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Reflecting upon one's life – along one's life

Biographical Self-Reflection from age 30 to age 66

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Overview

- 1 Two research questions
- 2 Design
- 3 Hypotheses on development
- 4 Test of hypotheses
- 5 Conclusion: Characteristics of biographical self-reflection

1 Two research questions

First question: How to conceive biographical self-Reflection

Life = Sequence of

- Decisions

- Occurrences

- Developments

Modi of biographical self-reflection

In each modus

Contents reflected – and surveyed

- Such as: education, work, partnership etc.

Second question:

How develops biographical self-Reflection over life?

- Age 30 on youth and early midlife
- Age 43 on mid-midlife
- Age 56 on late midlife
- Age 66 on old age

2 Design of study

2.1 Modi in everyday life and in surveys

2.2 Data, survey questions, and scoring

2.1 Modi in everyday life and in surveys

Modi defined

Decisions: source person

- not everyday = short term, easily revisable
- biographical = long term, revisable with costs

Occurrences: source environment = others and nature

Both: distinct time point, common categories, *when* and *what* easy to identify

Developments: source person

- Result of decisions and occurrences in long term
- Diffuse: *when* and *what* difficult to identify

Modi: difference of locus of control and of need to be reflected

Locus of control: Person for Decision and Development

- no need to be reflected if positive, but if *negative*
- Surveyed only *unhappy* decisions and *unfortunate* developments

Locus of control: Environment for Occurences,

- need to be reflected = evaluated whether positive or negative consequences for person.
- Surveyed *occurences* and *positive or negative consequences*

2.2 Data, survey questions, and scoring

Year	1969/70	1984/5	1997	2010	2020
Age	15/16 Youth	30 Early midlife	43 Midlife	56 Late midlife	66 Old age
Sample n	3.240 students	1.989 (61,3%)	1.596 (49,3%)	1.301 (40,2%)	1.013 (31,3%)
Method	PAPI within classes	PAPI	CATI	CATI	CATI
Occupation	Social background Plan for the future Intelligence Structure Test School grades	Social background Educ./occup. life course Study grades	As 1984/5	As 1984/5	As 1984/5
Family		Private life course Partner status	As 1984/5 As 1984/5	As 1984/5 As 1984/5	As 1984/5 As 1984/5
Success		Biog. self definition Biog. self reflection Causal attribution School satisfaction	Soc. Selftident. As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 Coping strategies	As 1997 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1997	As 1997 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1997
World view		Family Politics Religion	As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5	As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5	As 1984/5 As 1984/5 As 1984/5
Retirement				Spare time Volunteering Plans for old age	Spare time As 2010 Realization Renewed planning Life balancing
Life balancing					

Question phrasing

- „Since your last interview in month/yeare (individual interview time point), have there been **decisions** which you had rather had taken differently in retrospect?“ Yes/No. If yes:„What had you rather made differently?“
- „There are sometimes in life specific **occurences** which bring a noticeable change into life. Have there been such occurences in your life, since your last interview in (as above) or have there been none?“ Yes/No. „Could you please tell such an occurences?“ „What was the specific impact upon your life?“ „And in which year did it take place?“
- **Developments** „Did you have in the last years since (as above) at some times the feeling that you should not continue your life in the same manner as before, but rather change it?“ Yes/No. „When did that happen?“ „What was it you were disconcerted with in your life?“

Frageformulierungen

- „Gibt es **Entscheidungen** seit der letzten Befragung im Monat/Jahr (individueller Befragungszeitpunkt eingesetzt), die Sie nachträglich lieber anders getroffen hätten?“ Ja/nein. Falls ja: „Was hätten Sie lieber anders gemacht?“
- „Es gibt ja manchmal im Leben auch bestimmte **Ereignisse**, die eine spürbare Veränderung des Lebens zur Folge haben. Gab es seit der letzten Befragung (s. o.) bei Ihnen derartige Ereignisse oder gab es keine?“ Ja, es gab sie – nein, es gab keine. „Können Sie mir bitte ein solches Ereignis nennen?“ „Worin lag der besondere Einfluss auf Ihr Leben?“ „Und in welchem Jahr war dieses Ereignis?“
- **Entwicklungen** „Hatten Sie in den vergangenen Jahren (s.o.) einmal das Gefühl, dass Sie Ihr Leben in der Weise, so wie es war, nicht mehr weiterführen, sondern ändern sollten?“ Ja - nein. „Wann war das?“ „Womit waren Sie selbst in Ihrem Leben nicht einverstanden?“

Open questions, scored according to contents

About 100 scores, similar for the three modi

Collapsed to 6 content categories

- Family of origin
 - Education
 - Occupation
 - Partner
 - Children
 - Illness / Anomie
- Institutionalized Life course
- Biological Life Curve

Variables: 0, 1 for respondent, % in sample

1 All

2 All negative ones: Unlucky decisions, negative occurrences, unfortunate developments

3 Unlucky decisions

4 All occurrences

5 negative occurrences

6 Positive occurrences

7 unfortunate developments

8 Education

9 Occupation

10 Partner

11 Children

12 Family of origin

13 Illness / Anomie

3 Hypotheses on development of biographical self-reflection from youth to late-midlife

General justification

Tasks of self-reflection shifting

- From youth: identity formation = search and find
- To adult: Identity maintenance = default to stay, move if unavoidable

Accordingly, focus of biographical self-reflection shifting

- Modi:
 - youth and early midlife = decision and occurrences
 - mid- and late-midlife = developments
- Contents:
 - youth and early midlife = work and family
 - mid- and late-midlife, old age = biologic life curve

Hypotheses on development of **sums and modi** over life course

Sum of all, Sum of all negative ones:

- More self-security, less challenges
- negative tendency

Decisions:

