



Contemporary Czech Emerging Adults: Generation Growing up in the Period of Social Changes

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Young Czechs

Young Czechs obtained the legal status of adulthood at the age of 18. Nevertheless, reaching legal age does not mean that most of them also feel as adults subjectively.

Similarly to their peers in other European countries, in a majority of cases they also report that they undergo the stage of life when they do not regard themselves as adolescents nor as complete adults.



Young Czechs

Correspondingly to other advanced European countries:

- the time of study and career-preparation of young Czechs extended,
- leisure time enhances its value, and the range of options of how to spend an adult life is widened,
- the marriage rate has decreased by half and first marriages are often postponed until the late twenties (the mean age of brides was 26.4 in 2000 compared to 21.8 in 1989, and for grooms it has risen from 24.6 to 28.8,
- the mother's age of the birth of the first child has also risen demonstrably, almost 50% of children are born to mothers over 27 years of age)



Young Czechs

We can assume that young Czechs do not differ basically from their peers in Western and Central Europe.

However, we also have to consider the fact that the time of transition from adolescence to adulthood is also specifically determined by specific cultural, social and historical factors.



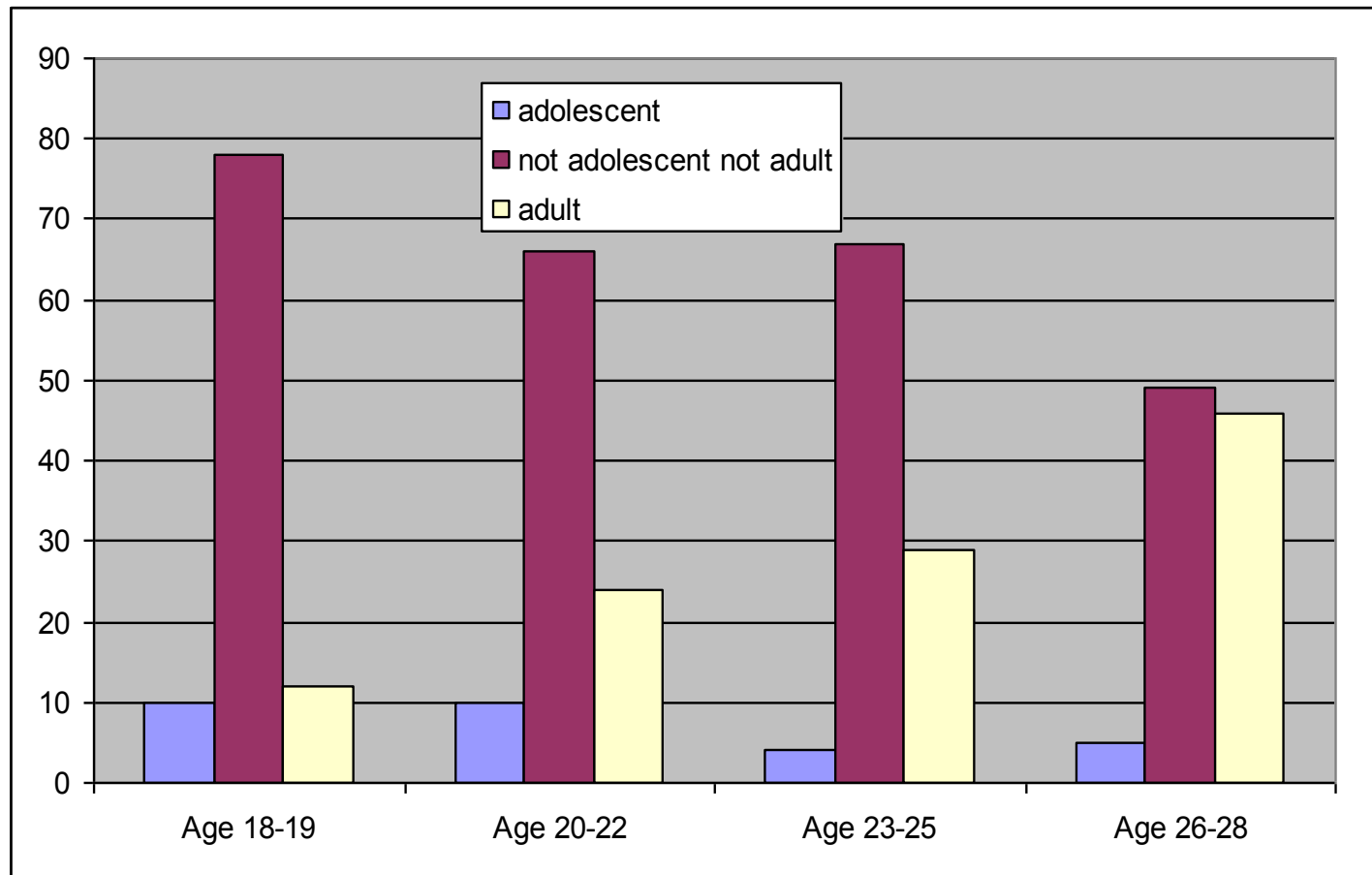
Quantitative Study

The participants were 436 young people (196 male, 246 female) aged 18 to 27. We intended to include both university students and young people who had already completed their education and work full-time.

Variables:

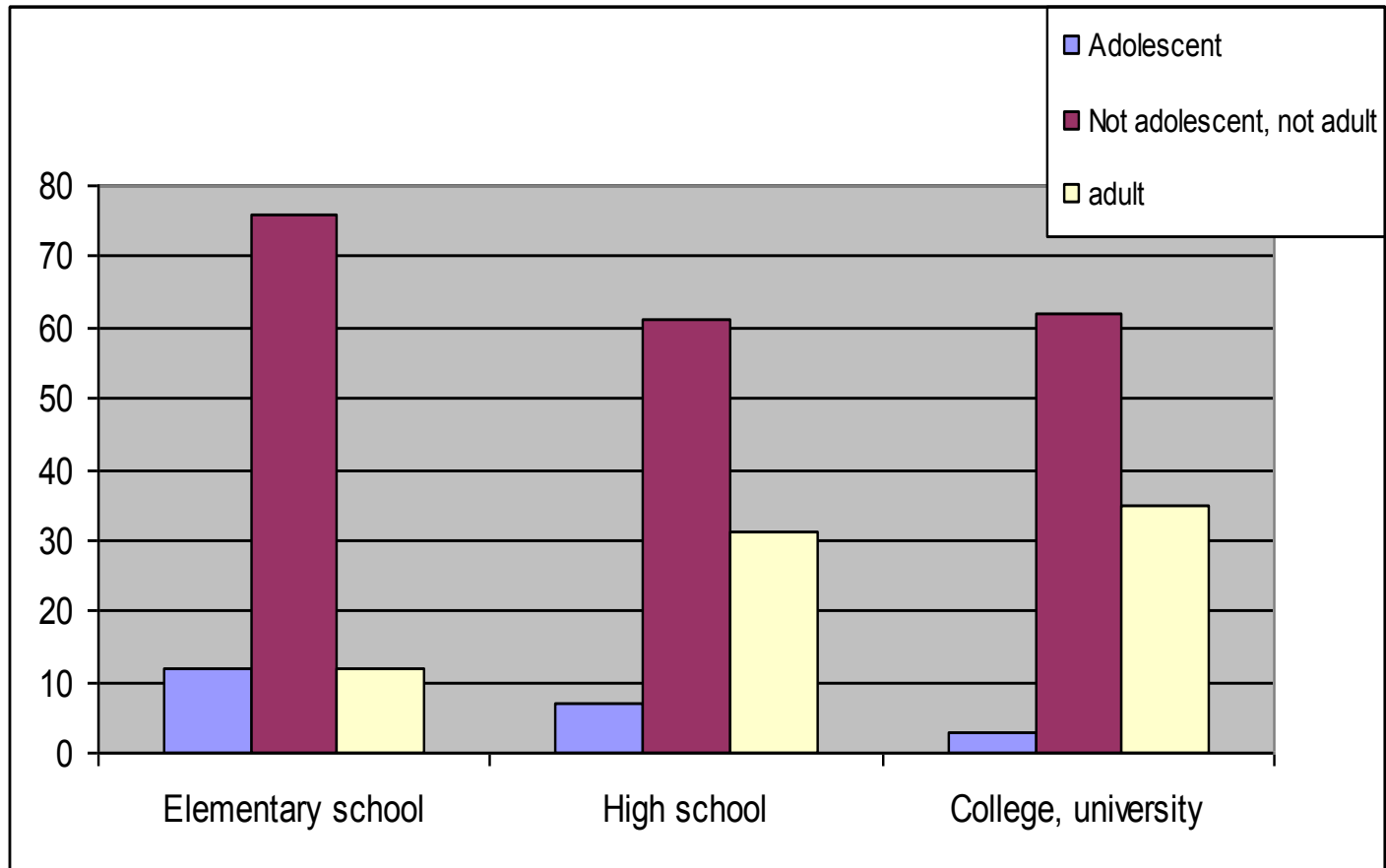
- Subjective developmental status (adolescent, not adolescent not fully adult, adult)
- educational attainment, employment status, marital status, place of living, financial support
- Stability, self-focused orientation, diffuse orientation, clarity of values, identity exploration, concern for others

