert & Goldscheider, 2010; Holden et al., 2018; Kokko et al., 2009; Oesterle et al., 2010; Ramos, 2018) I expected that *women would be members of those groups or patterns that are linked to early or on-time entry into partnership and family, while men would be members of those groups or patterns that are characterised by the postponement of these transitions to later age.*

## Methods

### Sample

This work is based on the ongoing longitudinal study of university students (Generation 2020). The longitudinal study was launched in 2008 and focused on university students ( $N = 1563$ ) studying at various state universities in the Czech Republic and their psychosocial functioning in emerging adulthood (see Hřebíčková et al., 2010 for more information). Ten years later, 743 people aged 29 to 43 years ( $M = 33.39$ ,

$SD = 2.70$ ) participated again in the second wave of the longitudinal study. The study was conducted in an online form; an anonymous code was assigned to each participant. At the beginning of the questionnaire battery, participants were informed about the content and objectives of the research; participation in the study was voluntary.

Since the participants were originally university students, most of them had obtained at least a Bachelor's degree (90%,  $N = 669$ ). Male participants were more often dropping out of university without any university degree ( $X^2(3) = 15.72$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.15$ ). The sample had a higher proportion of women participants ( $\chi^2(1) = 58.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $V = 0.28$ ); male and female participants in the sample were of similar age ( $X^2(14) = 24.62$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $V = 0.18$ ); female participants were more often married ( $\chi^2(3) = 9.84$ ,  $p = 0.043$ ,  $V = 0.07$ ), had children ( $\chi^2(1) = 10.71$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $V = 0.12$ ) and were currently on parental leave ( $\chi^2(3) = 110.74$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $V = 0.22$ ) compared to male participants. Further demographic characteristics of the participants in the second wave of the study are listed in Table 1.

## Measures

### Adult transitions

*Adult transitions* were examined in the second wave of the study according to the age at the first occurrence of the transition, focusing on moving from the parental home, entry into regular employment, cohabitation, marriage, and

**Table 1**  
*Characteristics of the sample in the second wave of the study ( $N = 743$ )*

Characteristic	<i>N</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	743	100	33.39	2.70
Sex				
Males	267	35.9		
Females	476	64.1		
Current marital status				
Single	127	17.1		
In partnership	206	27.7		
Married	389	52.4		
Divorced	15	2		
Unknown	6	0.8		
Children				
Yes	397	53.5		
No	342	46		
Unknown	4	0.5		
Current employment status				
Employed	540	72.7		
Studying	9	1.2		
Parental leave	177	23.8		
Unemployed	8	1.1		
Unknown	9	1.2		

parenthood. Information about the occurrence and timing of these transitions was based on data from the Life History Calendar (LHC; Caspi et al., 1996), a method that allows obtaining autobiographical data, which were then compared to demographic information about the timing of these transitions in the general Czech adult population (Czech Statistical Office, 2008, 2013) and classified as *early* (lower age compared to general age cohort), *on-time* (same age compared to general age cohort), *late* (higher age compared to general age cohort), and *not-occurred* transitions. Detailed information is available in Table 2. Similarly to other longitudinal studies working with on-time and off-time (early or late) transitions based on data from the general population of the same age cohort (i.e., data from the national statistical office; e.g., Kokko et al., 2009), the age range for *on-time transitions* was delineated as the age in which more than 50% of people in the same age cohort had experienced a particular life transition (Czech Statistical Office, 2008, 2013, 2017). The only exception was the entry into marriage (in which the most common age range was used), as marriage rates are generally relatively low in contemporary Czech society (the entry into marriage experience less than 50% men and less than 60% women under 50 years of age; Eurostat, 2022d; Štyglerová, 2015).

### Emerging adulthood antecedents of the timing of adult transitions

Antecedents were measured in the first wave of the longitudinal study when the participants were between 18 and 33 years old. *Emotional control* was measured with a 15-item Emotional control subscale from the Social Skills Inventory (SSI; Riggio & Carney, 2003; Czech version Gillernová & Krejčová, 2008). This subscale is focused on regulating one's own non-verbal emotional behaviours, i.e., regulating and controlling emotional expressions. Internal reliability was satisfactory for both the original versions (Cronbach's alpha was 0.76) and the Czech versions (alpha was 0.77). The 5-point Likert response scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Perceived control* was measured using a 10-item General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; Czech version Křivohlavý et al., 1993) rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*not true at all*) to 4 (*exactly true*). The scale measures the self-reported level of general self-efficacy, i.e., the belief in mastering daily stressors, as well

as a variety of difficult demands in life. The psychometric properties of this frequently used scale were tested in multiple studies (see, e.g., Luszczynska et al., 2005; Scholz et al., 2002) and showed a high internal consistency of the scale (alpha from 0.75 to 0.94).