- Required early in life
- negative tendency

Occurences:

- Trigger environmont, no age dependeny of evaluation as positive or negative
- constancy

Development:

- Increasing triggers, increasing ability to handle them
- positive tendency

Hypotheses on development of contents over life course

Family of origin, education, occupation, partnership, parenthood:

- Scheduled early on institutionalized life course
- negative tendency

Illness and Anomie:

- Showing late in biological life curve
- positive tendency

Hypotheses on the development of modi and contents from age 30 to age 66

	Variable	Hypothesis
1 Sum	All (DEC + OCC + DEV)	-
2	Negative (DEC + OCC—NEGV + DEV)	-
3 Modus	Decisions (DEC)	-
4	Occurrences-Total (OCC)	0
5	Occurrences-Negative (OCC-NEG)	0
6	Occurrences-Positive (OCC-POS)_	0
7	Development (DEV)	+
8 Content	Education (E)	-
9	Occupation (O)	-
10	Partnership (PA)	-
11	Parenthood (PE)	-
12	Familie of Origin (O)	-
13	Illness/Anomia (I)	+

4 Test of Hypotheses

4.1 Sums and Modi

4.2 Contents

4.3 Synopsis

What is a confirmation of developmental hypotheses?

Decrease, Constancy, Increase in three intervals:

- 3*3 developments possible

Of these only 3 *monotonous* ones = confirmation of hypotheses

- Negative tendency

- Constancy

- Positive tendency

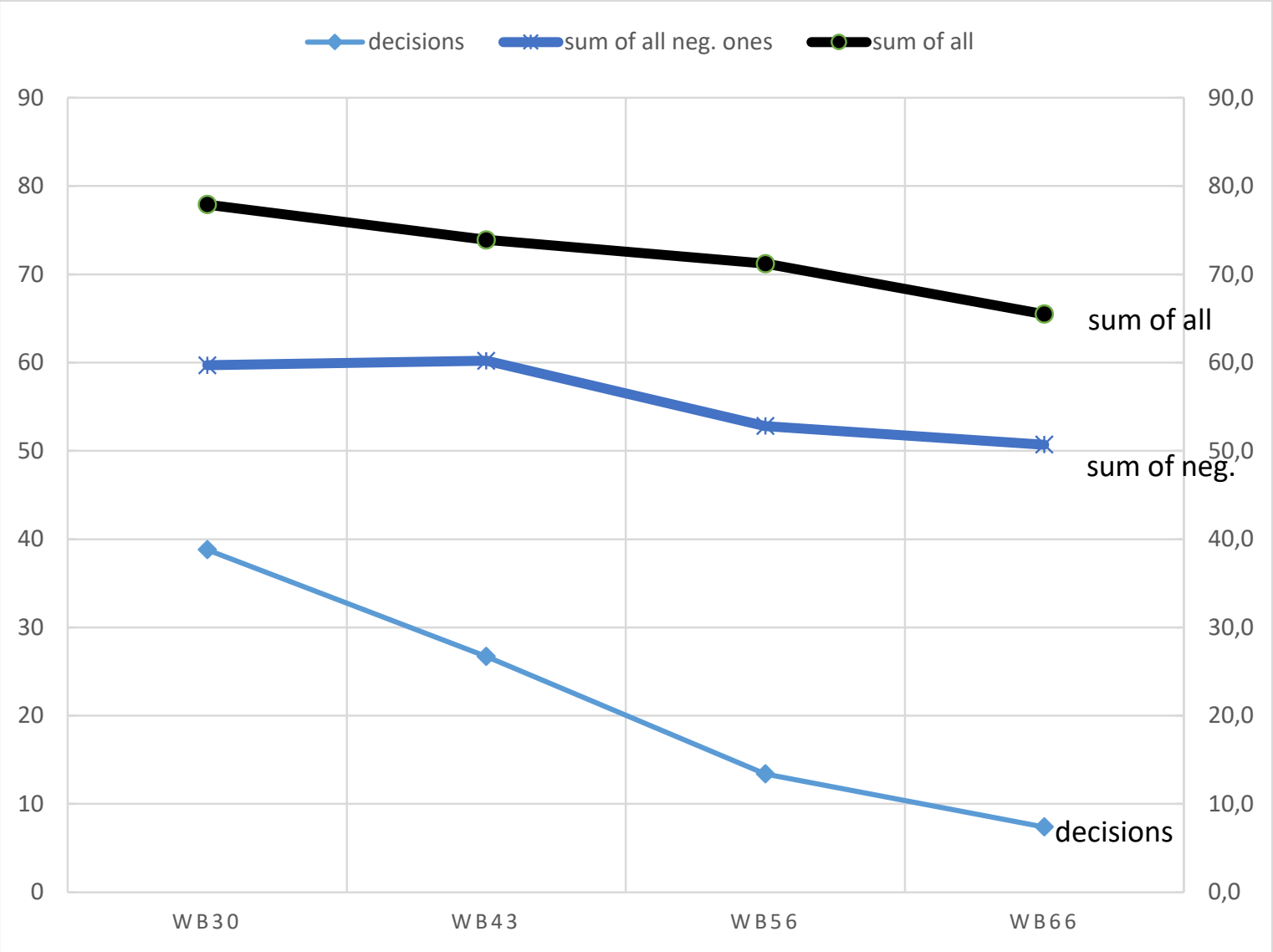
All *non-monotonous* ones, disconfirmation, described ex post as

