

Sequence Analysis:

A Non-Parametric Approach to Study Pathways to Adulthood

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What are sequences and where can we find them?

A string of values of a categorical (nominal / ranks) variable

A string of states (state – a certain value of a categorical variable)

It can look like this:

1 1 2 3 4 3 2 1 4 1 1 2 3 4 3 2 1 4

Or this:

A-D-A-D-D-D-D-A-A-A-A-D-D-D

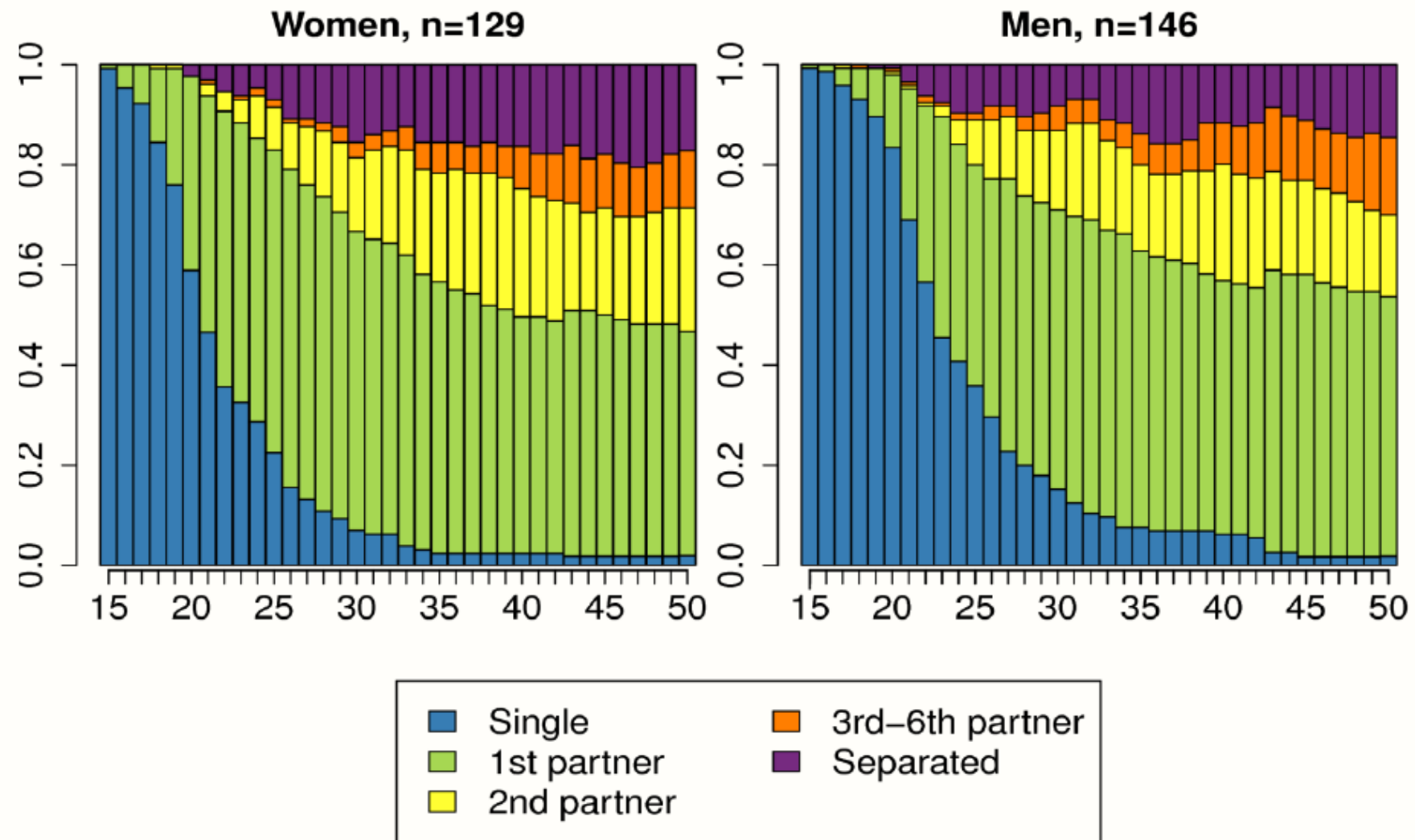
Sequences are usually obtained from prospective (in psychology) or retrospective (in sociology) **longitudinal studies**

What can we do with sequence analysis?

- Visualize the (longitudinal categorical) data!
- Investigate the sequences characteristics and link these characteristics to certain variables
- Build a typology of sequences, i.e., uncover certain groups that have similar sequences

Do lots of other cool stuff

Figure 1: State distribution plots of partnership histories for women and men between ages 15–50 in JYLS data



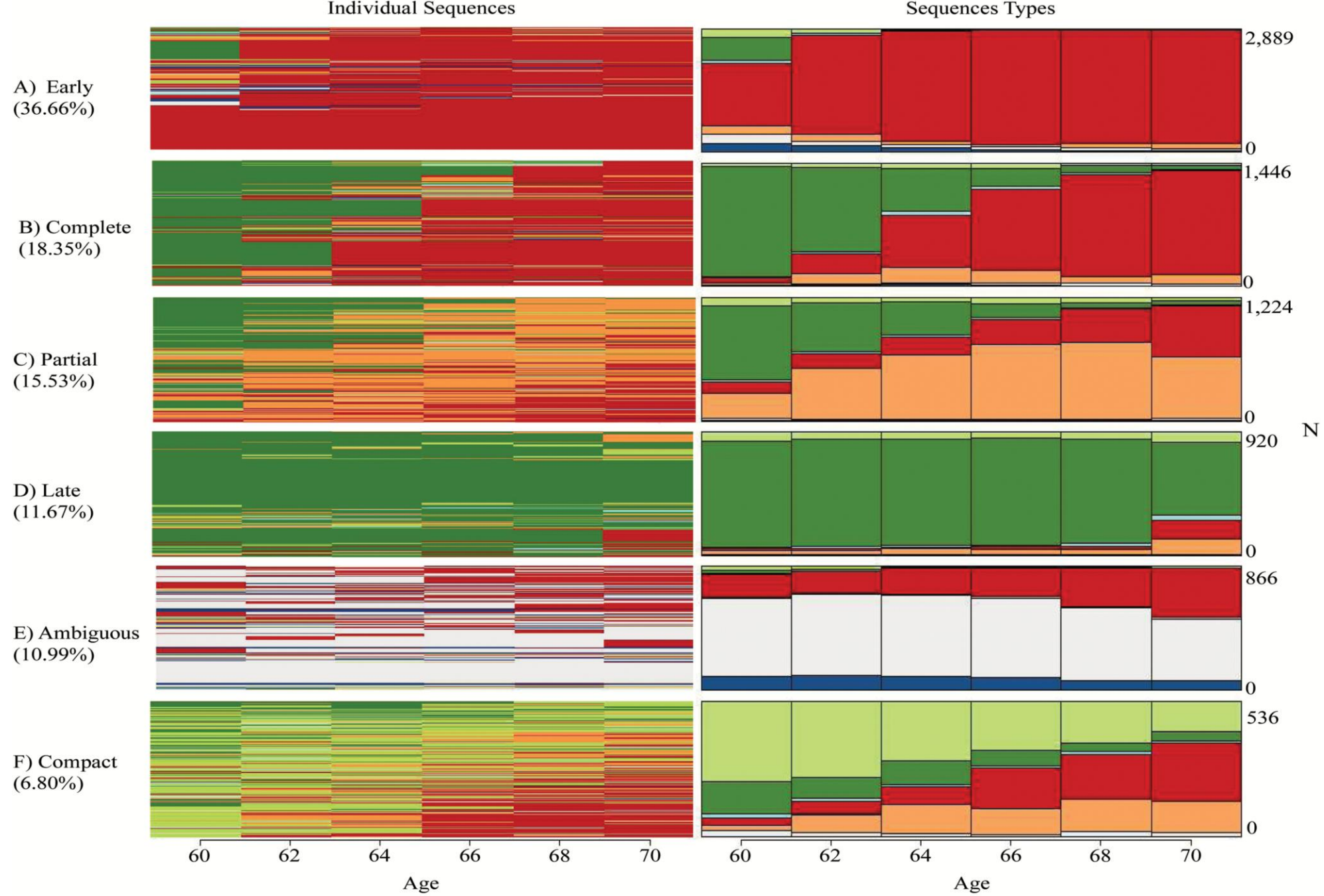
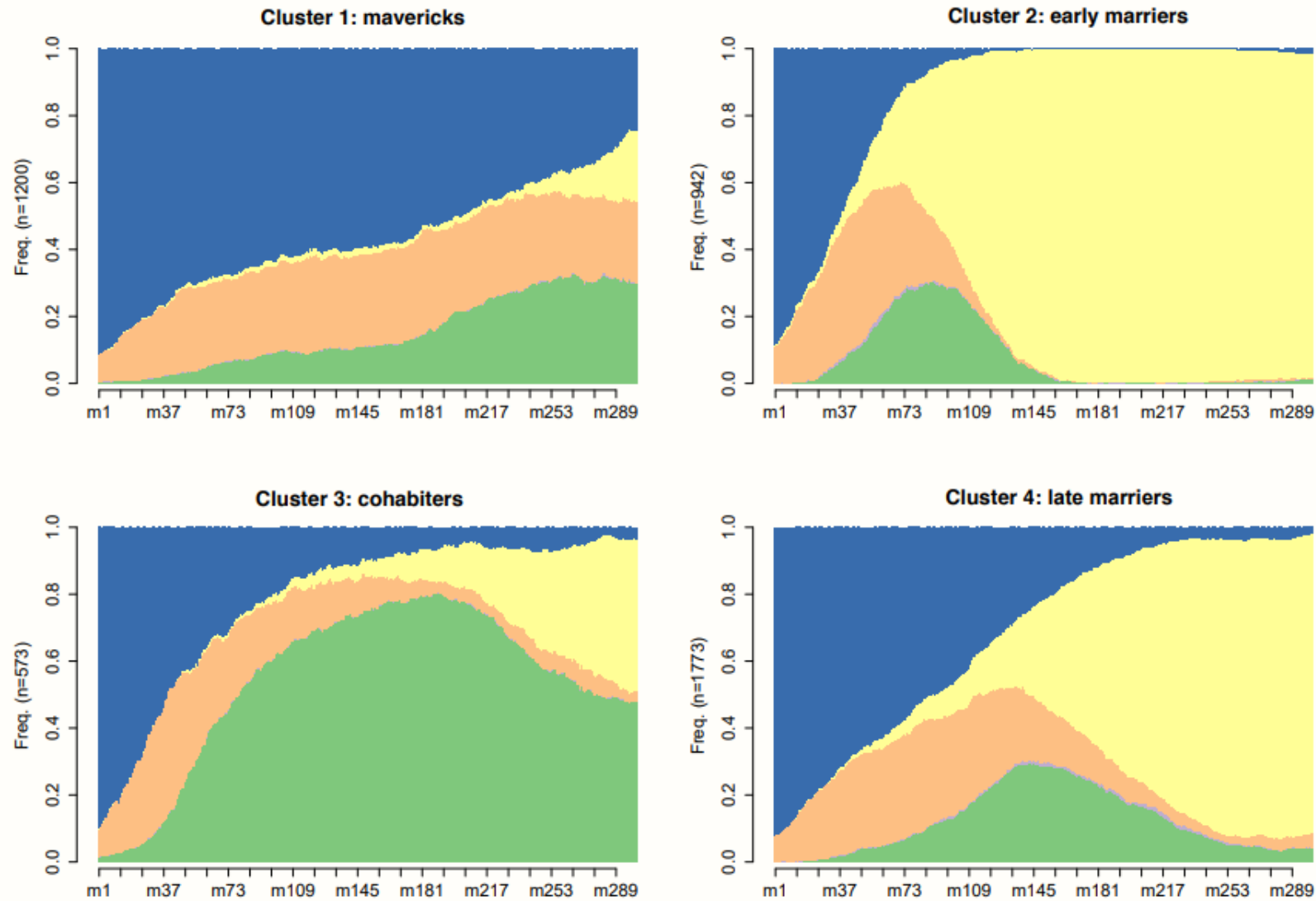
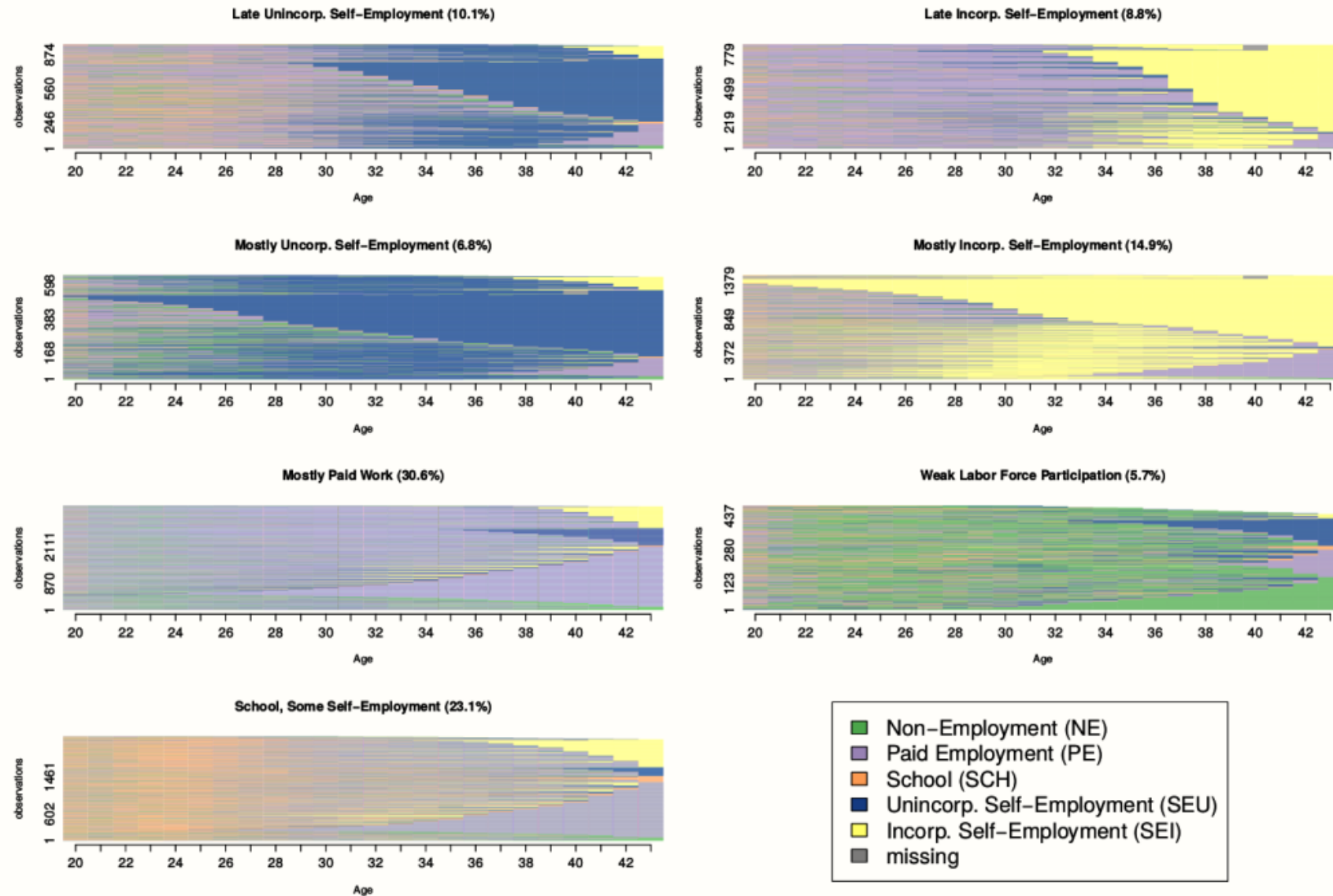