*Identity* was measured by the Identity Style Inventory, 4<sup>th</sup> revision (ISI-4; Smits et al., 2008; Czech version Ježek et al., 2011), which contains 48 items focusing on three identity styles (informational identity, normative identity, diffuse-avoidant identity) and identity commitment: People with an *informational identity* actively seek information that helps them relate to the world around them, they can change their minds under the influence of constructive information; people with a *normative identity* shape their worldview mainly under the influence of the external environment (family, society) and the opinion of other people; this style is associated with a higher level of commitment; people with a *diffuse-avoidant identity* do not have strong beliefs to guide themselves in life. They are often defined on the basis of specific social situations or first impressions and usually achieve a lower *identity commitment* (Berzonsky, 2011). The 5-point Likert response scale ranged from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*exactly true*). The internal consistencies of the subscales in various studies are satisfactory (from 0.80 to 0.87 with the exception of normative identity, which tends to be smaller than 0.70; for an overview, see Berzonsky et al., 2013 for the original version of the scale; Ježek et al., 2011 for Czech version).

### Statistical Analysis

Initially, 865 people participated in the second wave of the longitudinal study. 122 respondents with more than 25% of the items omitted in any of the measures were excluded from the study, for the rest ( $N = 743$ ; 85.9% of the original sample), the available item scores were averaged for each measure and these averages were substituted for missing scores. First, the chi-square was used for a comparison of demographic characteristics or timing of transitions according to gender. Second, latent class analysis (LCA) was used to reveal the patterns of timing of adult transitions. LCA is a mathematical technique used to create typologies based on categorical variables, and unlike some previous person-oriented analyses (i.e., cluster analysis), it uses indicators of model fit similarly to modern structural equation modelling (Weller et al., 2020). By interconnection of multiple life transitions, it makes possible to create a typology of holistic

**Table 2**

*Early, on-time, and late timing of transitions according to age categories and sex in general adult population (adapted from Czech Statistical Office, 2008, 2013)*

Domain	Early		On-time		Late	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Moving from the parental home	≤ 24 years	≤ 21 years	25-29 years	22-26 years	≥ 30 years	≥ 27 years
Cohabitation	≤ 28 years	≤ 24 years	29-33 years	25-29 years	≥ 34 years	≥ 30 years
Marriage	≤ 29 years	≤ 26 years	30-34 years	27-31 years	≥ 35 years	≥ 32 years
Regular employment	≤ 18 years	≤ 22 years	19-23 years	23-27 years	≥ 24 years	≥ 28 years
Parenthood	≤ 28 years	≤ 24 years	29-33 years	25-29 years	≥ 34 years	≥ 30 years

patterns. In the present study, five categorical variables were used: cohabitation, marriage, parenthood, moving from the parental home, and regular employment. The parameters of the LCA model are proportions of individuals within each of the latent classes and their distribution across the predictor variables in a given latent class (Nylund et al., 2007). Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC), adjusted Bayesian Information Criteria (aBIC), Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test (BLRT) and Lo-Mendell-Rubin adjusted Likelihood Ratio Test (LMR RMT) were used as main indicators of model fit. Lower values of BIC and aBIC indicate a better fitting model. BLRT  $p$ -values above 0.05 indicate a good fit of the specified LCA model, while values below 0.05 indicate that the number of classes should be increased by one (Nylund et al., 2007). Finally, multinomial regression analysis with odds ratios (OR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) was used to predict the timing of adult transition patterns. Personality characteristics in emerging adulthood were used as predictors and classes obtained from LCA were used as outcome (dependent) variables. Multinomial regression analysis is the regression analysis usually applied when the outcome variable is categorical with more than two levels and the predictor variables are continuous or categorical. Odds ratio (OR) greater than one indicates that those individuals with the characteristic are more likely to be in that particular class than those individuals without the characteristic. Each latent class was, in turn, used as a reference class to compare each latent class with all other latent classes (Field, 2015). In this study, LCA produced a categorical variable (timing of adult transition patterns) with four levels (classes), which was considered an outcome variable in multinomial regression analysis. A detailed description of the four classes is given in the Results section. Descriptive statistics and multinomial logistic regression analysis were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 24, latent class analysis was performed using the Mplus statistical package version 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2019).