- U with time of two peaks

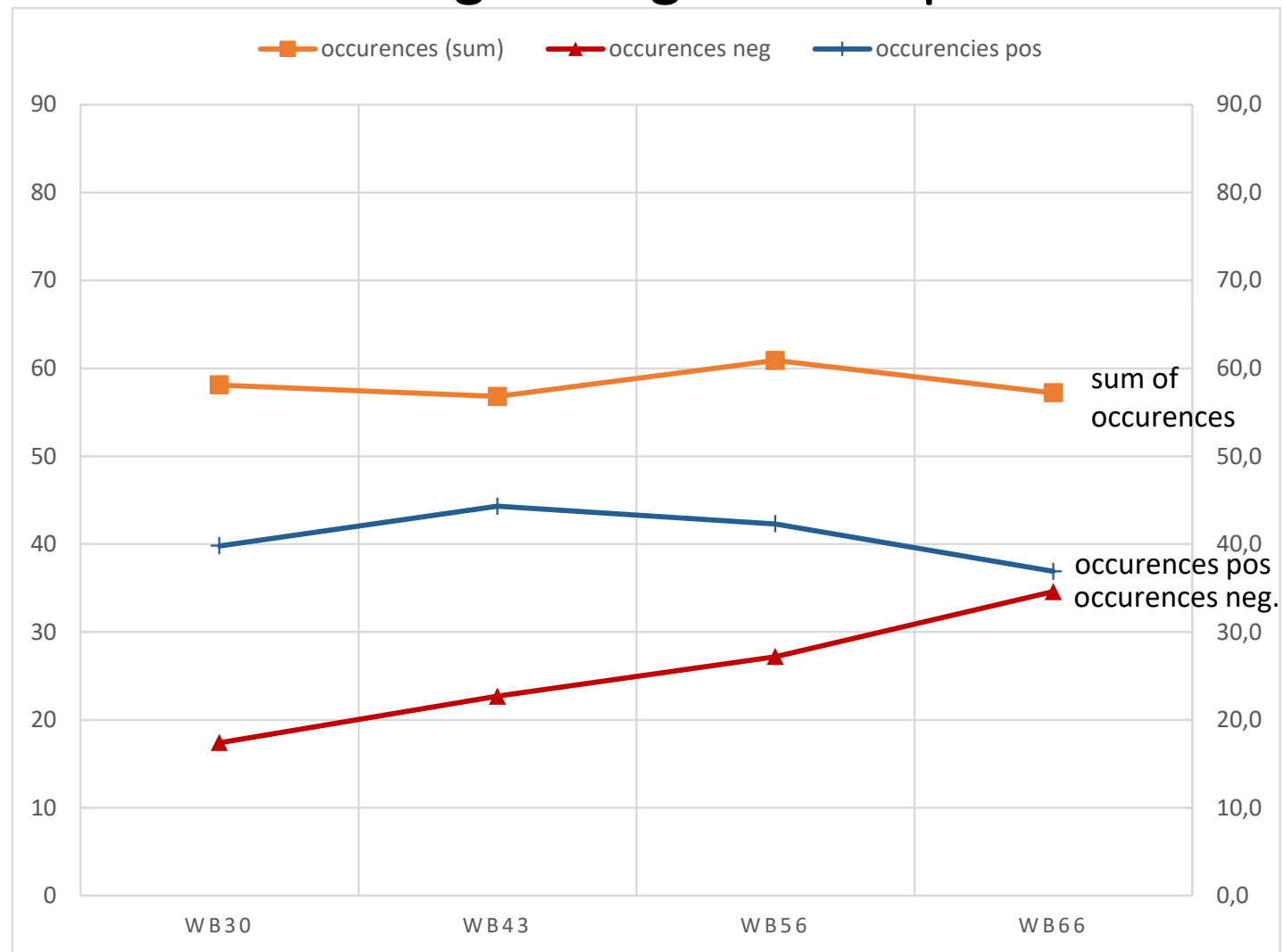
- Ω with one time of one peak

4.1 Sums and Modi

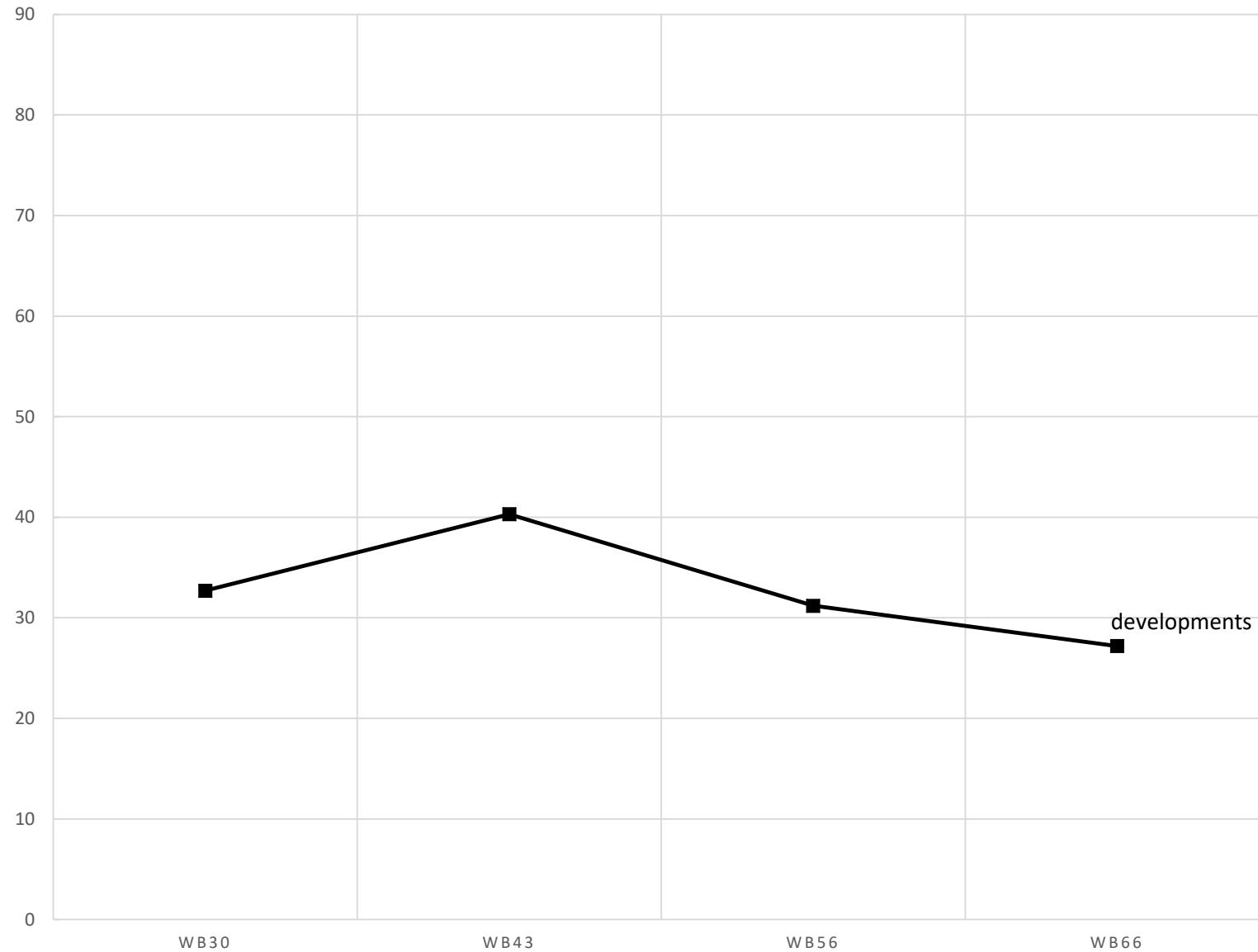
Biographical self-reflection: Sum of all, sum of all negatives, decisions % mentioning among 1013 respondents



