



## How Do Care Leavers Estimate Their Own Transition into Adulthood?

Findings from a Panel Study from SOS Children 's Village Germany

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**SOS  
KINDERDORF**

### **... grew up in alternative care or in foster families for a period of time**

- \_ often affected by social disadvantages and exclusion in their biography
- \_ often had to change their place of living with separation from attachment figures

### **... prepare for leaving care or have already left care**

- \_ in Germany they often have to leave care at the age of 18
- \_ have to reach independence up to five years earlier than average (gap of 5 years in personality development!)

### **... have to live more or less independent**

- \_ cannot rely on family support throughout their way to adulthood
- \_ have to develop capacities for the life-conduct as an adult



### **... are a vulnerable group of young people**

- \_ often face substantially lower educational attainment as compared to peers
- \_ often lack of suitable subsequent care options and a clear educational or vocational perspective
- \_ have to tackle with multiple transitions at the same time
- \_ are at risk to face material insecurity, low degree of cultural and social resources, psychosocial harm, health problems or homelessness

**A successful transition is a condition for social integration into society and a stable life-course**



## Quantitative Data

- \_ every two years since 2014
- \_ SOS care leavers from 28 facilities

Questionnaire Survey	2015, 2016, 2018
Care Leavers in total	n=624
Care Leavers with first survey and data during care	n=244 (39%)



## Qualitative Data

- \_ every two years since 2015

Interviews	2015, 2017, 2019
Care Leavers in total	N=40



### How do young people in care look forward to their transition on reaching majority?



#### **„It’s high time for me“**

looking forward with delight, they combine transition with a higher amount of freedom, feel prepared for moving out and also feel up to step into independent living

#### **„Mixed Feelings“**

moving-out seems to be suitable on the one hand, but they don’t know if they manage the challenges of transition in different life-terms on the other hand



#### **„I am not yet prepared“**

move-out feels like a „throw out of their nest“, which is set from outside by the youth welfare system and which conflicts with the subjectively felt situation

## Summarized Findings

- \_ being stabilized in life-course and character, gained competences for independent living
- \_ being prevented from social drop-out, had a good life, being not disturbed by negative parental influence

- \_ experienced community and gained self-confidence, were helped to cope with the past
- \_ were enabled for regular school attendance and school qualifications, managed transition into vocational training or study



**Most of interviewees report on a positive influence while growing up in SOS care**



### How do SOS care leavers estimate their move-out in retrospect?

(multi-voting possible)

**39.6 %**

found first time of independence  
difficult to deal with (n=220)

**45.9 %**

experienced the move-out of care  
as a deep cut in current life (n=220)

**49.6 %**

had many misgivings before moving  
out on how things will go on (n=224)

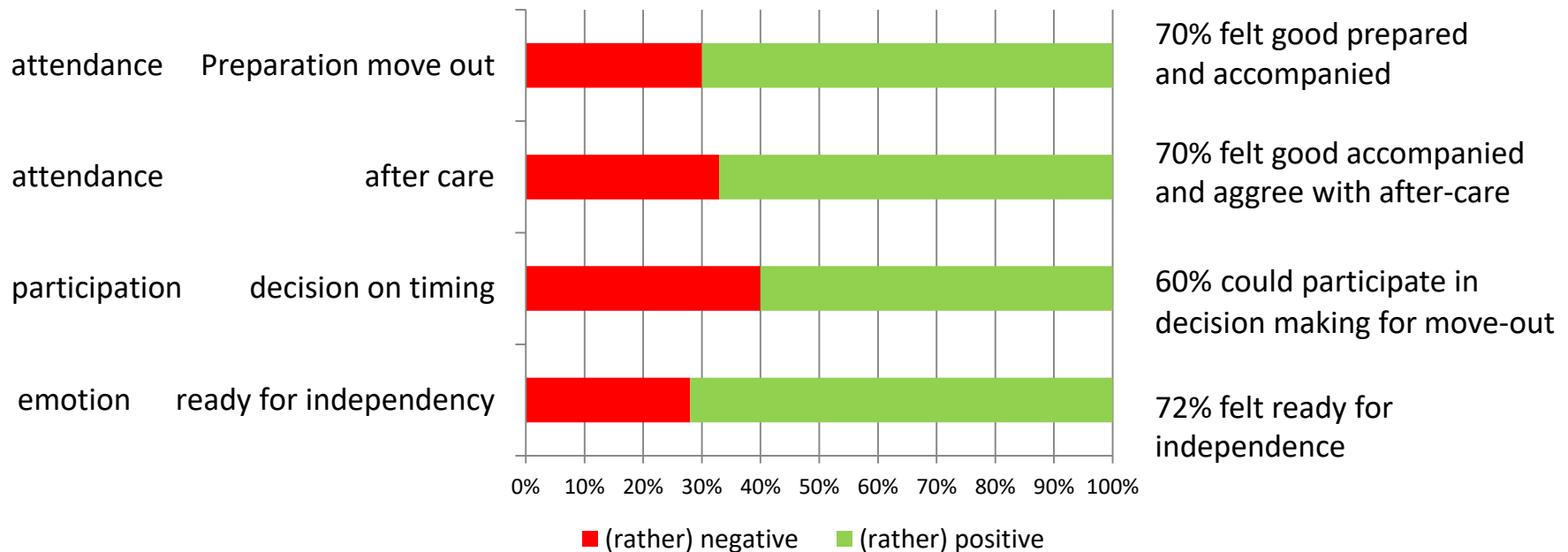
**63 %**

knew what will come up to  
them after move-out (n=224)



### How do SOS care leavers estimate their move-out in retrospect?

(First survey after move-out, n from 208 to 225)