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

The frequencies of timing of life transitions for the whole sample are shown in Table 3. According to the results of the chi-square test, women in our sample moved from the parental home ( $\chi^2(22) = 105.33, p = 0.001$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.38$ ), entered cohabitation ( $\chi^2(20) = 92.51, p = 0.001$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.38$ ) and marriage ( $\chi^2(21) = 35.32, p = 0.026$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.20$ ) at a younger age than men. The gender differences in the age of entry into regular employment ( $\chi^2(17) = 13.57, p > 0.05$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.13$ ) and parenthood ( $\chi^2(17) = 15.35, p > 0.05$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.19$ ) were not significant.

The descriptive statistics and internal consistencies for the characteristics of emerging adulthood are shown in Table 4. All variables except the normative identity subscale achieved a satisfactory reliability greater than 0.70. Although gender differences were found in some of these characteristics, the effect size indicators reached a rather negligible level: Women had a higher level of informational identity ( $t(741)$

$= 3.36, p = 0.01$ , Hedges'  $g = 0.026$ ) and a lower level of self-efficacy ( $t(741) = -2.69, p = 0.01$ , Hedges'  $g = 0.021$ ) or diffuse avoidant identity ( $t(741) = -2.41, p = 0.05$ , Hedges'  $g = 0.018$ ). No significant gender differences were found for other variables (emotional control:  $t(741) = 0.57, p > 0.05$ , Hedges'  $g = 0.044$ ; normative identity:  $t(741) = -1.60, p > 0.05$ , Hedges'  $g = 0.058$ ; identity commitment:  $t(741) = 1.48, p > 0.05$ , Hedges'  $g = 0.014$ ).

### Latent class analysis

Latent class analysis was used to identify patterns of adult transition timing. The model fit indicators for the estimated class models showed the best fit for a 4-class model (with the lowest levels of the BIC and aBIC indicators and acceptable BLRT and LMR RMT values), although the 3-class and 5-class models also reached acceptable values (see Table 5). Since the interpretability of 3-class and 5-class models was not as good as that of the 4-class model, I decided to choose the 4-class model as the final model. The characteristics of the final latent class model are shown in Table 6.

The class proportions are shown in Table 6. The normative (on-time) moving from the parental home and entry into regular employment was typical for all groups. The absence of family and partnership transitions (cohabitation, marriage, and parenthood) was the most characteristic feature of the largest group of *Work-oriented singles* (43.4% of the participants). Compared to the other groups, members of this group entered regular employment relatively early. Members of the second largest group, *Normative timing* (28.6%) typically had undergone all transitions on-time. The earliest timing of partnership and family transitions was characteristic for members of the third largest group, *Family-oriented* (23.8%): All members of this group entered cohabitation and marriage early; most of them had children on-time. Compared to the other three groups, they were the first to move from the parental home. Members of the smallest group, *Work-oriented with delayed partnership and family* (4.2%) had delayed their entry into cohabitation and marriage and generally established a family late. This group was similar to the first group (*Work-oriented singles*) in the dimensions of moving from the parental home and entering regular employment but differed in partnership and family transitions: The members of *Work-oriented with delayed partnership and family* group had undergone them but with later timing.

### Emerging adulthood predictors of class membership

Multinomial logistic regression analysis with emerging adulthood characteristics as predictors showed that the model fits the data (see  $\chi^2$  in the overall model statistics in Table 7), although the squared value of the multiple correlation coefficient was somewhat lower (Cox and Snell  $R^2 = 0.095$ ; Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.104$ ). Participants who entered transitions related to partnership and family early (*Family-oriented* and *Normative timing* group), had a higher normative identity and were younger compared to *Work-oriented participants*