Figure 10: Distribution of partnership statuses in clusters 1–4

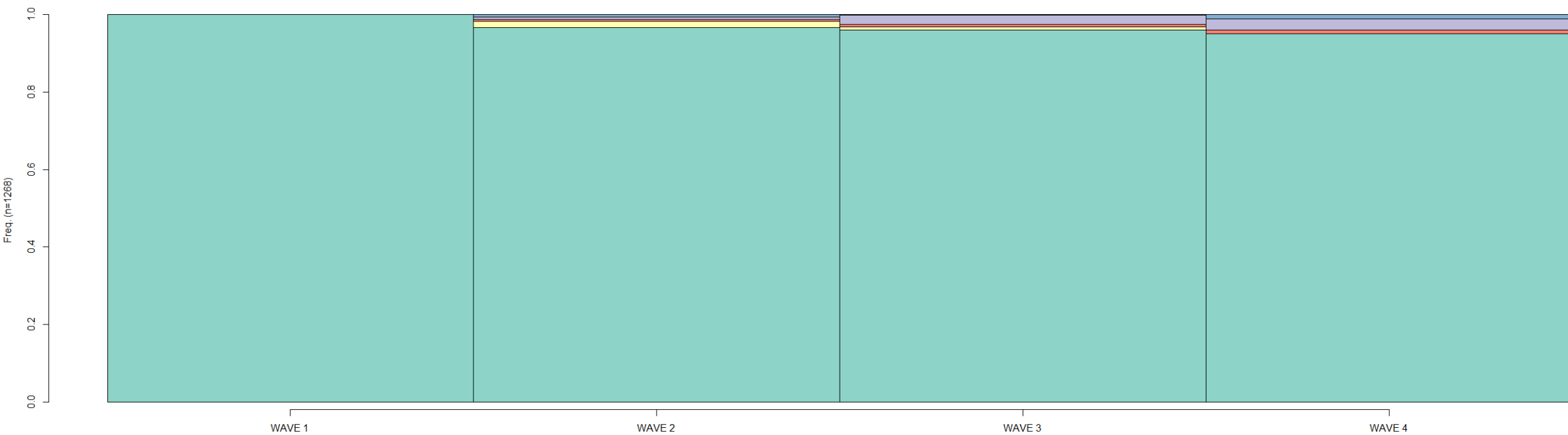


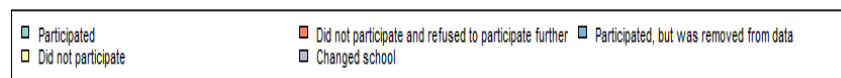
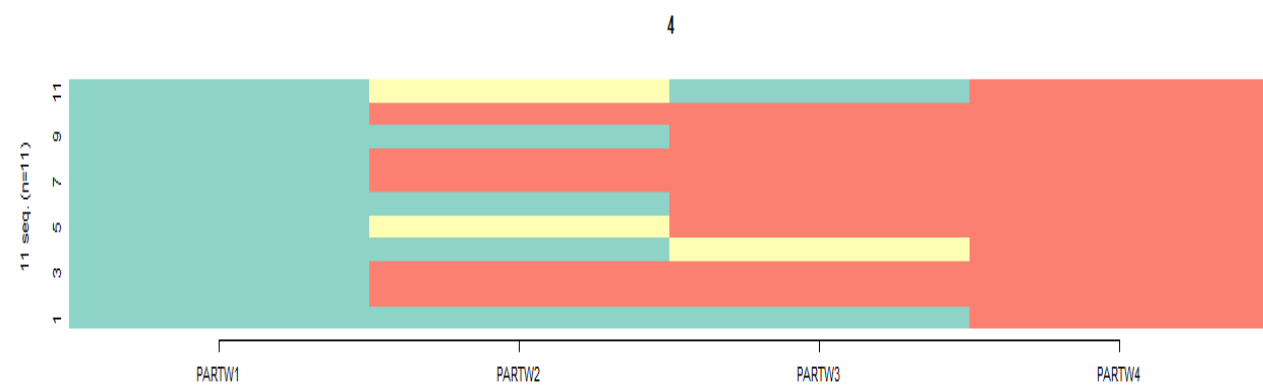
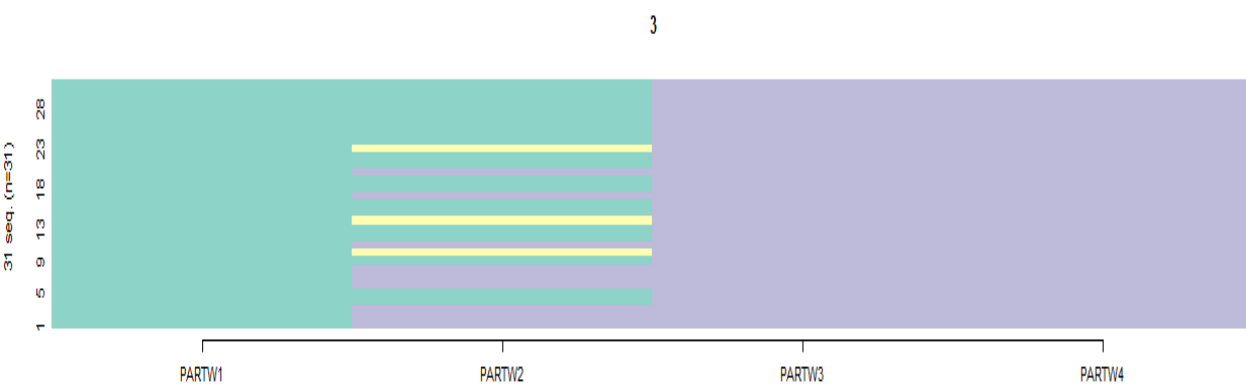
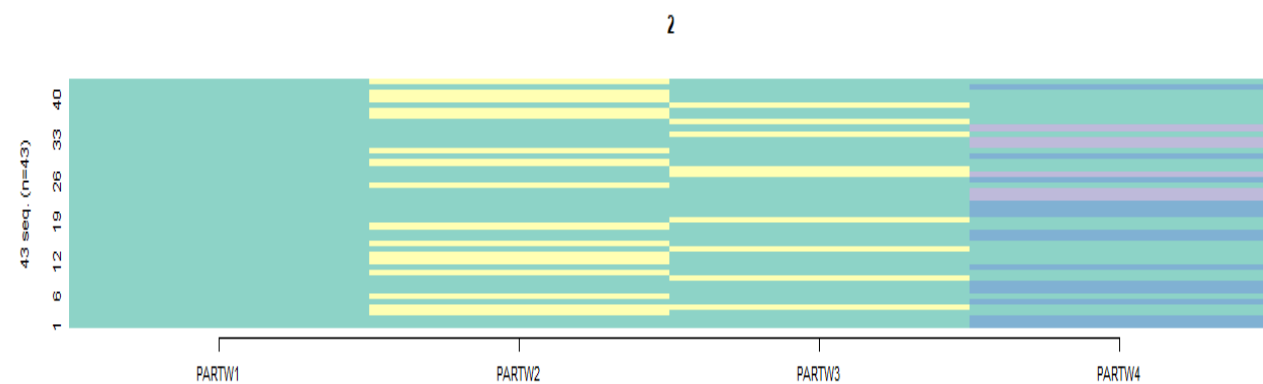
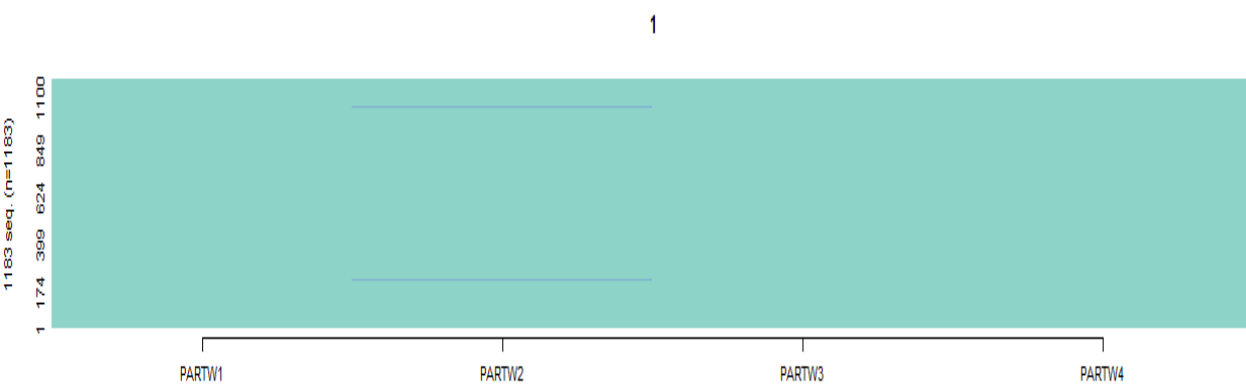
Source: Pairfam waves 1–6, own research.