Do you feel that you have reached adulthood?

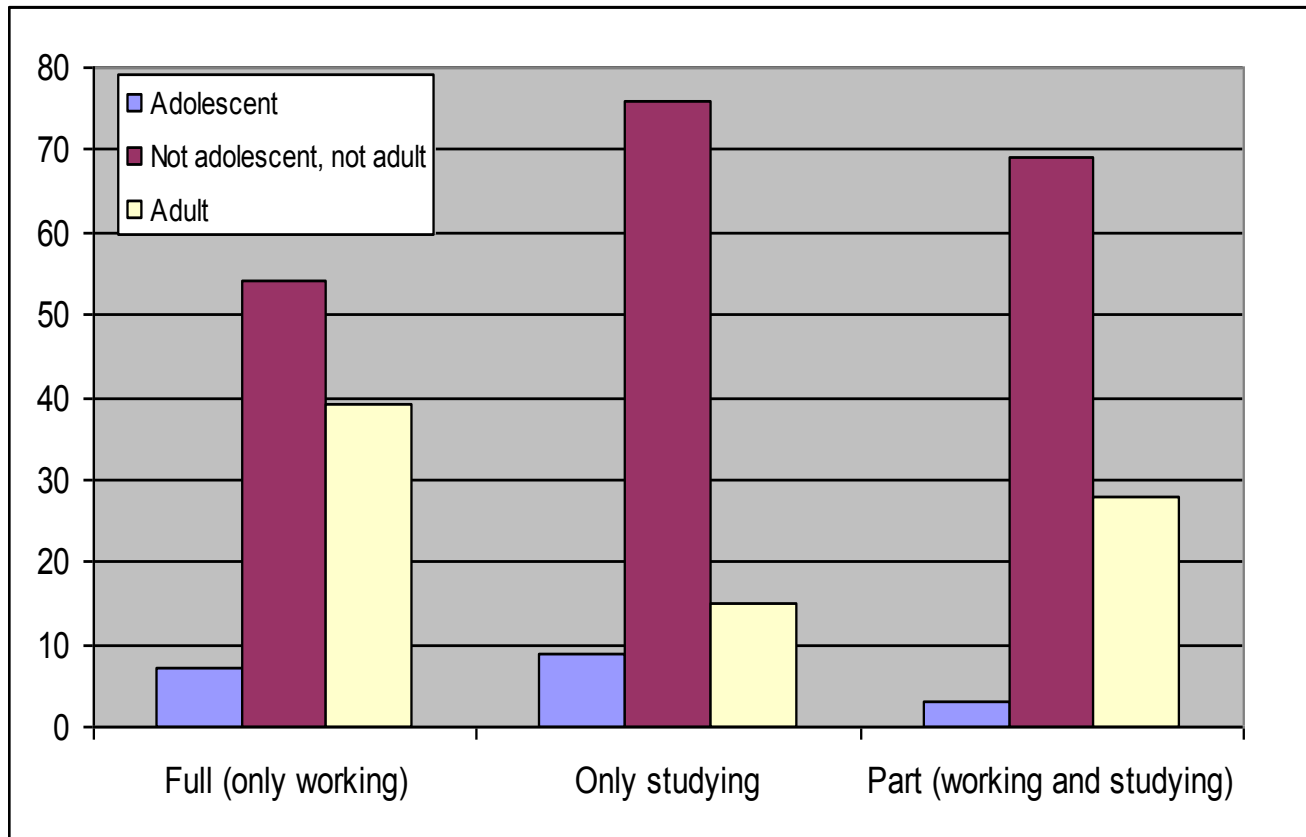


Total sample: 64% report the subjective status of an emerging adult, 30% as young adult and 7% of respondents as adolescent.