**Table 3**  
Timing of life transitions in the sample – frequencies

Domain	Timing of transitions – frequencies (%)									
	Early		On-time		Late		Non-occurrence		Missing data	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Moving from the parental home	80 (10.8)		487 (65.5)		120 (16.2)		20 (6.7)		6 (0.8)	
	63 (78.8)	17 (21.3)	114 (29.6)	343 (70.4)	36 (30.0)	84 (70.0)	11 (55.0)	9 (45.0)	1 (16.7)	5 (83.3)
Cohabitation	242 (32.6)		345 (46.4)		41 (15.5)		109 (14.7)		6 (0.8)	
	121 (50.0)	121 (50.0)	67 (19.4)	278 (80.6)	4 (9.8)	37 (90.2)	74 (67.9)	35 (32.1)	1 (16.7)	5 (83.3)
Marriage	175 (23.6)		211 (28.4)		31 (4.2)		323 (43.5)		3 (0.4)	
	73 (41.7)	102 (58.3)	60 (28.4)	151 (71.6)	4 (12.9)	27 (87.1)	130 (40.2)	193 (59.8)	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)
Regular employment	148 (19.9)		403 (54.2)		183 (24.6)		3 (0.4)		6 (0.8)	
	19 (12.8)	129 (87.2)	88 (21.8)	315 (78.2)	158 (86.3)	25 (13.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (100.0)	2 (30.0)	4 (70.0)
Parenthood	47 (6.3)		206 (27.7)		128 (17.2)		358 (48.2)		4 (0.5)	
	27 (57.4)	20 (42.6)	69 (33.5)	137 (66.5)	7 (5.5)	121 (94.5)	163 (45.5)	195 (54.5)	1 (25.0)	3 (75.0)

**Table 4**  
Descriptive statistics and internal consistencies of the characteristics of emerging adulthood

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
Self-efficacy	29.21	4.97	-0.18	-0.14	0.85
Emotional control	47.08	9.08	-0.17	-0.45	0.77
Informational identity	48.54	6.13	-0.48	0.48	0.72
Normative identity	35.44	5.17	0.01	-0.07	0.58
Diffuse-avoidant identity	34.07	7.36	0.28	-0.06	0.78
Identity commitment	38.43	6.47	-0.58	-0.10	0.85

**Table 5**  
Latent class analysis - model fit indicators

Number of classes	<i>BIC</i>	<i>aBIC</i>	<i>BLRT p-value</i>	<i>LMR RMT</i>
2 classes	7172.272	7073.836	< 0.001	< 0.001
3 classes	6592.414	6443.173	< 0.001	0.130
4 classes	6477.484	6277.437	< 0.001	< 0.001
5 classes	6552.350	6301.498	0.001	0.001

Notes. BIC = Bayesian Information Criteria; aBIC = adjusted Bayesian Information Criteria; BLRT = Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test; LMR RMT = Lo-Mendell-Rubin adjusted Likelihood Ratio Test

with delayed family; moreover, in the case of *Family-oriented* group they were more often females. Women were also more often members of the *Work-oriented singles* group compared to the *Work-oriented* group with delayed family, as well as members of the *Family-oriented* group compared to the *Normative timing* group. Furthermore, members of the *Work-oriented singles* were younger than members of the *Work-oriented* group with delayed family. Participants in class with the *Normative timing* of adult transitions had higher normative identity compared to the *Work-oriented with delayed family* group. Members of the *Work-oriented singles* group were more often younger women with a lower level of normative identity compared to the *Normative timing* group, whose

members were more often men. Similarly, the *Work-oriented singles* had a lower level of normative identity, compared to participants who were oriented toward family (*Normative-timing* and *Family-oriented* groups). Furthermore, members of this group also had a lower level of identity commitment compared to the *Family-oriented* group. The most significant predictors of class membership were gender, age, normative identity, and identity commitment. However, even though these predictors were statistically significant, they seem to contribute relatively little to the overall membership of the class. Other characteristics measured in emerging adulthood (self-efficacy, emotional regulation, informational identity, and diffuse-avoidant identity) did not contribute significantly to class membership.