Figure 3: Clusters of Life Cycles Involving Self-Employment (1970 birth cohort)



Notes: Figure shows life employment profiles of all Swedish males born in 1970 who are ever self-employed between 1990 and 2013.





Instruments: Life History Calendar (LHC)

- LHC is an interview-based assessment that was used to collect data on **partner, parenthood, living arrangements, educational and work status histories.**



Interviews took about 15-25 minutes to complete.

Starting point of the life story in terms of role statuses, was finishing school

Finishing point was – current moment

Minimal interval - six months

LIFE-HISTORY CALENDAR

[illegible]

3 : B042 2

	ID	B001	B002	B011	B012	B021	B022	B031	B032	B041	B042	B051	B052
1	1002	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1
2	1004	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
3	1009	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
4	1010	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	1011	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
6	1012	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
7	1013	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8	1015	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
9	1017	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
10	1018	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
11	1019	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
12	1020	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
13	1024	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	2
14	1025	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
15	1026	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
16	1030	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
17	1032	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
18	1033	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
19	1042	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
20	1043	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
21	1044	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
22	1045	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
23	1046	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
24	1047	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
25	1052	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
26	1056	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
27	1057	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
28	1058	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
29	1059	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
30	1065	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

First steps

- Download R software
- Download R Studio software
- Save data from SPSS into *.dat file **with column names included in the dataset**
- Preinstall libraries

RStudio

File Edit Code View Plots Session Build Debug Profile Tools Help

Go to file/function Addins

SWebinar main file.R*

```
1 setwd("C:/Users/rvosy/Desktop/Sequence analysis seminar/")
2
3 library(TraMineR) #main package
4 library(cluster) #needed for building a typology
5 library(RColorBrewer) #this one is needed for building nice graphs
6 library(foreign)
7 library(weightedcluster) #this one may also be used for cluster analysis
8
9
10 #lets read the data. The data should be saved in tab-delimited .dat format column names should be kept it
11 #the first command reads the data.
12 maindata <- read.delim("SWebinar.dat")
13 #this command lets you view the data
14 view(maindata)
15 #this prints the names of variables in the console
16 names(maindata)
17
18
19
20 #we will start by analyzing residential status
21 #we need to introduce some labels to code quantitative values
22 #we need two types of labes: short ones and long ones.
23
24 RS.labels <- c("Lives with parents", "Lives in temporary accomodation", "Lives in self-owned accmodation")
25 RS.shortlab <- c("LWP", "LTA", "LSOA")
26
27 #to build some of the charts we will need labels representing different columns
28 #values of x in the histogram
29 xvalues25 <- c("finished school", "0.5 y.", "1 y.", "1.5 y.", "2 y.", "2.5", "3 y.", "3.5 y.", "4 y.", "4.5 y.", "5
30
31 #we also need to define values that we are interested in the sequences. This is called alphabet
32 #since there are three values in residential status variables, we need to specify what they are
33 #creating alphabet
34 alphabet.RS.seq <- c("1", "2", "3")
35
36
```

17:16 (Top Level) R Script

Console Terminal Jobs

R 4.1.1 · ~/

R version 4.1.1 (2021-08-10) -- "kick Things"
Copyright (C) 2021 The R Foundation for Statistical Computing
Platform: x86_64-w64-mingw32/x64 (64-bit)

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Environment History Connections Tutorial

Import Dataset 125 MiB

R Global Environment

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Install Packages...
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Jobs
Addins
Memory
Keyboard Shortcuts Help Alt+Shift+K
Modify Keyboard Shortcuts...
Show Command Palette Ctrl+Shift+P
Project Options...
Global Options...

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> |

Environment History Connections Tutorial

R Global Environment

Environment is empty

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Install Packages

Install from: [Configuring Repositories](#)
Repository (CRAN)

Packages (separate multiple with space or comma):

Install to Library:
C:/Users/rvosy/Documents/R/win-library/4.1 [Default]

☒ Install dependencies

Install Cancel

Required R libraries

```
setwd("C:/Users/xxxx/Desktop  
/Sequence analysis seminar/")
```

```
library(TraMineR)
```

```
library(cluster)
```

```
library(RColorBrewer)
```

```
library(foreign)
```

```
library(WeightedCluster)
```

TraMineR is the main sequence analysis package, however, few additional ones are needed for cluster analysis and for making “cool” looking graphs

Cluster and WeightedCluster are two cluster analysis packages

RColorBrewer helps coloring the charts to make them more readable

Reading the data

```
maindata <-  
read.delim("SAwebinar.dat")  
View(maindata)  
names(maindata)
```

The first command reads the data and creates a data frame object in R

The second command lets you view the data

The last command prints the names of variables in the console

Alphabet, long labels, short labels

```
alphabet.RS.seq <- c("1", "2", "3")
```

```
RS.labels <- c("Lives with  
parents", "Lives in temporary  
accomodation", "Lives in self-  
owned accomodation")
```

```
RS.shortlab <- c("LWP", "LTA",  
"LSOA")
```

***note that the you can name the object in any way you like, but try using the names that you will later remember

In order to build a sequence object (a data frame that contains sequences, which we will later analyze), we first need to create three additional objects that will contain some important information for the sequence object

Alphabet. Specifying the alphabet means that you state the values that will appear in the sequences. If you create a sequence object without specifying the alphabet option, all possible states are supposed to be present in the data set and the alphabet is set by listing the distinct states encountered. However, in some cases, we may have to consider states that are not present in the data set used to create the sequence object. In the example dataset sequences have three distinct values: 1, 2, 3. The first command states that these values will appear in the sequences.

Short labels. These usually are the short names for the possible values that may appear in the sequences. These are used in some particular charts or dataframes, which will be created later.

Long labels. Just another type of labels that may be used in some particular charts.

One more object...

```
xvalues25 <- c("finished school", "0.5  
y.", "1 y.", "1.5 y.", "2 y.", "2.5", "3 y.",  
"3.5 y.", "4 y.", "4.5 y.", "5 y.", "5.5 y.",  
"6 y.", "6.5 y.")
```

Specifically for this analysis we will create an additional objects, which will contain the names of the columns in several charts that we will create later.

The labels here represent a specific period of life course that were assessed in the study: the moment when participants finished high school, then six months later and so on...

...and now, the most important object!

Defining a sequence object

```
RS.seq <- seqdef(maindata,  
var= 2:15, label=RS.labels,  
states=RS.shortlab,  
alphabet=alphabet.RS.seq)
```

View(RS.seq)

names(RS.seq)

Seqdef is the command that defines and creates the state sequence object

The first argument specifies the dataset object

The second argument (var=...) specifies with columns represent a sequence

The third argument (states) specifies long labels

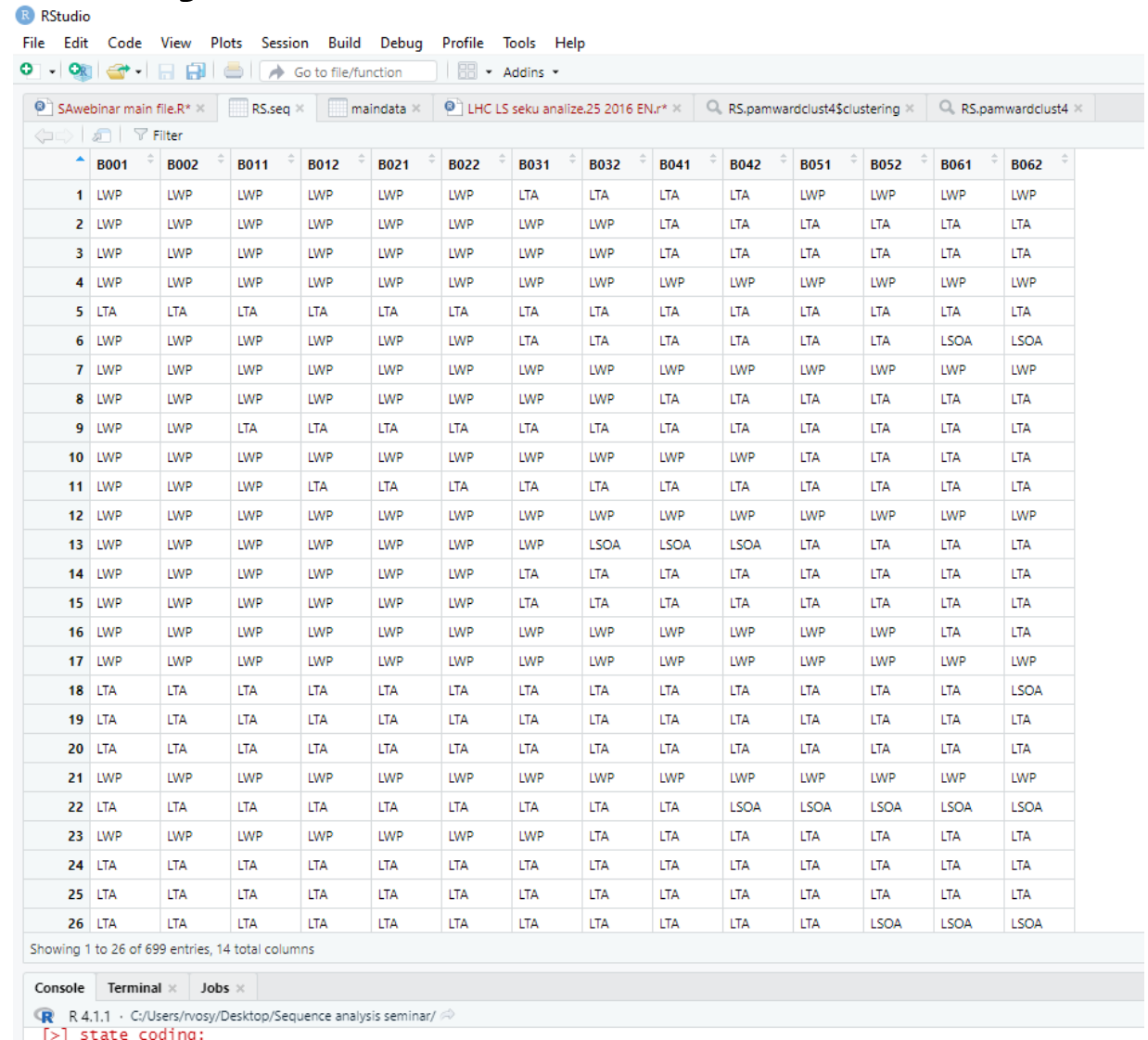
The fourth – specifies short labels

Fifth – the alphabet

Viewing the sequence object

If everything went well so far, then you should see the new window in R, which looks something like this →