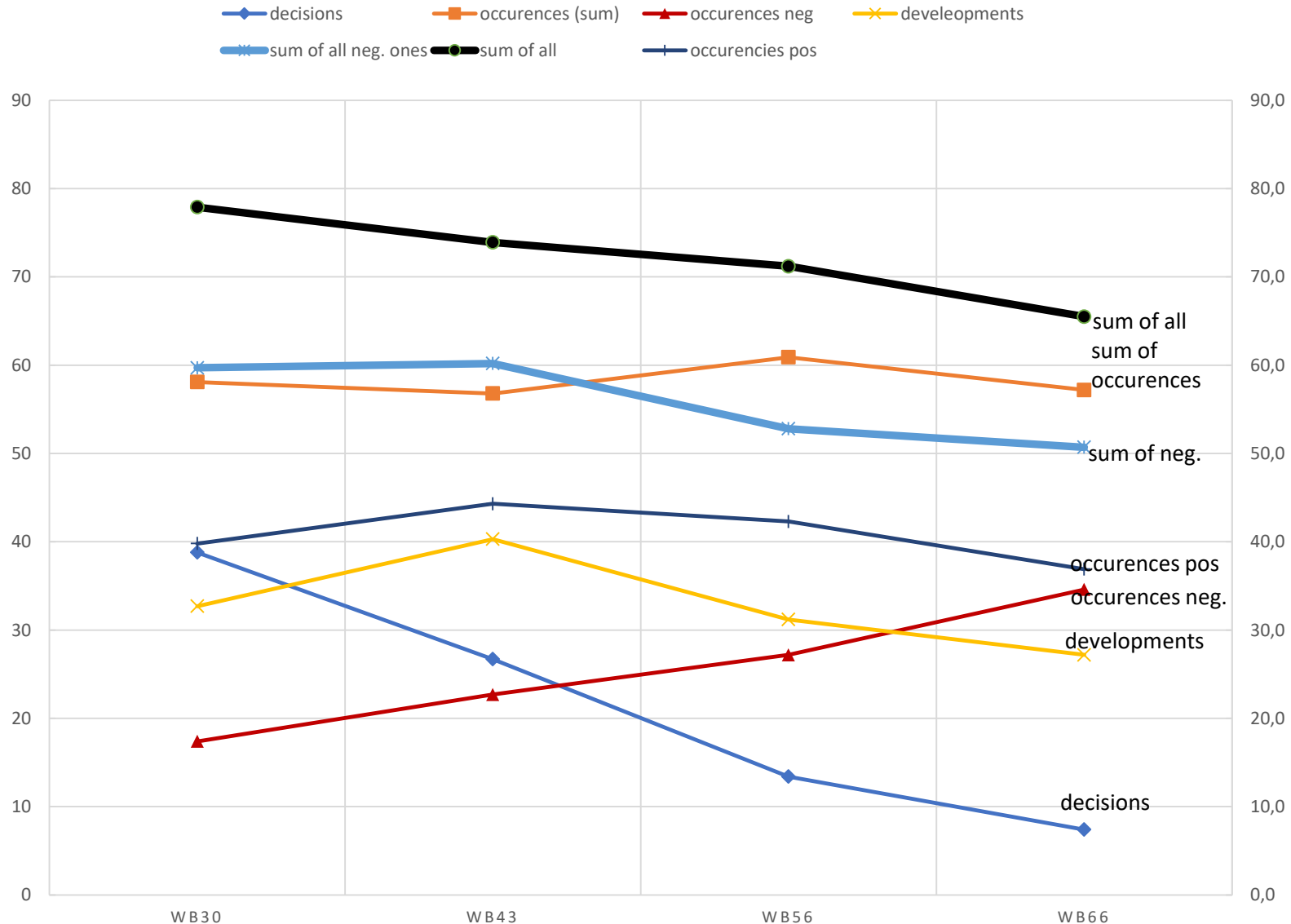
Biographical self-reflection: Occurences % mentioning among 1013 respondents