**Table 6**  
*Latent class probabilities of the 4-class model*

	Work-oriented with delayed family and partnership	Family-oriented	Work-oriented singles	Normative timing
Cohabitation				
early	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.009
on-time	0.006	0.000	0.009	0.991
late	0.886	0.000	0.037	0.000
no cohabitation	0.008	0.000	0.954	0.000
Marriage				
early	0.000	0.976	0.000	0.000
on-time	0.000	0.024	0.000	1.000
late	0.989	0.000	0.000	0.000
no marriage	0.011	0.000	1.000	0.000
Parenthood				
early	0.032	0.223	0.016	0.005
on-time	0.032	0.514	0.084	0.417
late	0.613	0.080	0.097	0.303
no children	0.323	0.183	0.803	0.275
Moving from the parental home				
early	0.097	0.149	0.112	0.071
on-time	0.581	0.749	0.616	0.668
late	0.290	0.074	0.178	0.194
lives with parents	0.032	0.029	0.094	0.066
Regular employment				
early	0.355	0.223	0.203	0.156
on-time	0.548	0.514	0.512	0.621
late	0.097	0.251	0.281	0.218
no regular employment	0.000	0.011	0.003	0.005
Class <i>N</i> (%)	31 (4.2)	175 (23.8)	320 (43.4)	211 (28.6)

## Discussion

This study focused on *the patterns of life transitions* experienced from emerging to established adulthood based on the timing of life transitions and their psychosocial antecedents. The participants were mainly people in their 30s who have already experienced many characteristic life transitions for established adulthood: moving from the parental home, entering regular employment, partnership, marriage, and parenthood. Academic graduation was not included in these life transitions, since the participants were former university students and most of them had obtained at least a bachelor's degree; therefore, their overall timing of this transition was rather late compared to the general population. Four patterns of life transitions were identified according to their early, on-time, or late timing: *Work-oriented singles*, *Work-oriented with delayed partnership and family*, *Family-oriented* and *Normative timing* group. This typology was slightly similar to previous research studying the general population with various levels of education (i.e., fast starters,

parents without careers, educated partners, educated singles, working singles, slow starters; Osgood et al., 2005; work orientation with delayed parenthood, traditional work and family, academic orientation with no children; Rääkkönen et al., 2012). The differences found may have been due to the transitions studied in this study: Unlike previous research, the timing of education was not considered due to the high homogeneity of the graduation age (participants were former university students); marriage and cohabitation were studied separately, since marriage rates are generally relatively low in contemporary Czech society (Eurostat, 2022d; Štyglerová, 2015). This was also reflected in our sample, where more than 40% of the participants had not yet entered into a marriage.

The patterns described in this study differed mainly in partnership and parenthood transitions, similar to previous research (Osgood et al., 2005; Rääkkönen et al., 2012), particularly in cohabitation, marriage, and parenthood. The absence of all these three transitions was characteristic for *Work-oriented singles*. Other patterns differed especially according to the timing of cohabitation and marriage: members of the *Family-oriented* group entered cohabitation

**Table 7**  
*Patterns of adult transition timing in relation to emerging adulthood characteristics: Multinomial logistic regression analysis*