Note that the short labels are presented instead of actual variable values



RStudio

File Edit Code View Plots Session Build Debug Profile Tools Help

SAwebinar main file.R* RS.seq maindata LHC LS seku analyze.25 2016 EN.r* RS.pamwardclust4\$clustering RS.pamwardclust4

Filter

	B001	B002	B011	B012	B021	B022	B031	B032	B041	B042	B051	B052	B061	B062
1	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP
2	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
3	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
4	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP
5	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
6	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LSOA	LSOA
7	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP
8	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
9	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
10	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
11	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
12	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP
13	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LSOA	LSOA	LSOA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
14	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
15	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
16	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA
17	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP
18	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LSOA
19	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
20	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
21	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP
22	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LSOA	LSOA	LSOA	LSOA	LSOA
23	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LWP	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
24	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
25	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA
26	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LTA	LSOA	LSOA	LSOA

Showing 1 to 26 of 699 entries, 14 total columns

Console Terminal Jobs

R 4.1.1 · C:/Users/rvosy/Desktop/Sequence analysis seminar/

```
> state.codina:
```

Lets attribute some colors to different states

```
attr(RS.seq, "cpal") <-  
c("#7b3d17", "#565a3c",  
  "#355d7e")
```

I picked up three different color codes from the <https://colorbrewer2.org>.

If you would like to use some different colors, please visit the page and choose the colors you like

Now we are ready to build some cool looking graphs

State distribution plot

```
seqdplot(RS.seq, withlegend = T,  
border = T, xtlab=xvalues25)
```

The `seqdplot()` function plots a graphic showing the state distribution at each time point (the columns of the sequence object).

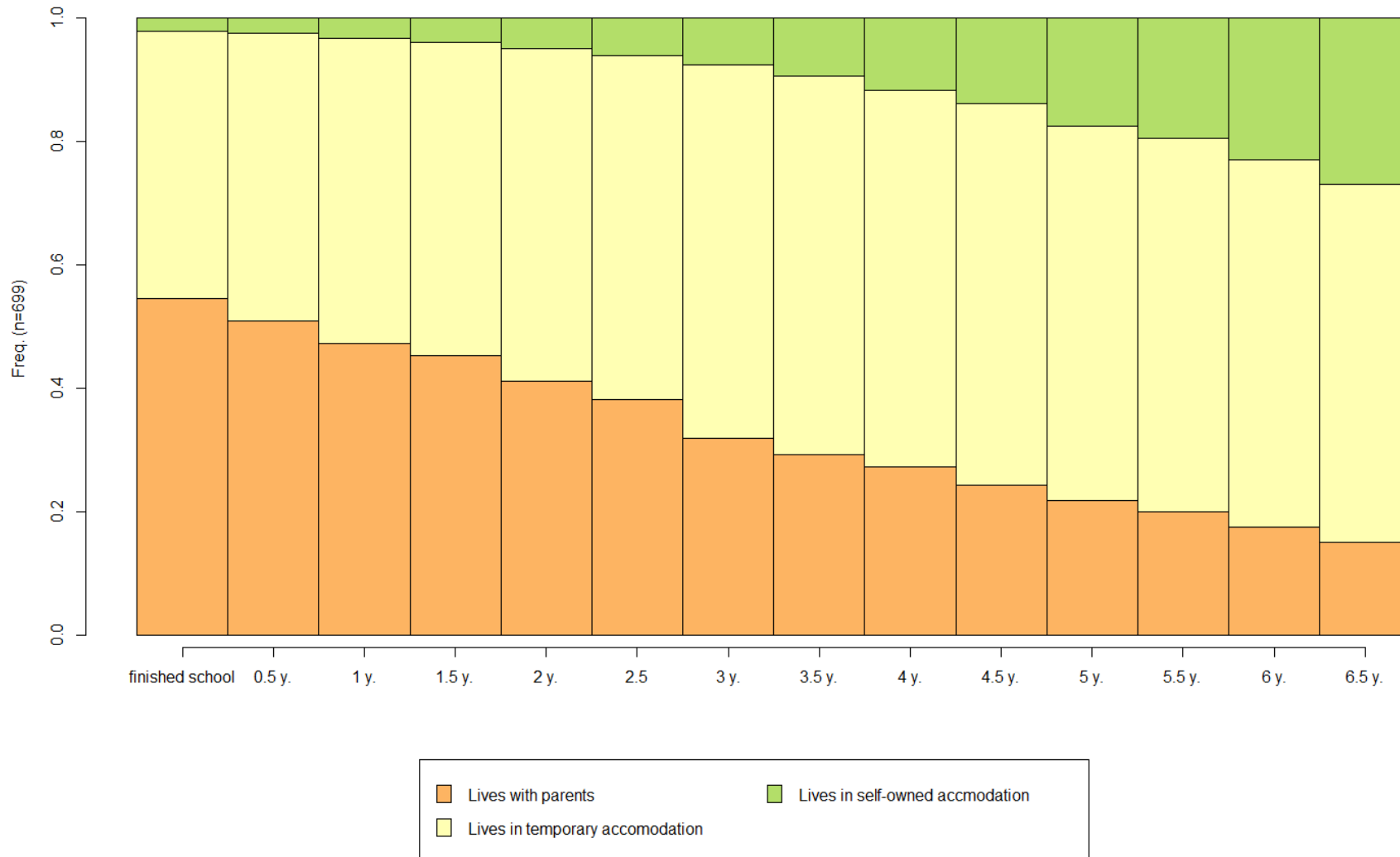
The first arguments specifies the sequence object

With the second one you can specify if you want a legend or not

The third object specifies if you want column borders to be visible or not

The fourth argument specifies the column labels (X-axis values)