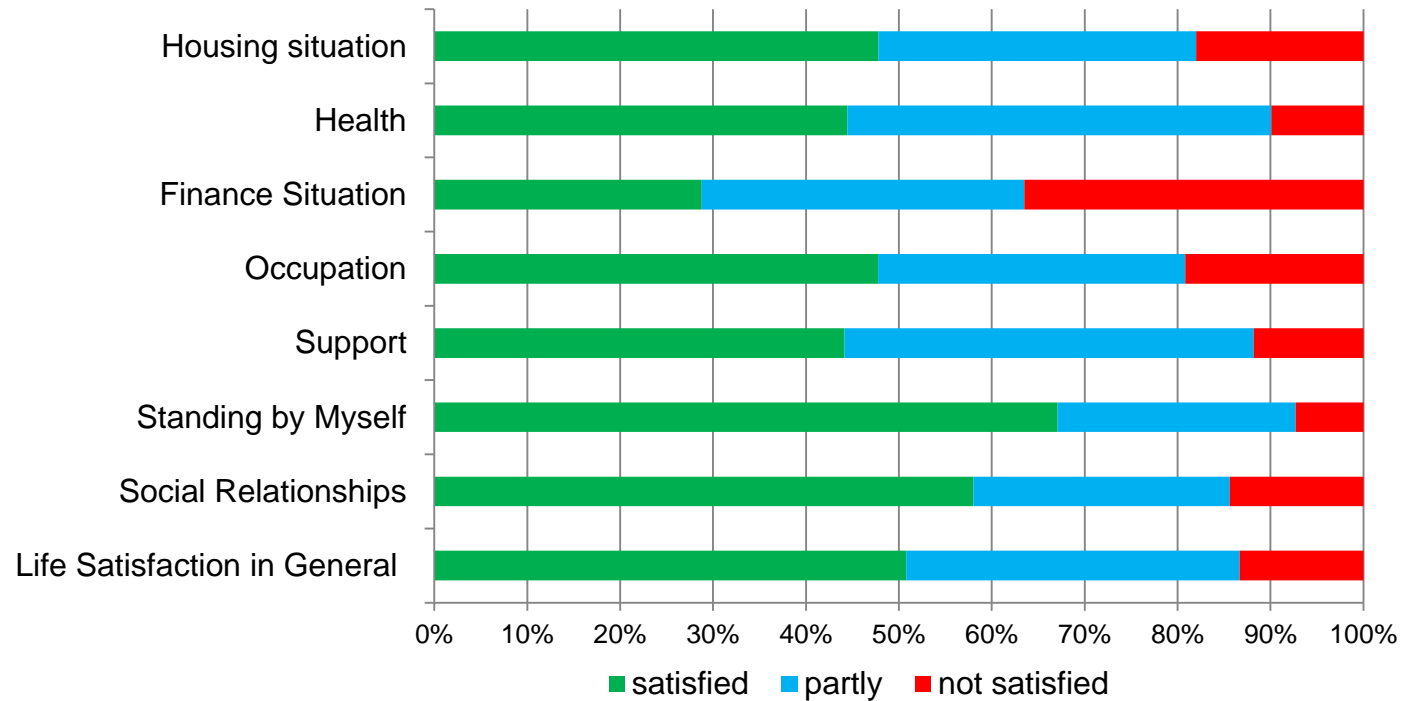


**All in all a high amount of attendance and satisfying opportunities of participation help care leavers to better cope with transition to adulthood**



### How satisfied are SOS care leavers in different life-terms?

(different n from 118 to 244)



### How care leavers estimate their own transition into adulthood is linked to how they estimate their life situation

### How do SOS care leavers succeed in their transition to adulthood? (first estimates, n=60)

**nearly 50 percent succeed more or less**

- \_ they feel relatively stable in some life-terms
- \_ foresee into the future with optimism and quite confidential



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#### a third feels to be in a phase of orientation

- \_ do not have a clear perspective of their path way
- \_ no adequate perception of personal resources and institutional opportunities
- \_ have the need for guidance and support in after-care and wish to get them



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#### around 20% tackle with bigger problems in different life-terms

- \_ e.g. school, professionell training, social network, psychosocial sufferings
- \_ do not have personal resources to cope with this stresses and strains on their own
- \_ have need for longer stay in organizational care and/or intense support



### Transition to independence for care leavers has to deal with ...

**Big challenge**

- balancing independence and interdependency
- handling with fears and loneliness
- trusting again and coming in social resonance
- affiliation to a group or somebody and building an own social network
- graduating from school and finding a vocational perspective
- working on identity at all

Developmental  
Tasks

**Enabling process  
longing for years**



### **How can care givers support adolescents on their way to independence in the SOS-facilities?**

focus on social relationships

- offer of individual and appropriate options to feel affiliated
- help to establish self-determined social relationships within and outside the SOS-facilities

educational support


- help to tap the full potential in different terms of education (curricular, political, personal ...)

options for building up self-efficacy

- esp. broad opportunities for participation and self-experiencing







### external context

dissing, radical insult, rassism graffitiies

### context within the SOS children village

art-, music- and theatre projects

### individual perspective

support in all personal issues close to  
pathway-planning (appropriate to age)

**Becoming independent starts  
long before moving out of care**



### What else can we do? Care givers have to create opportunities for ...

- understanding and accepting own biography
- opening access to the world in order to discover interests and passions
- taking over responsibility for themselves and others
- experiencing in new situations and different life terms
- developing step by step into independence

**Providing wide scopes for development, appreciating done challenges  
and keeping the door open if needed**



## Exchange Program

since 2016

**SOS Children Village  
Israel**

**SOS Children Village  
Black Forrest, Germany**



**A pathway into a Multicultural World**



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**Thank You for Your Attention!**  
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