Predictor	Family-oriented vs. Work-oriented with delayed family			Work-oriented singles vs. Work-oriented with delayed family			Normative timing vs. Work-oriented with delayed family			Family-oriented vs. Normative timing			Work-oriented singles vs. Normative timing			Family-oriented vs. Work-oriented singles		
	B	SE	OR (95% CI)	B	SE	OR (95% CI)	B	SE	OR (95% CI)	B	SE	OR (95% CI)	B	SE	OR (95% CI)	B	SE	OR (95% CI)
Intercept	2.13	3.86		6.91	3.74		4.57	3.81		-2.45	2.14		2.34	1.87		-4.78	1.97	
Self-efficacy	0.02	0.05	1.02 (0.92;1.12)	0.04	0.05	1.04 (0.95;1.14)	0.04	0.05	1.04 (0.95;1.15)	0.02	0.03	0.98 (0.93;1.03)	0.01	0.02	1.00 (0.96;1.05)	-0.03	0.02	0.98 (0.93;1.02)
Emotional control	0.01	0.03	1.00 (0.95;1.06)	-0.02	0.03	0.99 (0.94;1.04)	-0.01	0.03	0.99 (0.94;1.04)	0.01	0.01	1.01 (0.99;1.04)	-0.01	0.01	0.99 (0.97;1.02)	0.02	0.01	1.02 (0.99;1.04)
Informational identity	0.01	0.04	1.00 (0.93;1.08)	-0.01	0.04	0.99 (0.92;1.07)	-0.01	0.04	0.99 (0.92;1.07)	0.02	0.02	1.20 (0.98;1.05)	0.01	0.02	1.00 (0.97;1.04)	0.01	0.02	1.01 (0.97;1.04)
Normative identity	0.11	0.04	1.11* (1.02;1.21)	0.07	0.04	1.07 (0.98;1.16)	0.11	0.04	1.12* (1.03;1.21)	-0.01	0.02	1.00 (0.96;1.04)	-0.04	0.02	0.96* (0.92;0.99)	0.04	0.02	1.04* (1.00;1.08)
Diffuse-avoidant identity	0.07	0.04	1.07 (0.99;1.15)	0.07	0.04	1.07 (0.99;1.15)	0.04	0.04	1.04 (0.97;1.12)	0.02	0.02	1.02 (0.99;1.06)	0.02	0.02	1.02 (0.99;1.06)	-0.01	0.02	1.00 (0.99;1.03)
Identity commitment	0.04	0.05	1.05 (0.96;1.14)	0.01	0.04	1.00 (0.92;1.09)	0.01	0.04	1.00 (0.93;1.10)	0.04	0.02	1.04 (0.99;1.08)	-0.01	0.02	0.99 (0.96;1.03)	0.04	0.02	1.04* (1.00;1.08)
Age	-0.22	0.06	0.80** (0.72;0.90)	-0.24	0.06	0.79** (0.71;0.88)	-0.22	0.06	0.80** (0.72;0.89)	0.01	0.04	1.01 (0.93;1.09)	-0.02	0.04	0.98 (0.92;1.06)	0.02	0.04	1.02 (0.95;1.10)
Males (vs. Females)	-1.46	0.57	0.23* (0.07;0.73)	-1.35	0.56	0.26* (0.08;0.81)	-0.83	0.59	0.44 (0.14;1.18)	-0.63	0.22	0.53** (0.34;0.82)	-0.52	0.20	0.60** (0.41;0.88)	-0.18	0.20	0.89 (0.60;1.31)

Notes:  $R^2 = .095$  (Cox & Snell), .104 (Nagelkerke). Model  $\chi^2(24) = 73.031$ ,  $p < .001$ , OR = odds ratio; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval;  $df = 1$ .  
 $*p < .05$ ,  $**p < .01$

and marriage early and compared to the other patterns, they had children earliest. Members of the *Normative timing group* had on-time timing of entry into cohabitation and marriage, and they established a family on-time or late. *Work-oriented with a delayed family and partnership group* was characteristic of late entry into cohabitation and marriage, and most of the group had children late. Interestingly, the timing of cohabitation was consistent with the timing of marriage; latent class analysis did not identify a specific group characterised by cohabitation without the presence of marriage despite the trend in the current Czech society showing that many people in established adulthood live in cohabitation, have children of their own but do not enter into marriage (Eurostat, 2022d; Štyglarová, 2015).

On the contrary, the timing of moving from the parental home and entering regular employment was similar across the entire sample: Most members of each group had on-time timing of these two transitions. A possible reason is that the mean age when moving from the parental home is generally rather high in the Czech Republic, 27 years for men and 24 years for women, respectively. Although most of the participants had university education, due to the generally older age of entry into this transition in Czech society, their experience was very similar to that of most of the general population of the same age. Compared to the permanently increasing age of entry into marriage and parenthood, the age of moving from parental home has been rather stable during the last decade (Czech Statistical Office, 2008, 2017). Regarding employment during university studies, the Czech Republic has one of the highest percentages of working university students among European countries, 67% (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2016). It indicates that a significant part of the university student population starts working at a similar age as the general population.

The results indicate that *demographic* and some *personality characteristics* tend to be significant predictors of membership in a particular pattern. Gender and age were significant predictors of membership of most patterns: men were most likely members of the *Work-oriented group with a delayed family and partnership group* and the *Normative timing group*. Delaying entry into family transitions among men was also observed in previous studies (e.g., Kokko et al., 2009; Rääkkönen et al., 2012); however, a large part of the male subsample in this study entered cohabitation, marriage, and established their own family on-time. Women were more often members of the *Family-oriented group*: This group was also characterised by early or on-time entry into cohabitation, marriage and parenthood. This timing was consistent with expectations set in this study for patterns of timing in female participants; a similar result was also reported in previous studies (Hoffert & Goldscheider, 2010; Holden et al., 2018; Oesterle et al., 2010; Rääkkönen et al., 2012; Ramos, 2018). Quite surprisingly, women also predominated in the *Work-oriented singles group*. These two patterns (*Family-oriented* and *Work-oriented singles*) were distinct from each other in terms of the occurrence and timing of the partnership, marriage, and family transitions. Furthermore, the members of these two groups did not differ according to age. In terms of a more 'traditional' *Family-oriented group*, a higher