Biographical self-reflection: developments % mentioning among 1013 respondents



Biographical self-reflection: Sums (fat lines) and Modi, % mentioning among 1013 respondents



Summary of Results: Sums and Modi

Sum, all and all negative: Negative tendency confirmed

Decisions: Negative tendency confirmed

Occasions-Total: Constancy confirmed

Occasions-Negative: No constancy, + 17 positive tendency

Occasions-Positive: No constancy, - 3 Ω : 43, 56

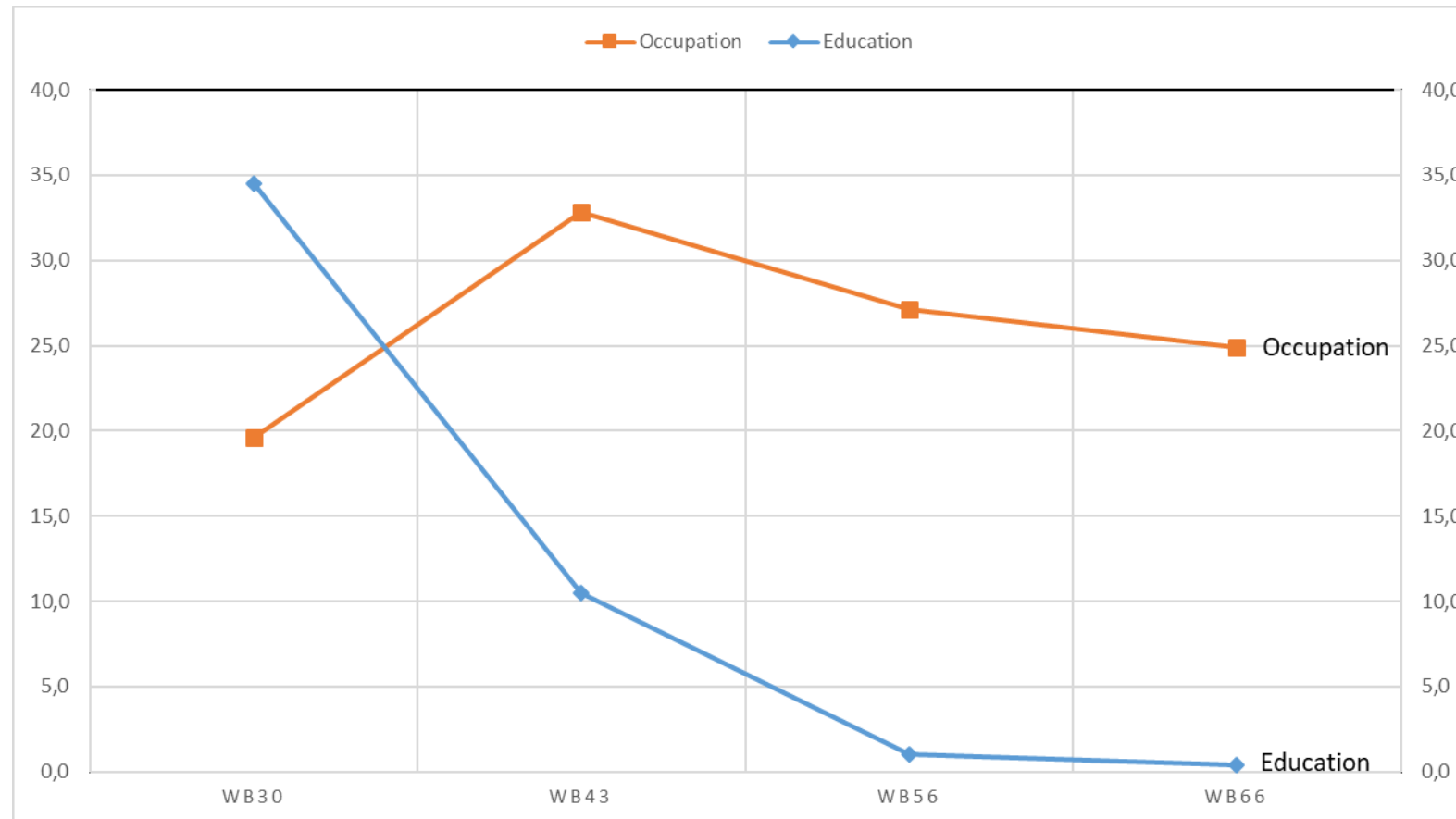
Developments: No positive tendency, - 6 Ω : 43, 56

Legend for disconfirmed (No):