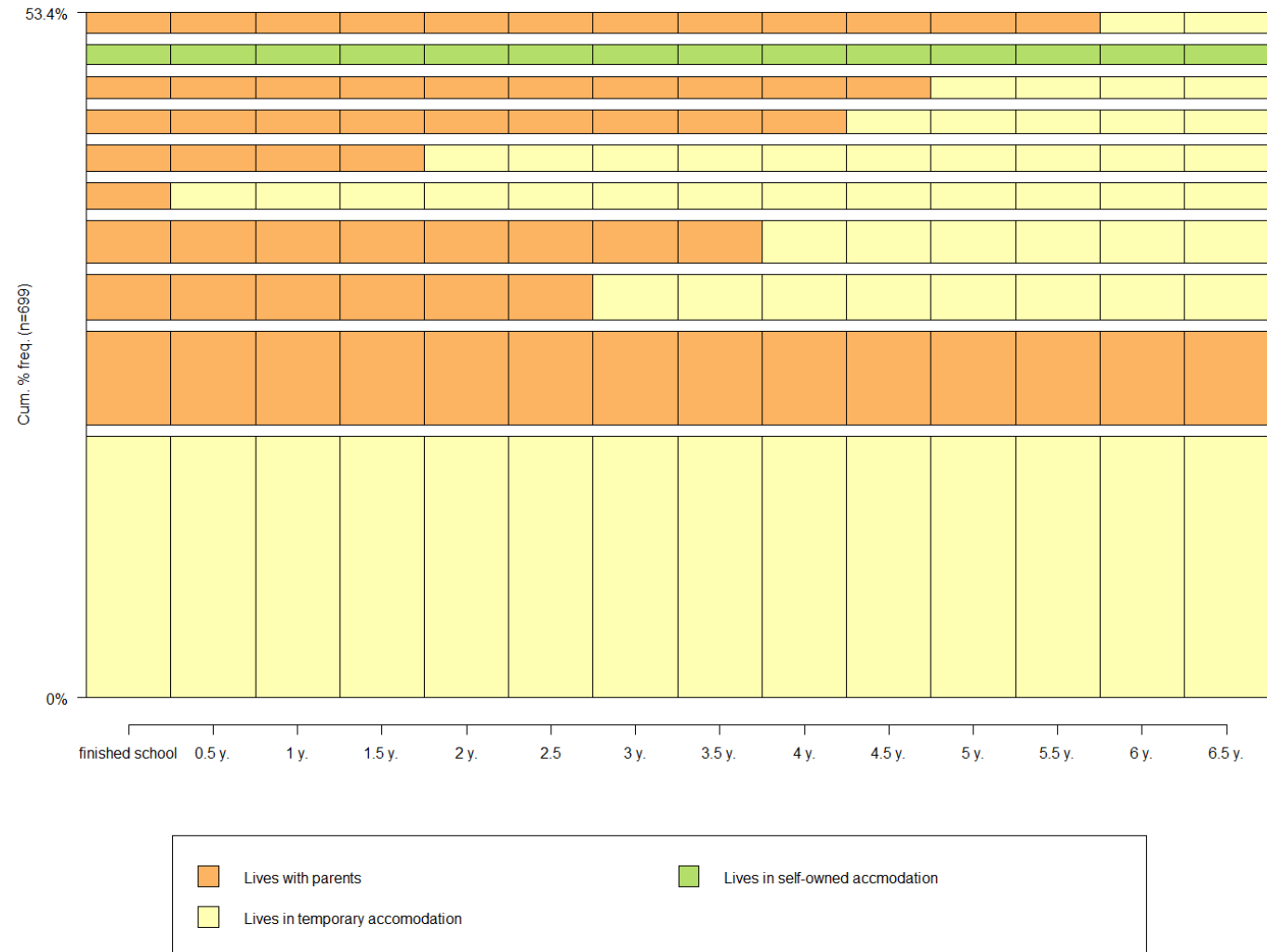
State distribution plot



This is what you should see if everything went well in the previous steps

Plot 10 most frequent sequences

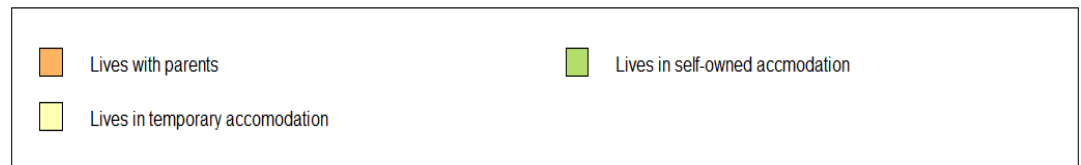
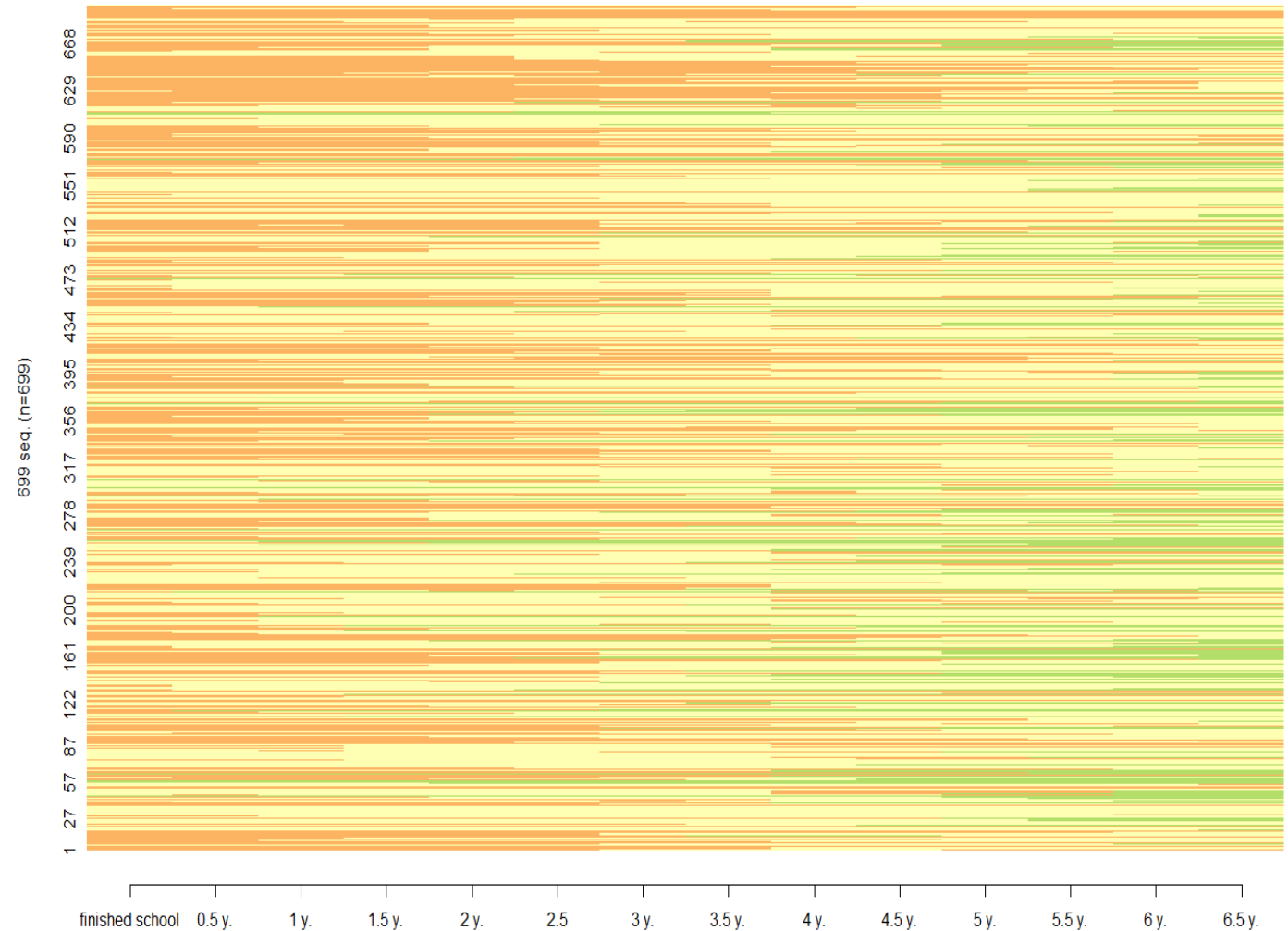
```
seqfplot(RS.seq,  
withlegend = T,  
xlab=xvalues25)
```



Plot ALL sequences

```
seqplot(RS.seq,  
withlegend = T,  
xlab=xvalues25, border  
= NA)
```

****note that I ask to
remove borders**

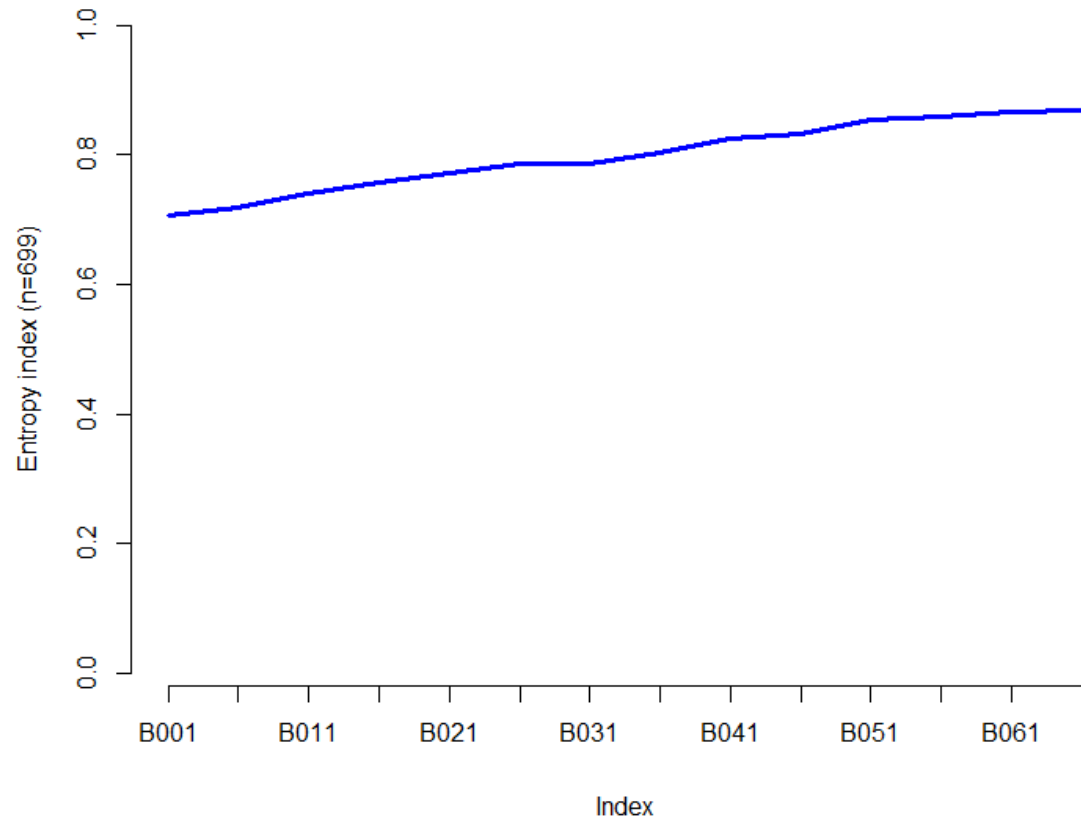


Within column entropy

`seqHtplot(RS.seq)`

**entropy close to 1
indicates that all states are
equally distributed at
some specific time
(column)

**entropy close to 0
indicates that at some
particular time (column),
only one state is present



Characteristics of individual sequences

`seqtransn(RS.seq)`

- This command prints out how many times individual has moved from one state to another

`seqient(RS.seq)`

- This command displays within row entropy (interpretation is the same as for columns)

`seqST(RS.seq)`

- This command displays turbulence characteristic for each sequence. Turbulence is a bit hard to define, but it is good to think of it as a level of chaos in the sequence.

Building a typology of sequence

Preliminary steps are:

1. Calculate transitions rates
2. Create transition costs

Main steps are:

1. Create a distance matrix using optimal matching (OM) or other method
2. Cluster analyze the sequences using Ward's hierarchical clustering
3. Cluster analyze the sequence again using the PAM method
4. Inspect quality and characteristics of different cluster solutions and make a decision
5. Describe the clusters

Sequence (dis)similarity metrics

1. Number of matching positions
 - How many positions in the two sequences have the same state (value)?
2. Longest common prefix
 - How long is a common prefix?
3. Longest common subsequence
 - How long is a common subsequence?
4. Optimal Matching (OM)
 - How many in/del (insert/delete) and/or subs (substitute) operations we need to do to transform one sequence to another?
5. Variants of OM

Examples of sequence (dis)similarity metrics

Method	Example	Sequence similarity
Number of matching positions	A-A-B-B-C-B-B-C-A-A A-B-B-B-C-C-C-C-C-A	6 matching positions, so $10-6=4$ Distance is 4
Longest common prefix	A-A-B-B-C-B-B-C-A-A A-B-B-B-C-C-C-C-C-A	1 state is the same in the prefix, so distance is $10-1=9$
Longest common subsequence	A-A-B-B-C-B-B-C-A-A A-B-B-B-C-C-C-C-C-A	Distance = 7
Classical Optimal Matching (OM)	A-A-B-B-C-B-B-C-A-A A-B-B-B-C-C-C-C-C-A A-B-A-B-A-B-A B-A-B-A-B-A-B	Based on my calculations ~ 8 , assuming in/del and substitute costs are set to 2

Specifics of OPTIMAL MATCHING

To use **OPTIMAL MATCHING**, we need to define the “costs” (points given) of each operation of in/del or substitute.

Traditionally in/del costs are set to 2 (1 for insert and 1 for delete)

Substitute costs, however, are set by:

- Using the value of 2 (because it is equal to in/del costs)
- Using the theoretical criteria
- Using the information about transition rates

NP-NP-NP-C-C

NP-NP-NP-NP-C

NP-NP-NP-NP-M

We will focus on the third options as this is the one used most often

Calculating transitions rates

First, we need to calculate transitions rates and create an object that stores these transition rates

```
RS.trate <- seqtrate(RS.seq)
```

Output:

	[-> LWP]	[-> LTA]	[-> LSOA]
[LWP ->]	0.877310389	0.103569152	0.01912046
[LTA ->]	0.021297574	0.955630053	0.02307237
[LSOA ->]	0.001138952	0.003416856	0.99544419

This command would create a new object, which we use later in OM command
Transitions rates are important for measuring distances between the sequences

Calculating transitions costs

Then, we need to calculate transitions costs and create an object that stores these transition costs

```
RS.seq.scost <- seqsubm(RS.seq, method = "TRATE")  
View(RS.seq.scost)
```

	LWP->	LTA->	LSOA->
LWP->	0.000000	1.875133	1.979741
LTA->	1.875133	0.000000	1.973511
LSOA->	1.979741	1.973511	0.000000

and now... we create OM distance matrix

```
RS.sec.full.distOM <- seqdist(RS.seq, method="OM", norm=TRUE,  
indel=1, sm=RS.seq.scost, full.matrix=TRUE)
```