proportion of women has also been found in similar groups in other studies (see, e.g., Kokko et al., 2009), and may be a result of social expectations. Although the life of current established adults is not as strongly standardised compared to previous generations (see, for comparison, Neugarten, 1979; Shanahan, 2000), data from the Czech Statistical Office (2008, 2013, 2017) suggest that women are at least to some extent still expected to enter life transitions connected to partnership and family earlier than men. On the other hand, since this study focused on university graduates and not on the general population, it is possible that the women in the *Work-oriented singles group* represented women who focus first on their work career and delay partnership and family transitions until the end of their 30s. This trend is also indicated by the data from the latest national census in the Czech Republic (Czech Statistical Office, 2022), showing that at least part of university educated women tends to have fewer children and start families at a higher age than women with lower levels of education.

In the area of *psychosocial predictors*, significant results were much scarcer. The only characteristic that predicted class membership, at least to some extent, was *normative identity*. The results obtained indicated that a higher level of normative identity could be seen more often in members of those groups that were characterised with early or on-time transitions in all areas related to partnership (cohabitation, marriage) and parenthood (*Family-oriented* and *Normative timing groups*) compared to groups with delayed or missing transitions in these areas of life (*Work-oriented singles* and *Work-oriented with delayed family and partnership groups*). It supported at least partly the assumption that the marriage and family established when young people are in their 20s are still perceived as 'normative' behaviour in the Czech Republic. It is interesting that this perception of the 'normative' pattern is still present despite an increasing number of alternative forms of partnership and the growing age of establishing one's own family. This is more frequent among people born in the 1980s who grew up after major changes in the Czech society (Chaloupková, 2009; Klicperová et al., 1997). However, it is questionable whether we can consider these patterns associated with earlier entry into partnership and parenting as mature, since, according to Berzonsky (Berzonsky, 2011; Berzonsky et al., 2013; see also Smits et al., 2011), normative identity is usually related to foreclosed identity status, a limited tolerance for uncertainty, and a strong need for structure and closure. Among other things, this can also be manifested by earlier entry into interpersonal life transitions similar to those in this study. It is also important to note that although differences in normative identity occurred quite systematically in comparisons of several classes, the overall size of the effect was relatively small.

In addition to normative identity, the only other significant predictor of class membership was *identity commitment*. Low identity commitment was more usual among members of the *Work-oriented singles group* (participants with the highest proportion of non-occurred transitions in the area of cohabitation, marriage, and partnership) compared to the *Family-oriented group* (participants with the highest proportion of experienced transitions in the area of

cohabitation, marriage, and partnership). Although these two groups differed in terms of identity commitment, the observed size of the effect was, again, generally rather small.

Expectations about link between the *diffuse-avoidant identity* and non-occurrence of life transitions were not fulfilled; this identity style did not predict membership in classes with a higher representation of non-occurred transitions (i.e., *Work-oriented singles* and *Work-oriented with delayed family and partnership*). These results are contrary to previous findings (Berzonsky, 2011; Berzonsky et al., 2013), which indicated that diffuse-avoidant identity is connected to diffusion identity status, and people with this immature form of identity do not have tendencies to assume mature responsibilities and commitments, such as entering adult life transitions. The lack of a significant association could be the result of the fact that in this study all participants have experienced at least one life transition: entry into regular employment was absent only in three participants, and only 20 participants did not experience moving from the parental home. Therefore, none of the classes obtained was characterised by the total absence of all life transitions observed in this study.

