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**Globalization, uncertainty and changes in early life courses.**

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Increasing uncertainty about economic and social developments is a definitive feature of globalization in advanced economies. However, increasing uncertainty does not impact all regions, states, organizations or individuals in the same way. There are institutional settings and social structures, historically grown and country-specific, that determines the degree to which people are affected by rising uncertainty. This paper develops a multi-level theoretical framework and summarizes the main empirical results from the first phase of the international research project GLOBALIFE. There is empirical evidence that youth in all countries are clearly exposed to more uncertainty in the course of globalization. Yet uncertainty is unequal, with risk accumulating in certain groups, generally those at the bottom. Uncertainty impacts family formation, with those in more precarious positions more likely to postpone or forgo partnership and parenthood. Youth develop rational responses to this uncertainty, which can be identified in the form of diverse behavioral strategies. A notable result is that young men and women are affected and respond differently to uncertainty, resulting in an unmistakable gender-specific strategy, particularly in the male-breadwinner societies. We show overwhelming support for the expectation that nation-specific institutions serve to shield or funnel this uncertainty in unique ways and to particular groups of youth.