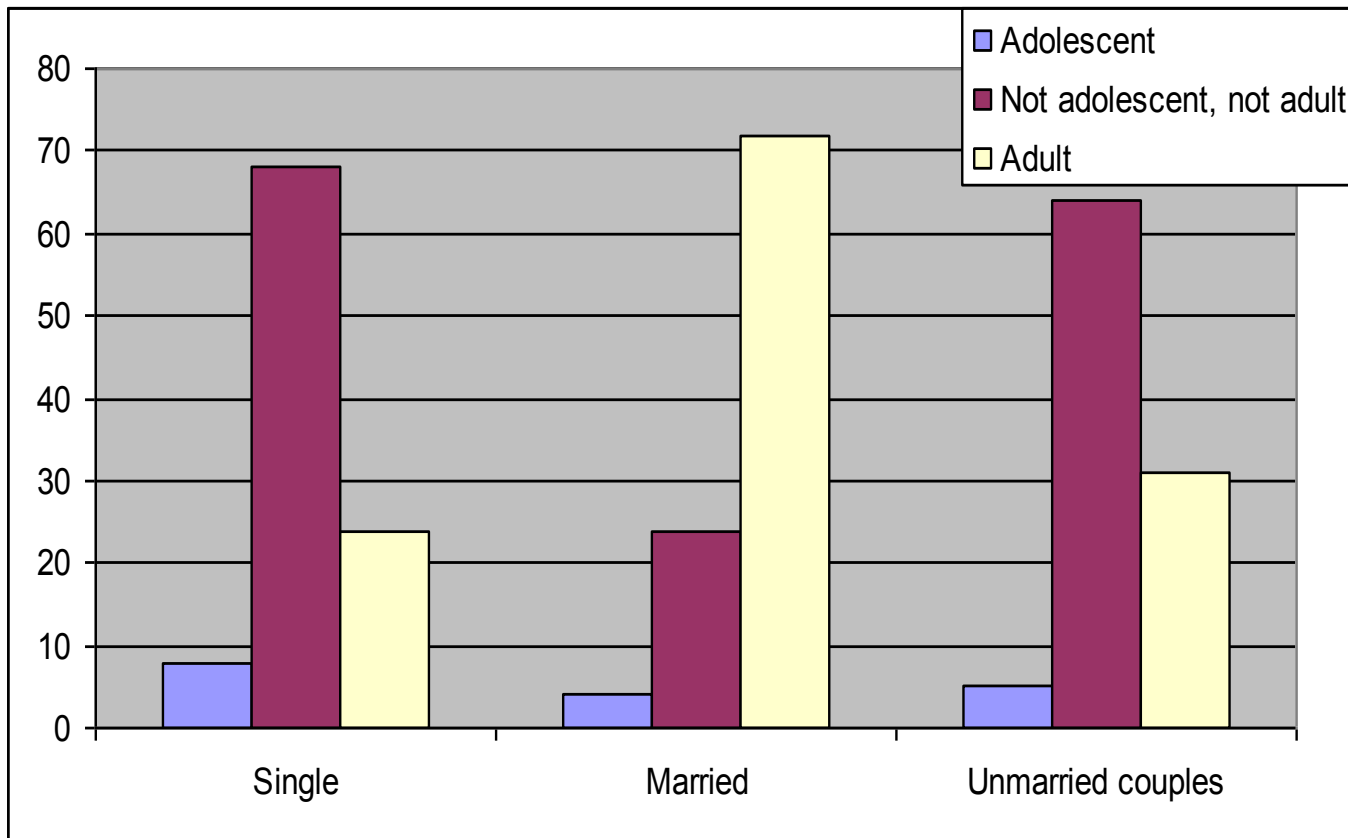
Highest educational attainment



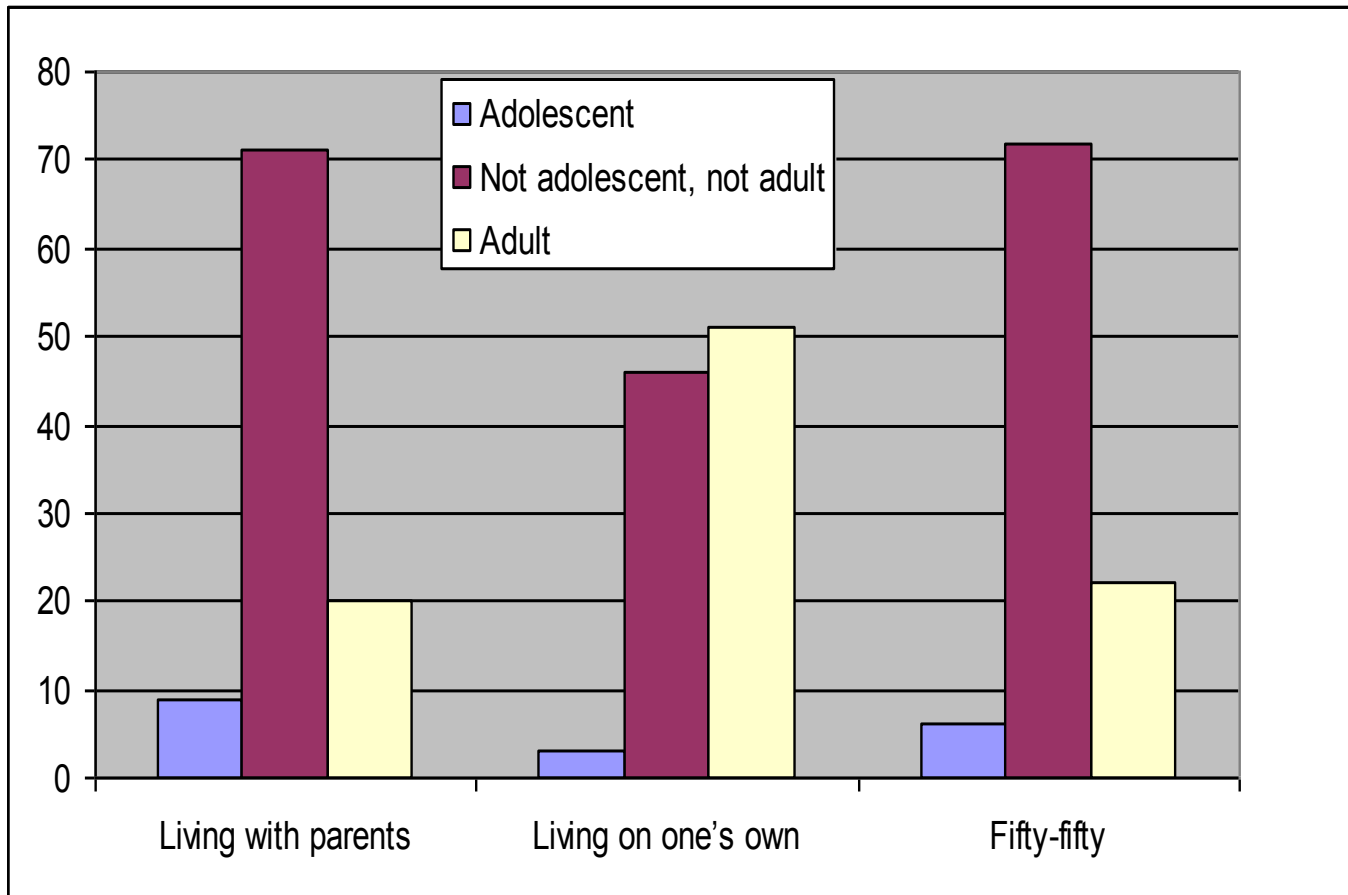
Employment status



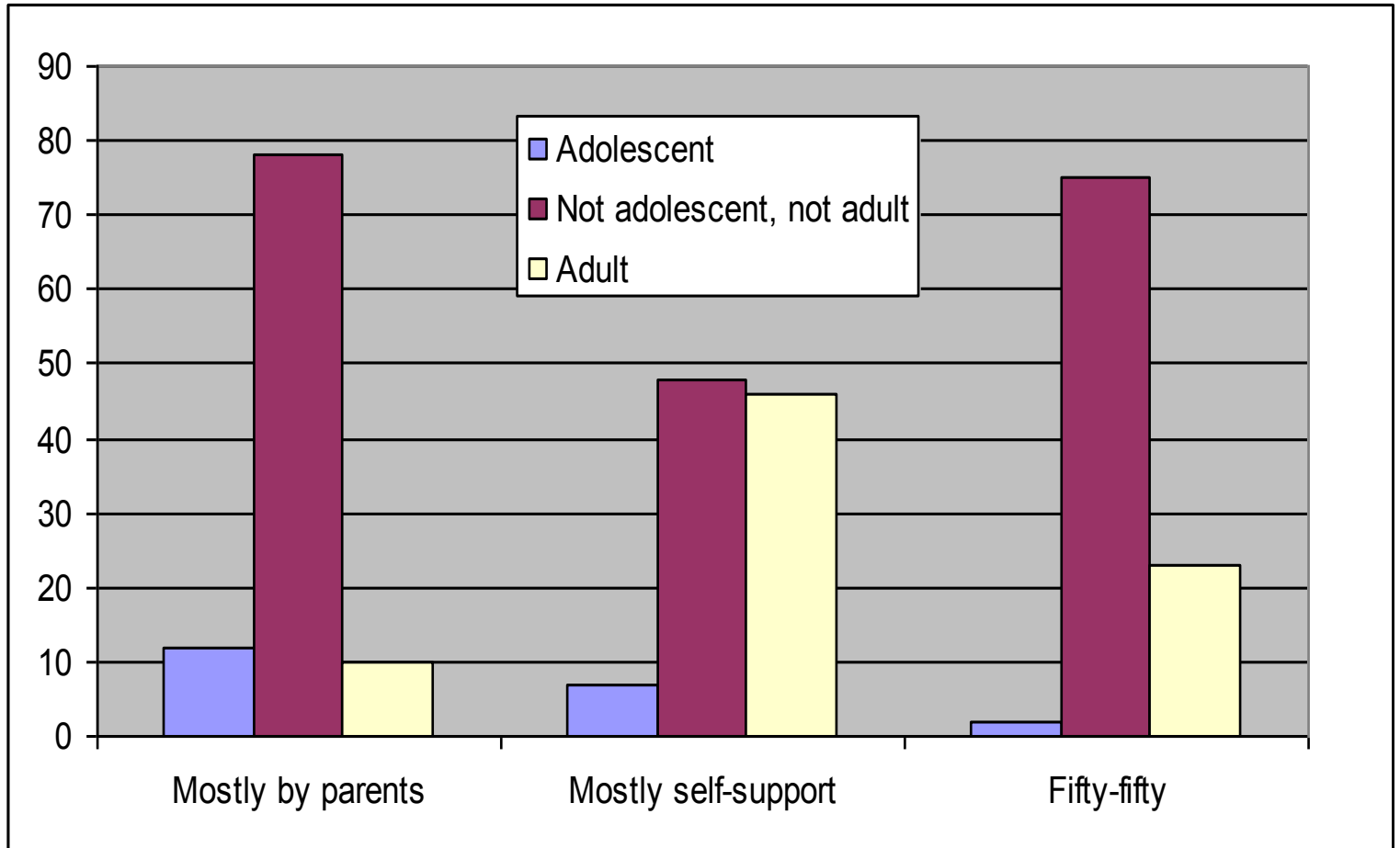
Marital status



Place of living



Financial support

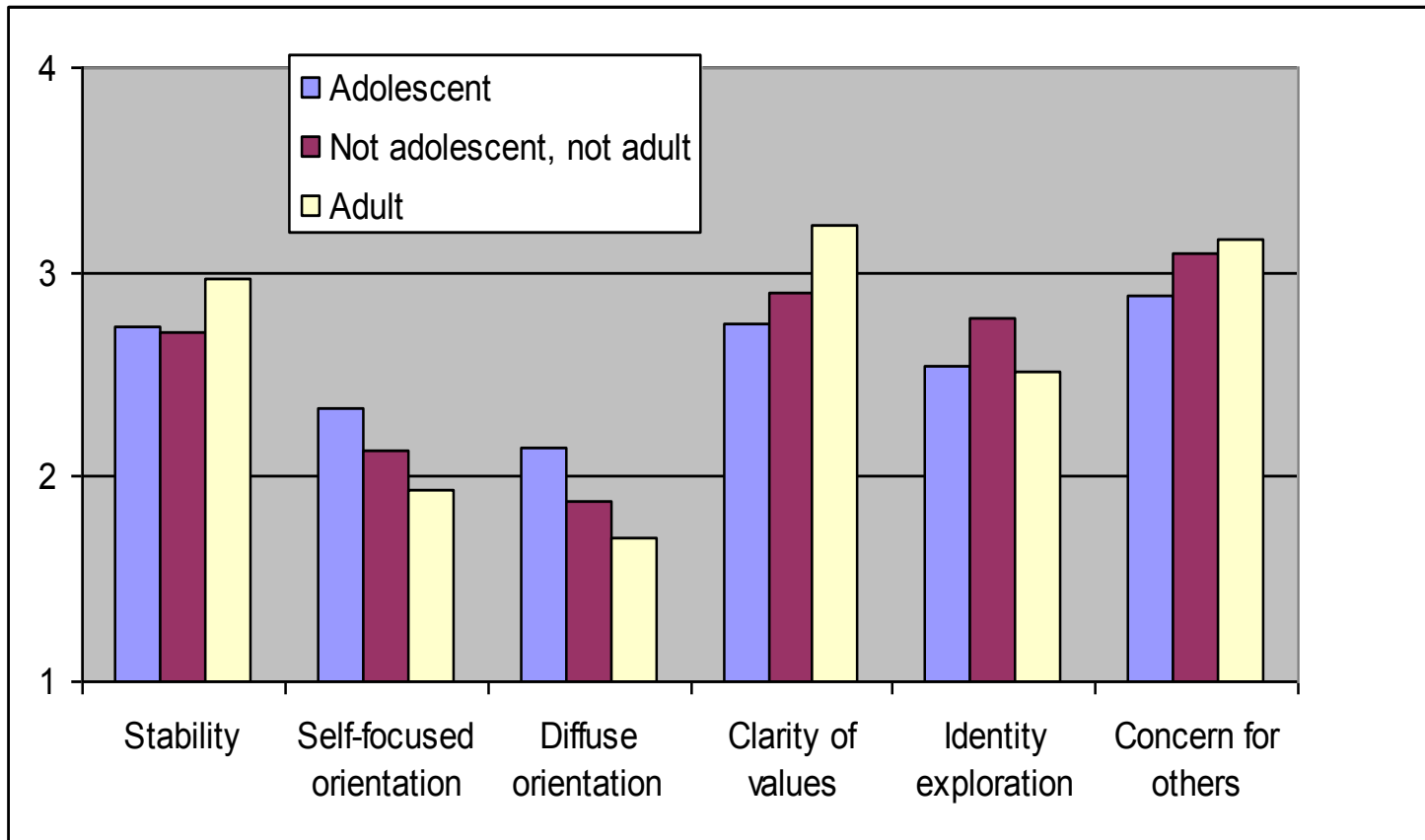


Quantitative Study - psychological characteristics

Questionnaire (inspired by IDEA, Reifman, Arnett, & Colwell, 2003) measured six variables relevant to essential qualities of emerging adulthood:

- Stability** (6 items, $\alpha = .79$) expressing the stability of mood („I don't let anything bother me“, „I am usually in a good mood“) and the feeling of prevailing inner harmony or distress („My life is quite settled right now“),