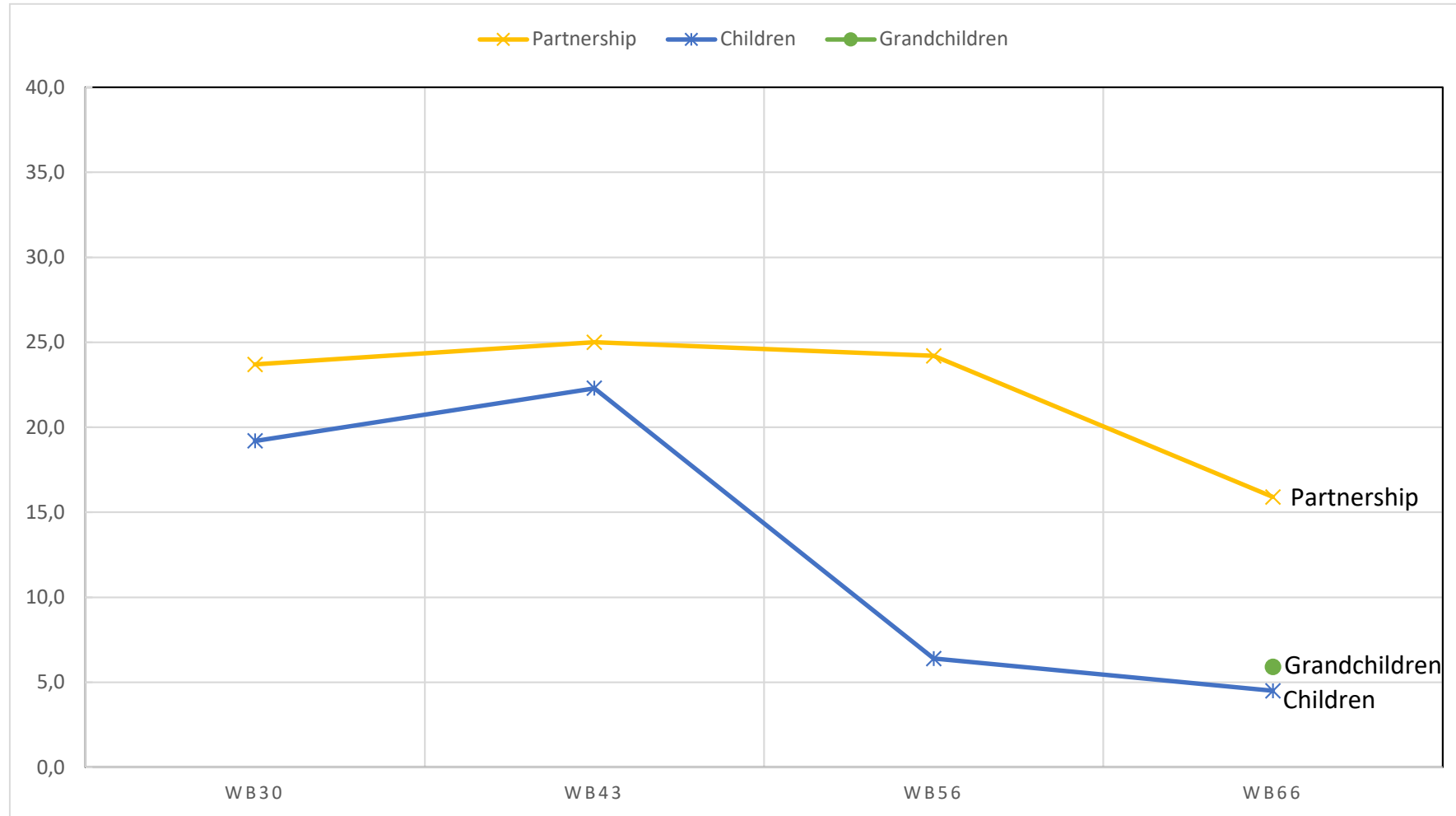
- first number % difference 16 – 66
- Ω inverse U-Form with ages(s) of peak

4.2 Contents

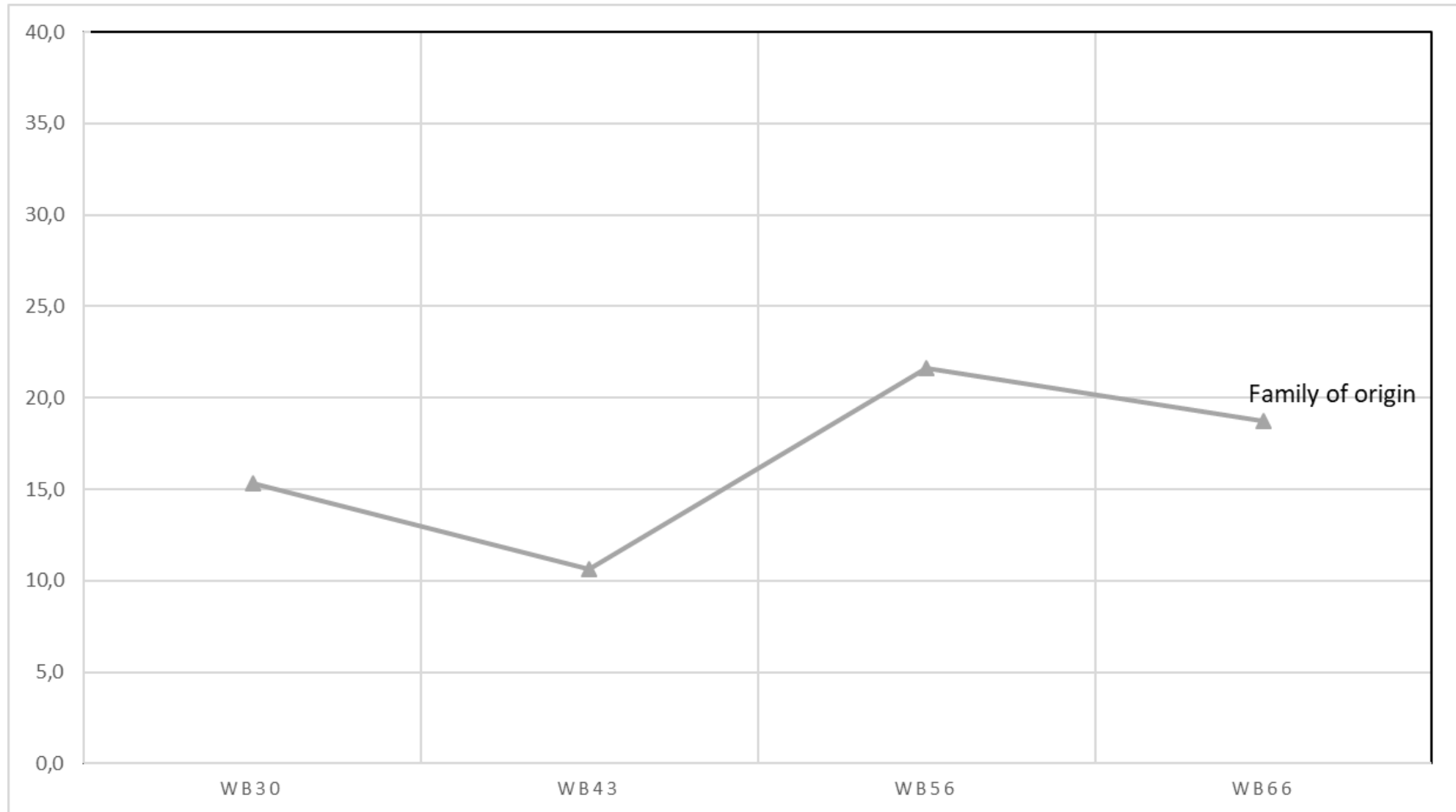
Biographical self-reflection: Education and Occupation, % mentioning among 1013 respondents