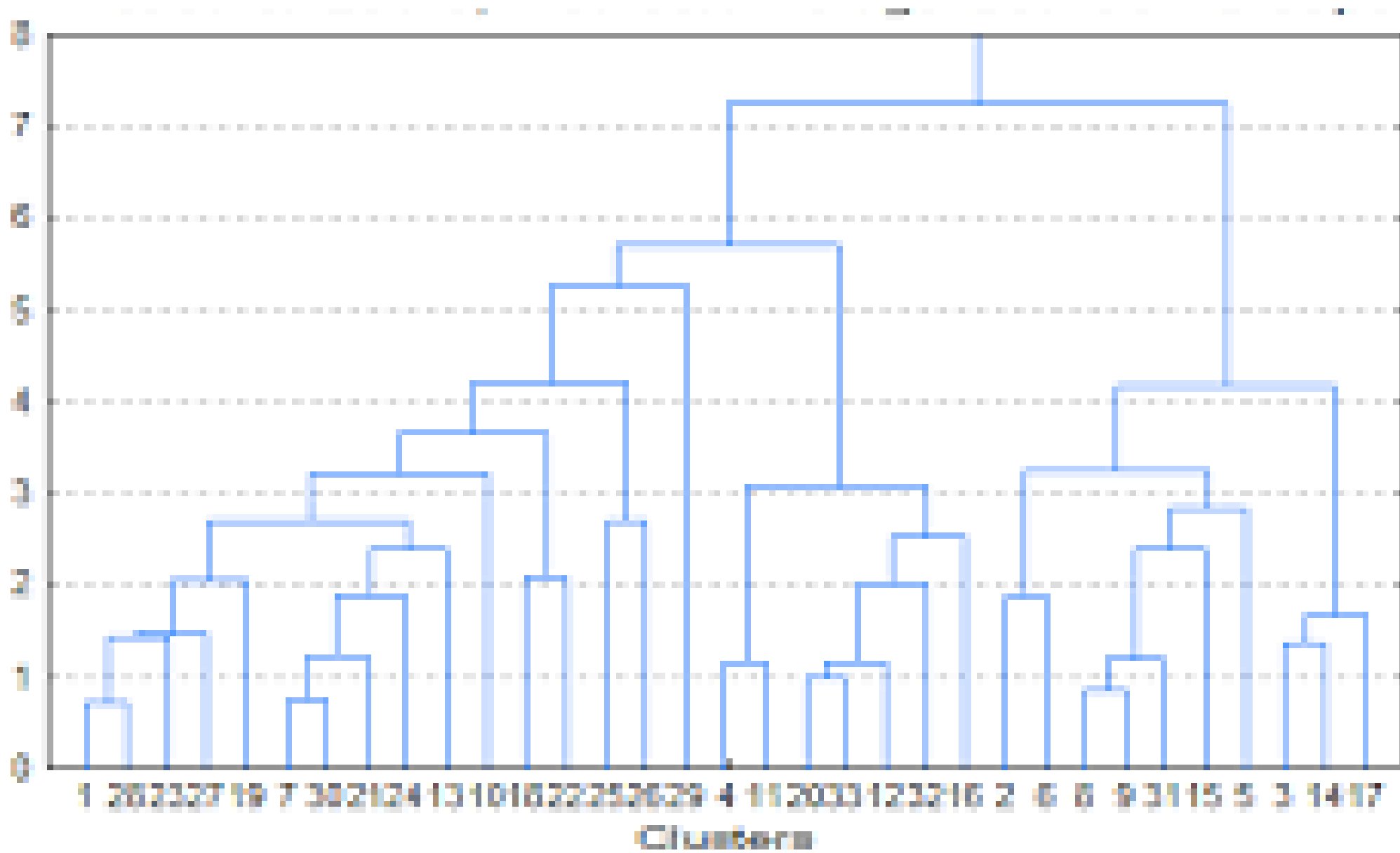
```
View(RS.sec.full.distOM)
```

This will create a huge matrix (rows = columns = N of sequence) and store it as an object called **RS.sec.full.distOM**

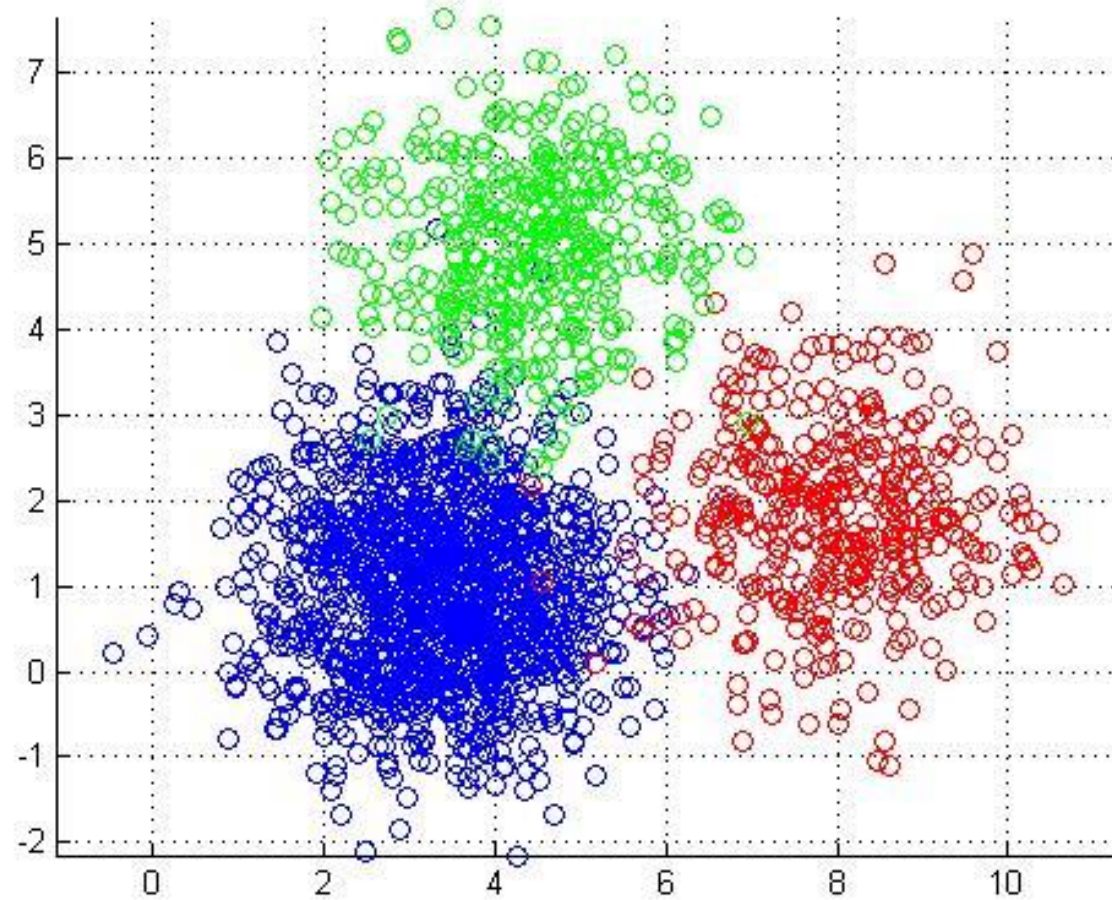
Running hierarchical cluster analysis with Ward's algorithm

```
RS.wardCluster <- hclust(as.dist(RS.sec.full.distOM), method = "ward")  
RS.wardTree <- as.seqtrees(RS.wardCluster, seqdata=RS.seq,  
diss=RS.sec.full.distOM, ncluster=8)
```

```
RS.wC.clust8 <- cutree(RS.wardCluster, k = 8)  
RS.wC.clust7 <- cutree(RS.wardCluster, k = 7)  
RS.wC.clust6 <- cutree(RS.wardCluster, k = 6)  
RS.wC.clust5 <- cutree(RS.wardCluster, k = 5)  
RS.wC.clust4 <- cutree(RS.wardCluster, k = 4)  
RS.wC.clust3 <- cutree(RS.wardCluster, k = 3)  
RS.wC.clust2 <- cutree(RS.wardCluster, k = 2)
```



K-means / PAM example



Running PAM (portioning around medoids) cluster analysis

```
RS.pamwardclust2 <- wcKMedoids(RS.sec.full.distOM, k = 2, initialclust = RS.wardCluster)
RS.pamwardclust3 <- wcKMedoids(RS.sec.full.distOM, k = 3, initialclust = RS.wardCluster)
RS.pamwardclust4 <- wcKMedoids(RS.sec.full.distOM, k = 4, initialclust = RS.wardCluster)
RS.pamwardclust5 <- wcKMedoids(RS.sec.full.distOM, k = 5, initialclust = RS.wardCluster)
RS.pamwardclust6 <- wcKMedoids(RS.sec.full.distOM, k = 6, initialclust = RS.wardCluster)
RS.pamwardclust7 <- wcKMedoids(RS.sec.full.distOM, k = 7, initialclust = RS.wardCluster)
RS.pamwardclust8 <- wcKMedoids(RS.sec.full.distOM, k = 8, initialclust = RS.wardCluster)
```