- Self-focused orientation** (7 items, $\alpha = .75$). The semantic core is the individualistic concept of freedom and self-focused orientation („I'm rather self-centered“) contrasted to a long-term relationship („I prefer individual freedom to a steady relationship“, „I want to have 'fun' as long as possible“).
- Diffuse Orientation.** (6 items, $\alpha = .71$) expressing a tendency to avoid responsibility and self-responsibility, unwillingness to plan ahead („I'm being irresponsible“, „I'm usually spontaneous and don't plan ahead“).
- Clarity of Values** consists of five items ($\alpha = .71$). („I know what I want to achieve in my life“, „I have a clear set of values“).
- Identity Exploration** (3 items, $\alpha = .69$). The key item here is the statement „I would like to find my place in life“ semantically linked to the need of living a meaningful life.
- Concern for Others** is formed by two items only („I care about other people's worries“, „I have commitments to others“).

Psychological characteristics



Stability: Ad = EA < A


Clarity of V.: Ad = EA < A

Self-focus: Ad = EA > A

Identity E.: EA > Ad = A

Diffuse: Ad > EA > A

C. for others: Ad = EA = A



Compared to emerging adults, adults presented higher Clarity of Values, higher Stability, and lower Self-focused Orientation

Compared to others, emerging adults presented higher level of Identity Exploration



Specific topic: Contemporary Czech emerging adults and their parents

Qualitative study,

$n = 15$, based on interviews with emerging adults

As it was shown in the results of the previous quantitative research, it is quite usual for the Czech emerging adults to live together with their parents. The economic benefit of a shared place of living is unquestionable.