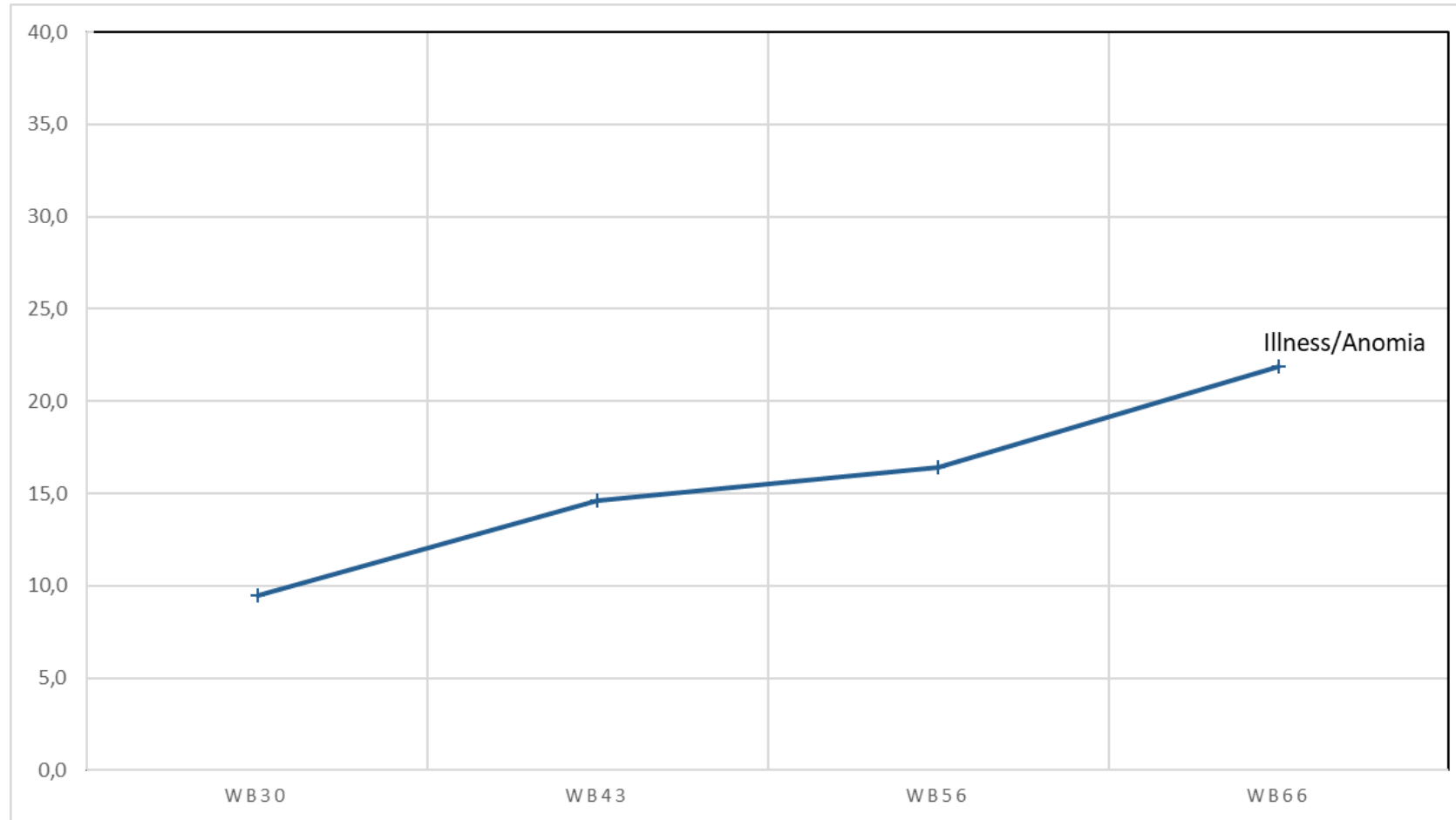
Biographical self-reflection: Partnership and Parenthood, % mentioning among 1013 respondents