Checking the quality of cluster solutions

RS.pamwardclust2\$stats

RS.pamwardclust3\$stats

RS.pamwardclust4\$stats

RS.pamwardclust5\$stats

RS.pamwardclust6\$stats

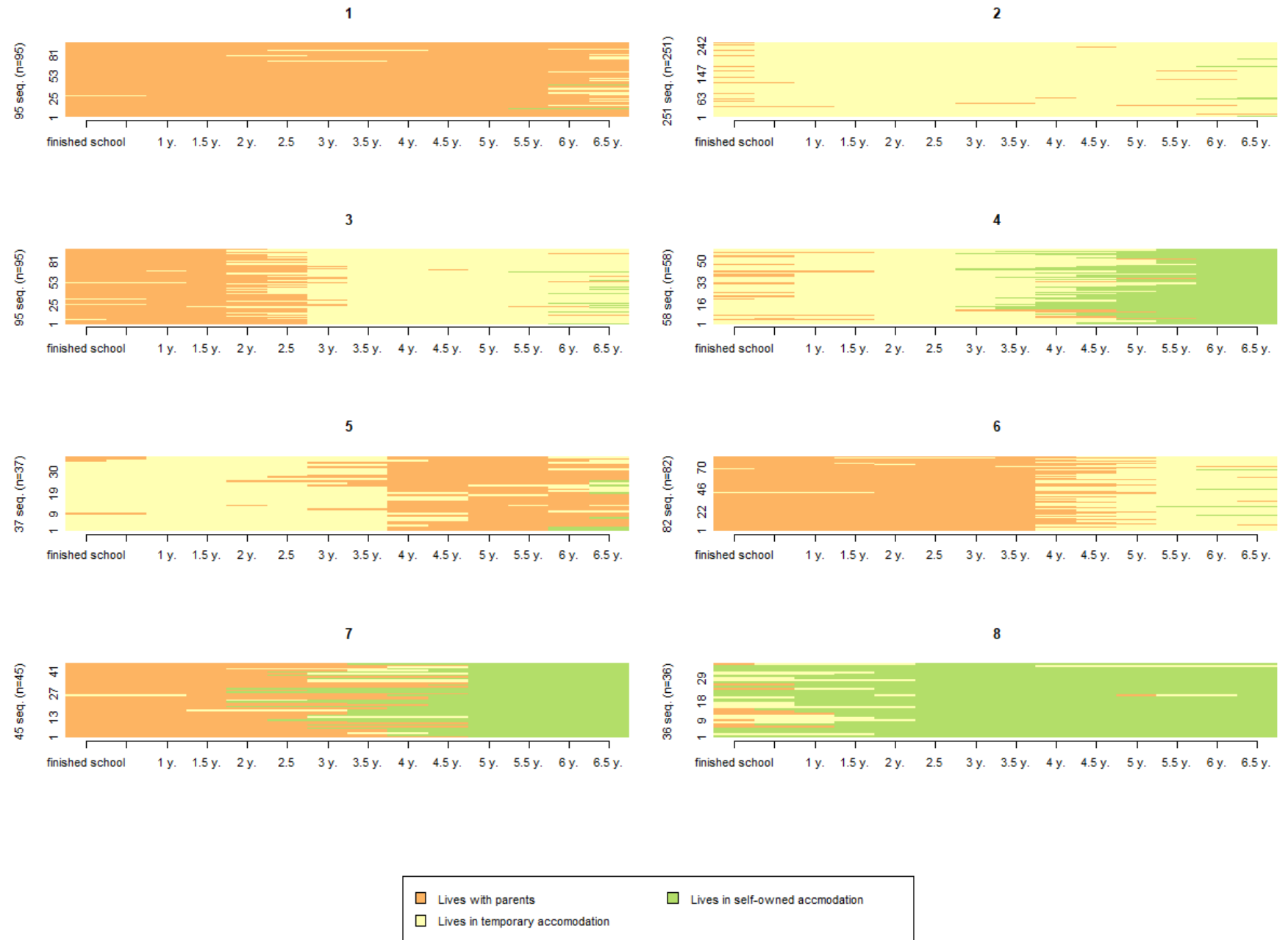
RS.pamwardclust7\$stats

RS.pamwardclust8\$stats

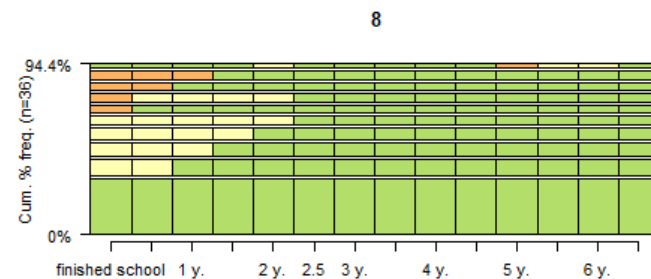
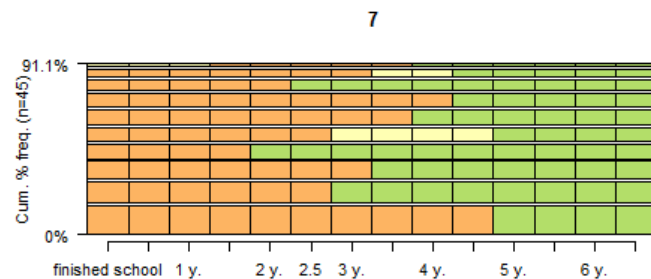
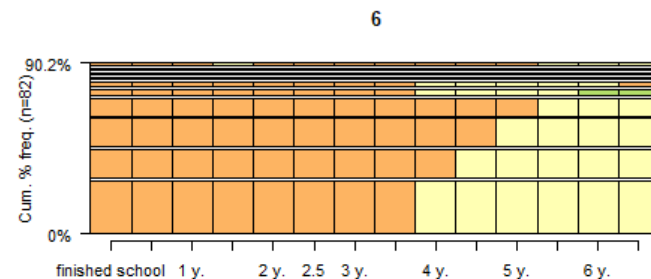
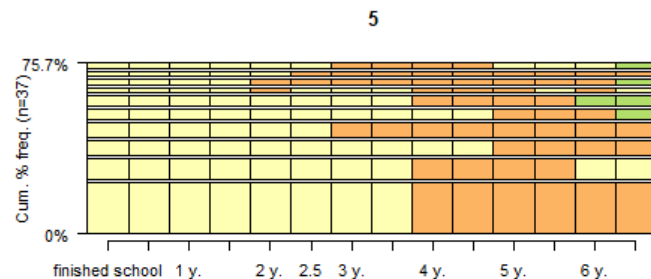
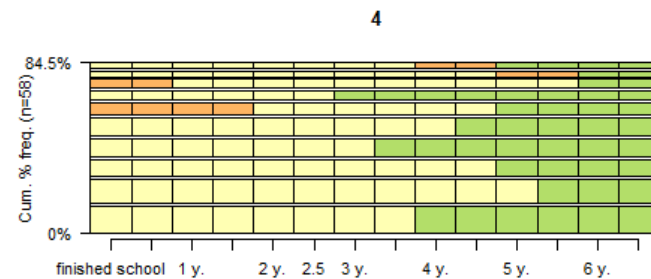
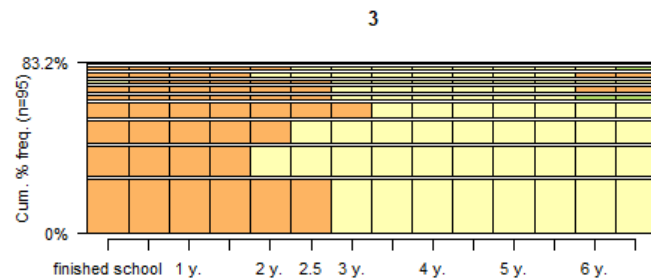
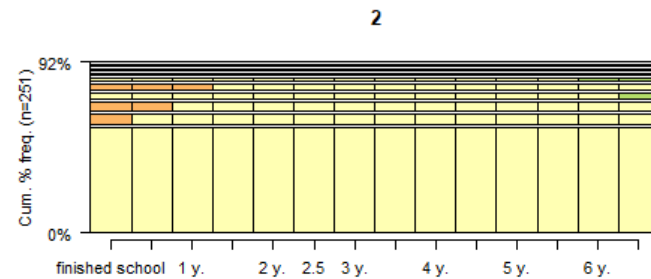
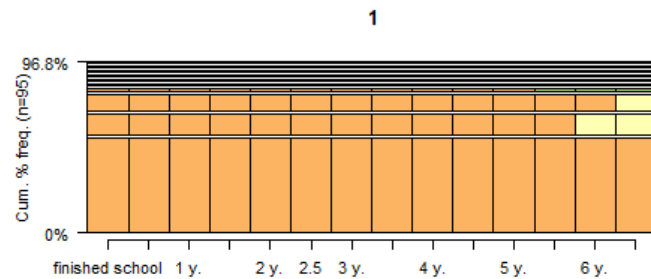
> RS.pamwardclust2\$stats

PBC	HG	HGSD	ASW	ASWw	CH	R2	CHsq	R2sq
0.5963015	0.6996396	0.6971913	0.4990412	0.5004807	373.8078249	0.3490896	703.0744734	0.5021693
HC								
0.1437818								

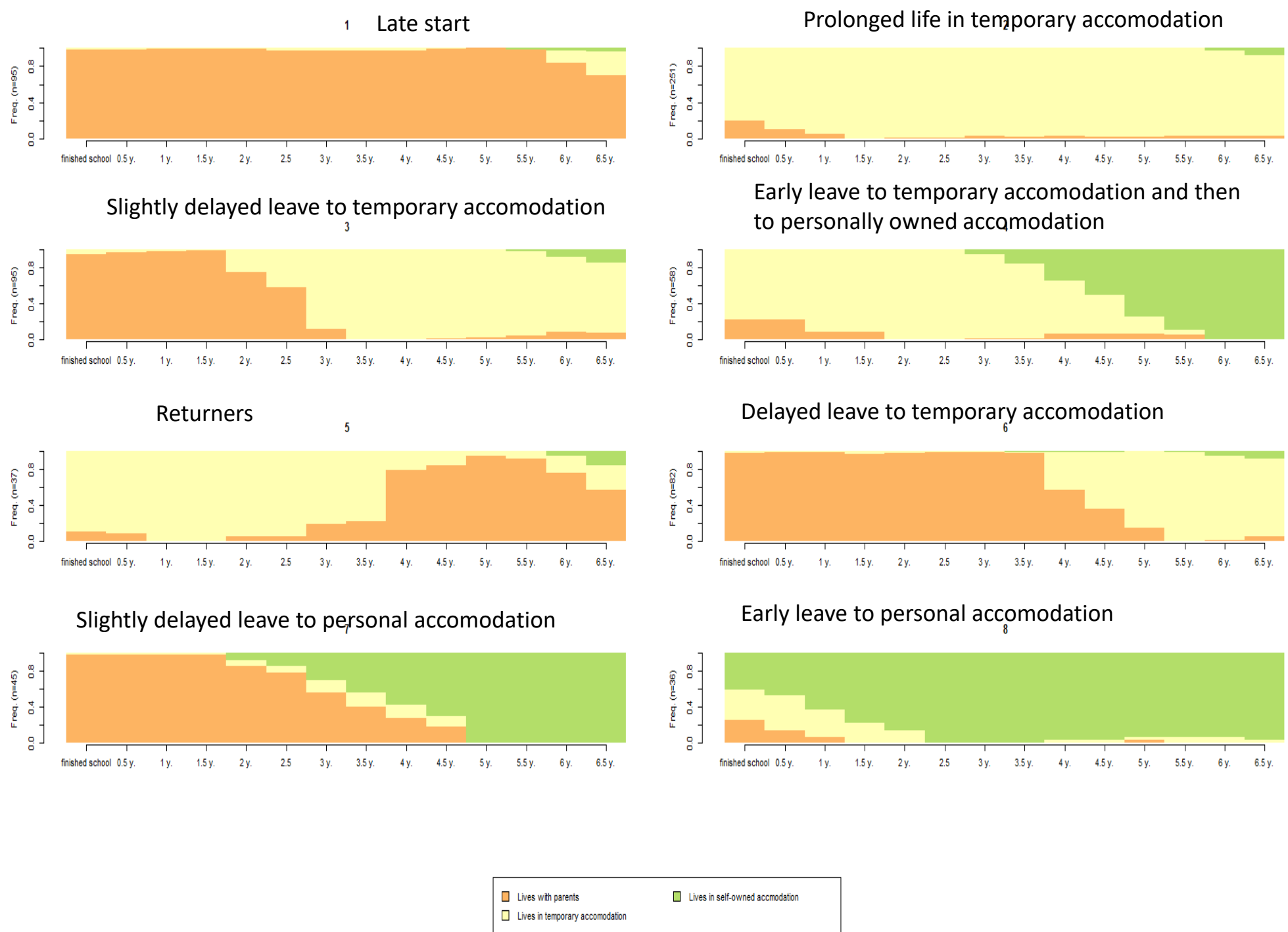
```
seqplot(RS.seq,
group=maindata
$RSPATHS,
xtlab=xvalues25,
border = NA)
```




```
seqfplot(RS.seq,
group=maindata$RSPATHS,
xlab=xvalues25, border = NA)
```