However, subjectively, co-living with one's parents can be interpreted in different ways.

Contemporary Czech emerging adults and their parents

The first one represents the opinion that ***sharing housing with parents is the best option*** that has no substantial drawbacks. For instance, Vita says:

“Well, I talk with them about anything, it’s not really relaxed but it’s OK with me because they are my parents ... but I live with them, so I have to put up with it somehow ... On the other hand, I’m not complaining, I could make my own living but I am lazy...I just have a comfortable life there, I don’t have to take care of anything, it’s more convenient. I just don’t feel like it yet.” (man, 23 year old, working)



Contemporary Czech emerging adults and their parents

The pragmatic convenience of a shared place of living is favored even when living with parents is far from being ideal. Here, it is very important to emphasize the ***awareness of one's individual freedom*** manifested as independence in personal decision-making. Martin (man, 24 years old, university degree, working) says:

“Well, the bad thing is that you are under a regime at somebody else’s place, they still think you are a child ... But I am not really dependent on them. Neither my mother or my father. Neither of them. Just to meet them once at the weekend in the afternoon, mother will be happy to see me and she won’t be a pest, it could work best this way. When she sees me everyday, she doesn’t enjoy it all that much and that annoys me, she keeps bugging me all the time ... about everything.”

.. But the advantages are incredible. That’s a really good living that I have there ... I’ll rather pay 3 000 CZ to them than elsewhere for the rent because I know what I can do here, basically just about anything. It’s just more convenient, I don’t think that those principles of theirs are such a “hard core” to make me move out ..”



Contemporary Czech emerging adults and their parents

In other respondents' answers is mentioned ***awareness of psycho-social dependence***. In the period of emerging adulthood, this is also perceived differently. It can be viewed as ***something positive*** which the particular person does not want to or even is not able to give up. For example, Anna (woman, 23 years old, university degree, working) depicts her relationship with her parents accordingly:

„I am happy that I have graduated from university, that meant a lot to me ... I quite managed to find a good job quickly ... But I might be more dependent on my family, I am not quite able to become independent, I'm still waiting for something ... for instance now I say to myself when I have more money. I don't know I might be fooling myself. But the family just matters most to me”.



Contemporary Czech emerging adults and their parents

It becomes apparent that among the Czech emerging adults, the range of perceiving relationships with parents is very wide.

It is important to stress that even the image of a completely grown-up person includes relationships to parents. As a frequent topic, we can identify recurrent ideas about ***personal responsibility to one's own parents***. For instance, Ilona (woman, 19 years old, student) sees the changes in her relationship with her parents in the following way:

“But the relationship with my parents has changed a lot. They used to regard me as a child that they had to look after, now they see me on the same level and I sometimes feel responsible for them ... I'm starting to be protective towards them because I simply know what this young world is all about ..”



Contemporary Czech emerging adults and their parents

Czech emerging adults also refer ***the continuity of mutual relationships*** with parents and *the change in roles and expectations*. Milan (man, 25 years old, university student) says:

“They are still my parents and there are moments when I am still their child. I don’t know but I feel that if they needed anything they can count on me to do it...”

Surely, these examples do not show the whole range of relationships that adult children and their parents have. Our results cannot be generalized.

Nevertheless, the fact that in the replies of emerging adults did not appear the opposite point of view that adult children and their parents should look only after themselves is, in our opinion, very interesting.



Conclusion

- Czech emerging adults have similar characteristics as their peers from other European countries.
- Nevertheless, their psycho-social development has to be seen in the context of social changes of the Czech society in the last twenty years. A lot of adults (including their parents) had to rearranged their personal values and to choose a new life goals and perspectives.
- The relationship to one's own parents has proved as a very important issue connected to the transition to adulthood – acquiring economic independence is rather difficult before the age of 25.
- Moreover, in many cases it is just as challenging to overcome psycho-social dependence as well and leave the 'comfy home'.
- As our results show, the concept of adulthood of Czech emerging adults does take into account the bond with parents. Accepting one's own responsibility is often associated with the idea to take care of one's parents in old age and in difficulties.