Similarly, expectations about levels of *emotional and perceived control* (in terms of self-efficacy) in emerging adulthood and their connection with the subsequent timing of life transitions were not met. Previous studies suggested a connection between off-time (i.e., late or even postponed) transitions and lack of emotional control (Kokko et al., 2009; Rääkkönen et al., 2011) and self-efficacy (in terms of broader self-regulation in general; Dennissen et al., 2008; Wrosch & Freund, 2001). However, in this study, the results of multinomial logistic regression analysis did not indicate the significance of emotional control or self-efficacy in predicting class membership related to the earlier or later timing of life transitions. It seems that self-efficacy and emotional control would be studied more appropriately in a more actual time frame: Results from longitudinal studies (Arnett, 2015; Galambos et al., 2006; Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2014) show that both characteristics, emotional control and self-efficacy, are still not yet established during emerging adulthood and stabilise only at the end of the third decade of life (that is, at the end of emerging adulthood). During the first wave of this study, when emotional control and self-efficacy were measured, most of the participants were in their early 20s, when, according to the studies cited above, stability is relatively low. Emotional control in this study was also defined relatively narrowly (as regulating and controlling emotional expressions) and did not include many other aspects often studied in the broader framework of emotional regulation (see, for comparison, Brewer et al., 2016; Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2014). Similarly, self-efficacy and self-regulation (which was studied previously in the context of timing of life transitions; e.g., Wrosch & Freund, 2001) could be seen as interdependent characteristics that support personal agency or control, but self-regulation covers much broader areas of psychosocial functioning compared to self-efficacy (Schunk, 1994). Another reason for the non-significant results may have been the gender structure of the sample: Previous studies (e.g., Caspi et al., 1988) showed that

emotional control is linked to postponement of entry into life transitions only in men, but not in women.

Generally, the results of this study show that the psychological characteristics (identity, emotional control, and self-efficacy) are only partially related to the prediction of class membership, and with very limited effect sizes. It seems that other, more socially embedded characteristics, such as academic achievement, problems, and behaviour, or parental socioeconomic status, might be more involved in the prediction of timing of major life transitions (Kokko et al., 2009; Rääkkönen et al., 2012; for review, see also Millová, 2020).

## Limitations

This study has several limitations that could influence the results. Although the sample consisted of people older than 29 years of age, some transitions did not occur in quite a large number of participants, especially transitions related to entry into marriage and parenthood. The age at which these transitions are experienced in young people constantly increases in all economically developed countries, including the Czech Republic (see Arnett, 2015). Therefore, the patterns of transitions are expected to be different if observed at an older age. This applies most of all to one pattern, *Work-oriented singles*. In this group, transitions into cohabitation, marriage, and parenthood might occur later, at an older age, and in this way, they will become members of a different group, for example, *Work-oriented with delayed family and partnership*. As a result of the age distribution of the sample and the tendency to postpone adult commitments in the current Czech society (see, for an overview, the Czech Statistical Office, 2017), this particular group was relatively small, comprising only 4.2% of all participants. Although most researchers recommend that the smallest size be greater than 5% of the whole sample (Weller et al., 2020), some (see, e.g., Nylund-Gibson & Choi, 2018) suggest that the size may be smaller if the classes are 'well separated'. This was the case in this study, where not only did fit indicators of solutions with fewer numbers of larger classes perform worse, but also these solutions had poorer interpretability. The second important limitation comes also from the educational composition of the sample: The participants were former university students, and almost all of them had obtained some level of university degree. Although the proportion of adults with a university degree in the Czech Republic is steadily increasing, the results obtained cannot be generalised to the general population. The last limitation was related to the measures used in this study, particularly the lower internal consistency of the normative identity subscale that reached an unsatisfactory level. Berzonsky et al. (2013) noted that when constructing the ISI-4 scale, the criteria for selecting the items could have been overly strict, which may have resulted in the removal of essential items. A lower level of the internal consistency of the normative identity subscale was also found in several previous studies using the ISI-4 scale (see, e.g., Doumen et al., 2012; Smits et al., 2011).

The characteristics of people who were born in the 1980s can be considered the greatest achievement of this study, since

most of the previous studies focused on older cohorts whose characteristics do not fully correspond with current cohorts of established adults. This study is unique in the context of existing research on the patterns and timing of life transitions. In addition, it deals with the adult development in a society that underwent macrosocial changes. These significantly influenced the timing of transitions, from relatively uniform trajectories that were prevalent in the generation of parents of our participants to very diversified ones typical of current emerging and established adults (Chaloupková, 2009). As this diversity was also found in younger age cohorts (Czech Statistical Office, 2022), it can be expected that a similar trend may also occur, at least partially, in younger generations.

## Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Ethical statement

This study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Institute of Psychology, Czech Academy of Sciences.

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