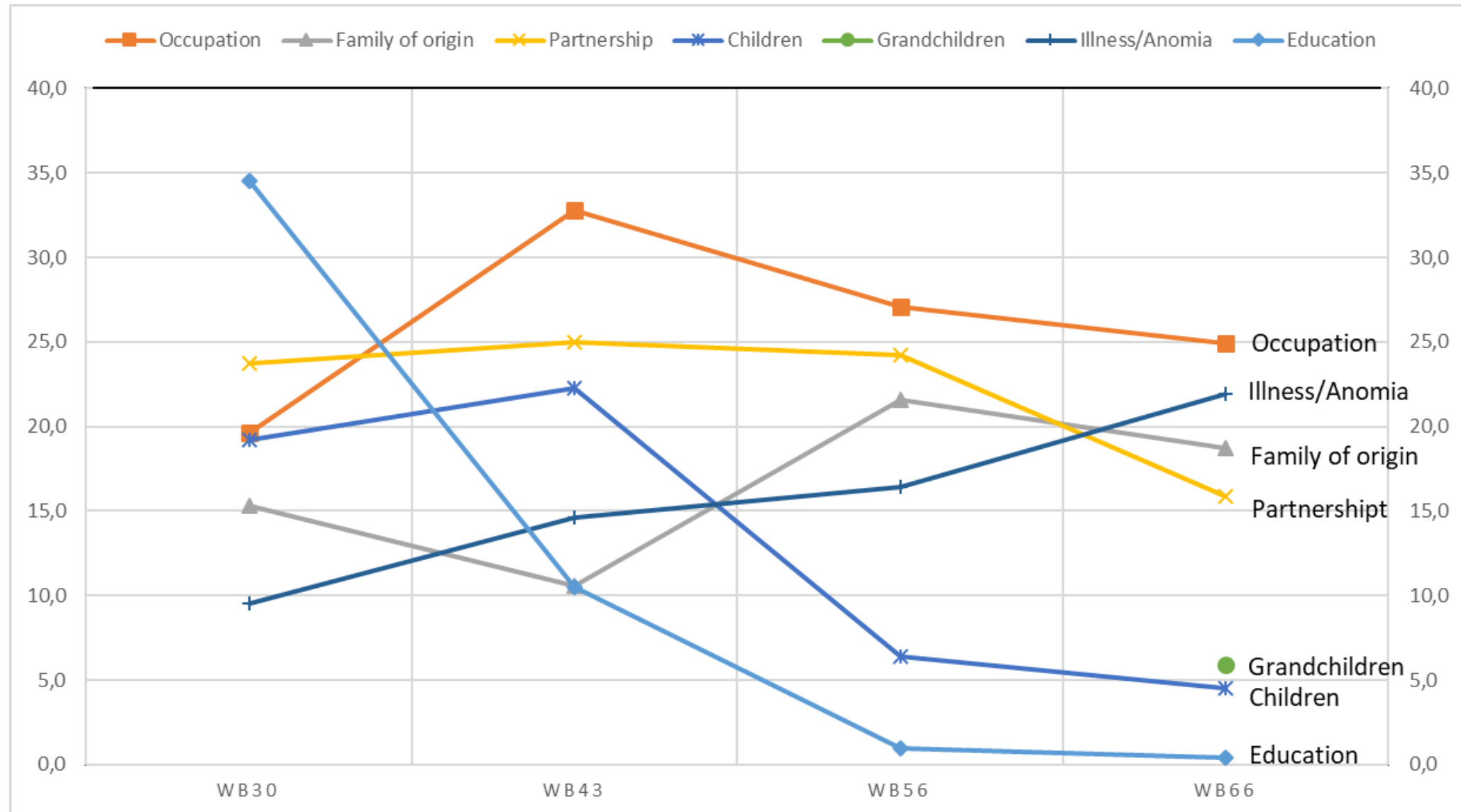
Biographical self-reflection: Family of origin, % mentioning 1013 respondents



Biographical self-reflection: Illness and Anomia, % mentioning among 1013 respondents



Biographical self-reflection: All Contents, % mentioning among 1013 respondents



Summary of Results: Contents

Education: Negative tendency confirmed

Occupation: No negative tendency; + 5, Ω : 43

Partnership: No negative tendency; -8, Ω : 43, 56

Parenthood: No negative tendency; -15, Ω : 43

Family of Origin: No negative tendency; +3, U: 30 vs 56, 66

Illness / Anomia: Positive tendency confirmed; +12

4.3 Synopsis

Overview of hypothesis and results

Abbildung	Prüfvariable	H	Ergebnis
2 Summen	Alle (ES+ER+EN)	-	-12
	Negativ (ES+ERN+EW)	-	-9
2 Modus	Entscheidung (ES)	-	-31
	Ereignis gesamt (ER)	0	0
	Ereignis negativ (ERN)	0	+17
	Ereignisse positiv (ERP)	0	-3, \cap : 43, 56
	Entwicklung (EW)	+	-6, \cap : 43
3 Inhalt	Ausbildung (A)	-	-32
	Beruf (B)	-	+5, \cap : 43
	Partnerschaft (P)	-	-8, \cap : 43, 56
	Elternschaft (E)	-	-15, \cap : 43
	Herkunftsfamilie (H)	-	+3. U: 30 vs 56, 66
	Krankheit/Anomie (K)	+	+12

Three summary results about forms of developments

- Predominantly monotonous positive, negative, constant
 - Tasks of ages superseded by identity consolidation
- Ω second most, peak 30, 43, and both
 - Midlife, Challenges of occupational choice and family formation, „critical“
- Only two remaining forms:
 - U: Family of origin, from passive to active
 - Constancy: Occasion-Total, environment

5 Conclusion: Characteristics of biographical self-reflection

Embeddeness in conduct of life

Almost 80% at age 30, 10 %-points decrease

Reflection part of conducting life, even when painful

Opposition of social and natural development

Institutionalized life course: Consolidation of self
Biological life curve: Experience of natural limits

Accomplishments of identity formation and maintenance

- Decrease of biographical self-reflection

Interference of natural limits

- Increase of biographical self-reflection

Concentration in midlife, „critical“

Cumulation of challenges and self-reflections

- Occupation peak 43
- Partnership peak 43 and 56
- Parenthood peak 43
- Family of origin bottom at 43

Midlife critical life phase, rather than old age (Erikson)

- Probing time enough – and revision time still enough
- Interpretation of life most urgent, when still opportunities of action and revision

Thank you for your attention