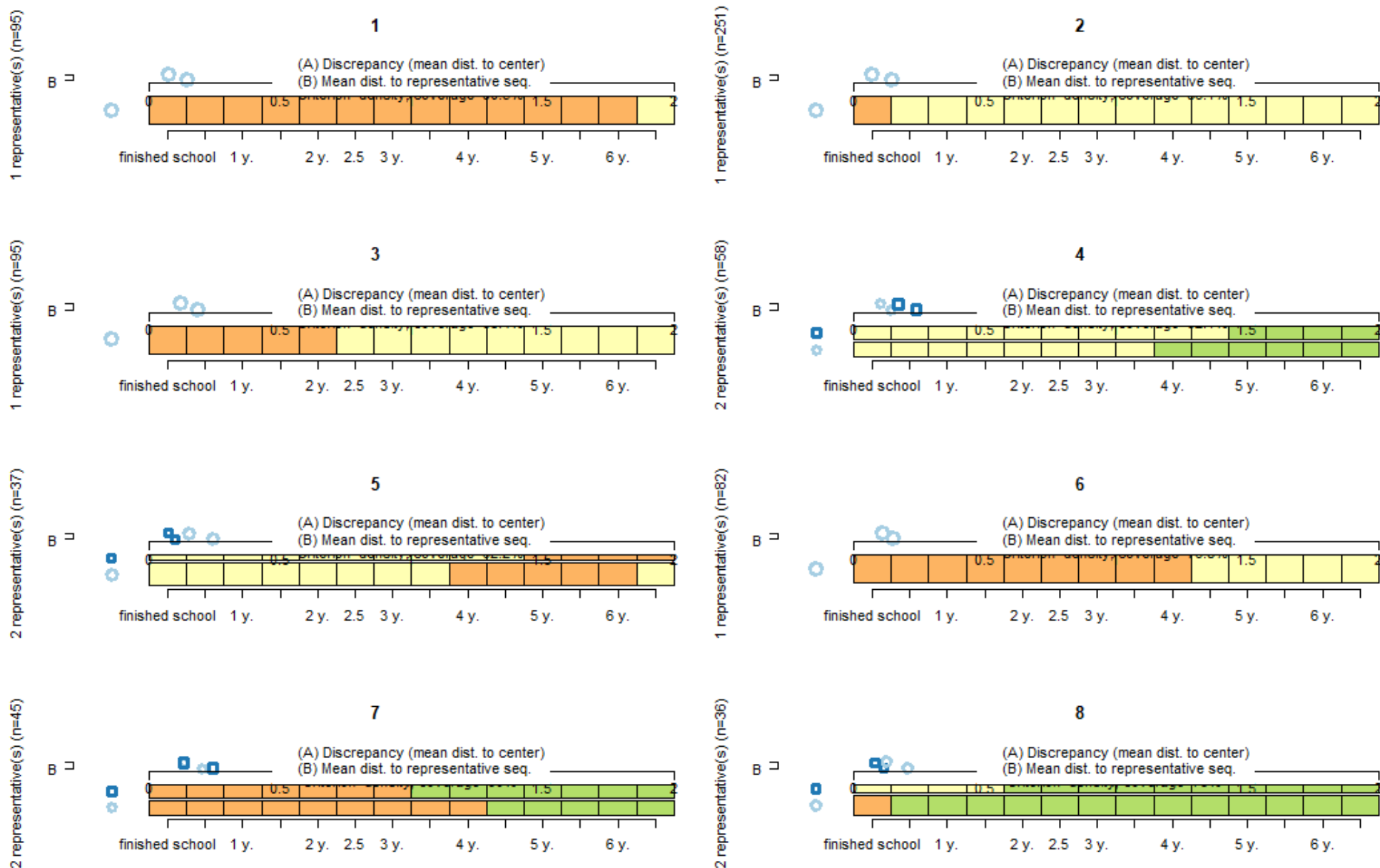
```
seqdplot(RS.seq,
group=maindata
$RSPATHS,
xlab=xvalues25,
border = NA)
```



```

seqrplot(RS.se
q, criterion =
"density",
withlegend = F,
group=mainda
ta$RSPATHS,
dist.matrix =
RS.sec.full.dist
OM, tsim =
0.10, trep =
0.5,
xtlab=xvalues2
5, cex.plot =
0.1)

```



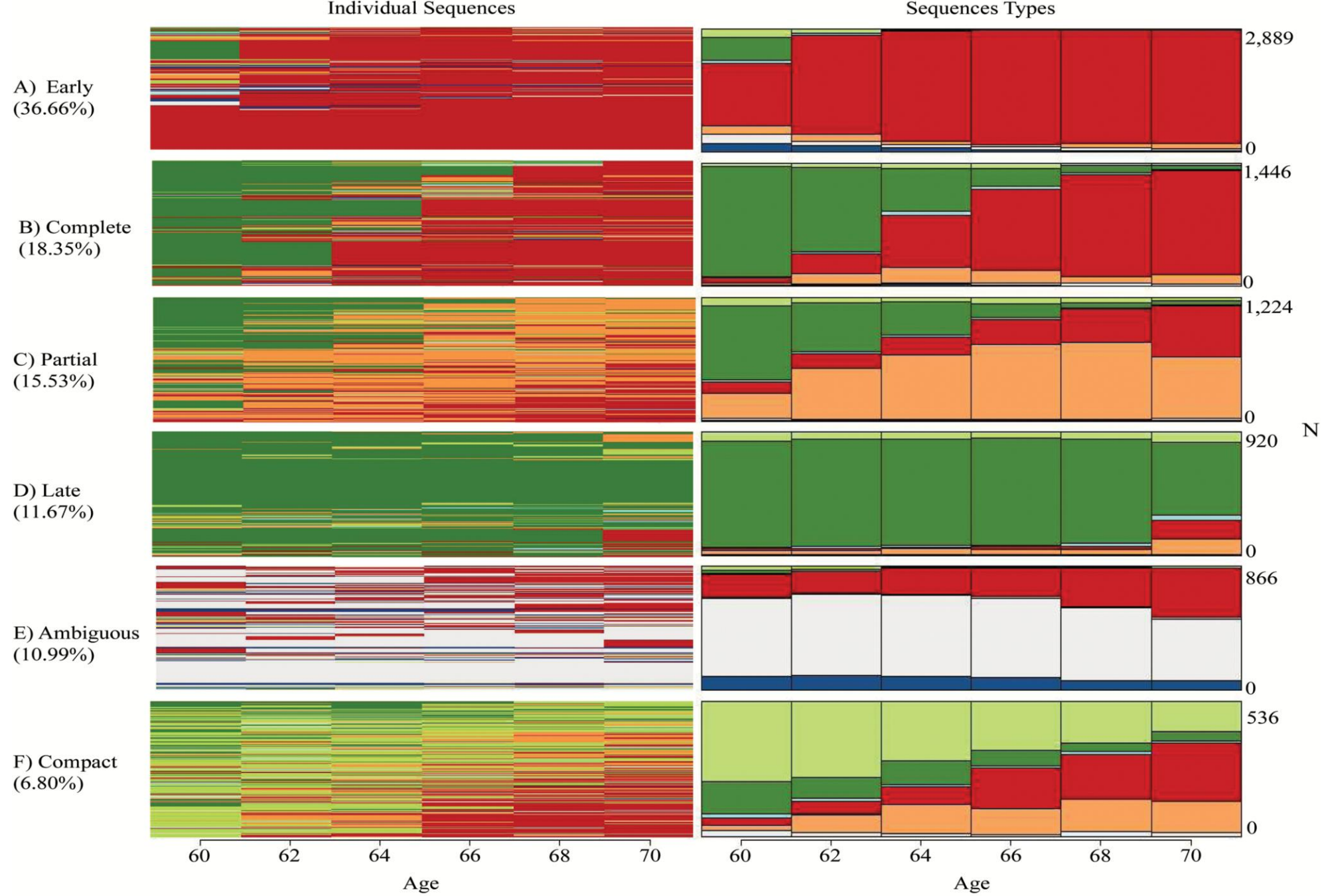
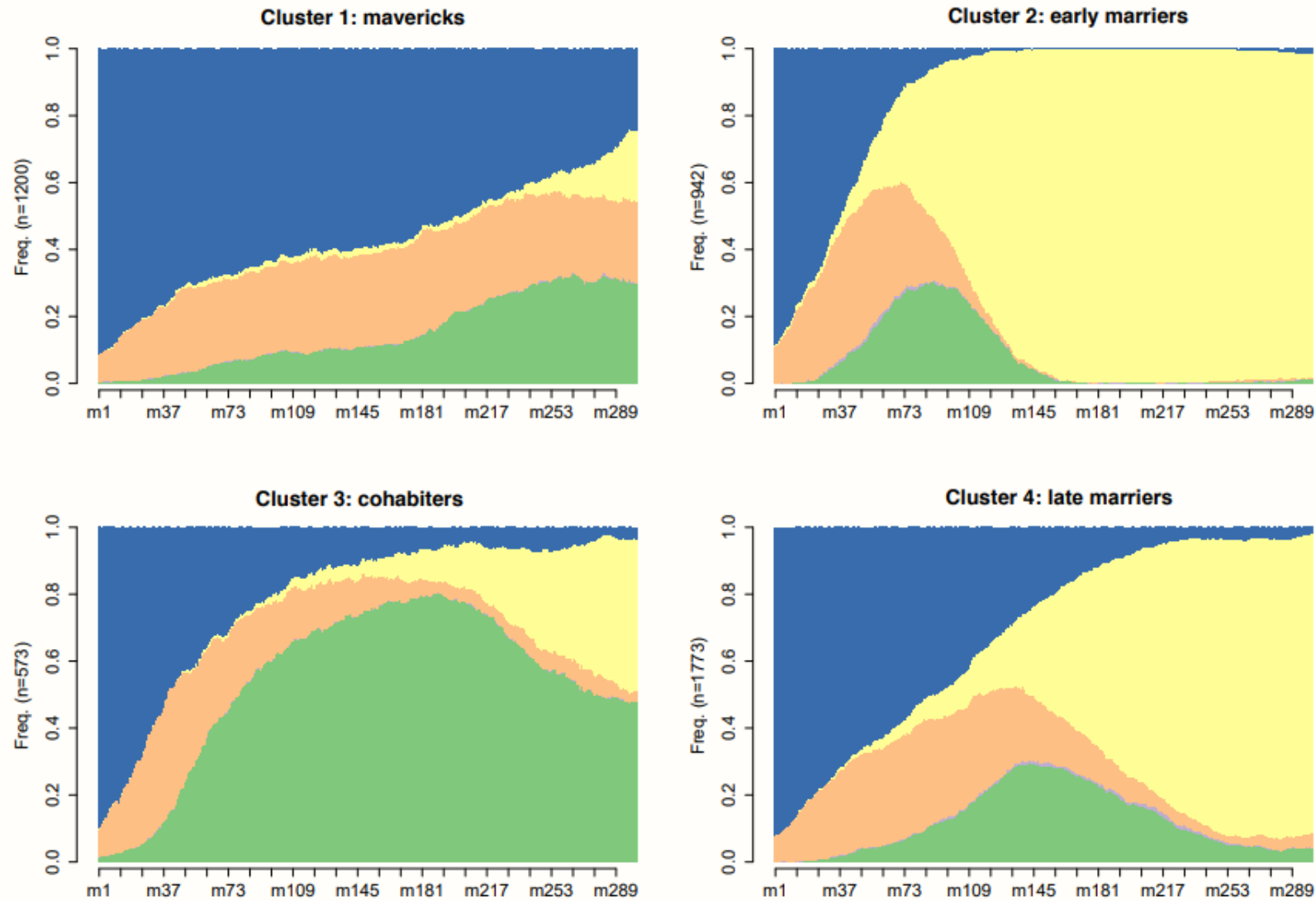
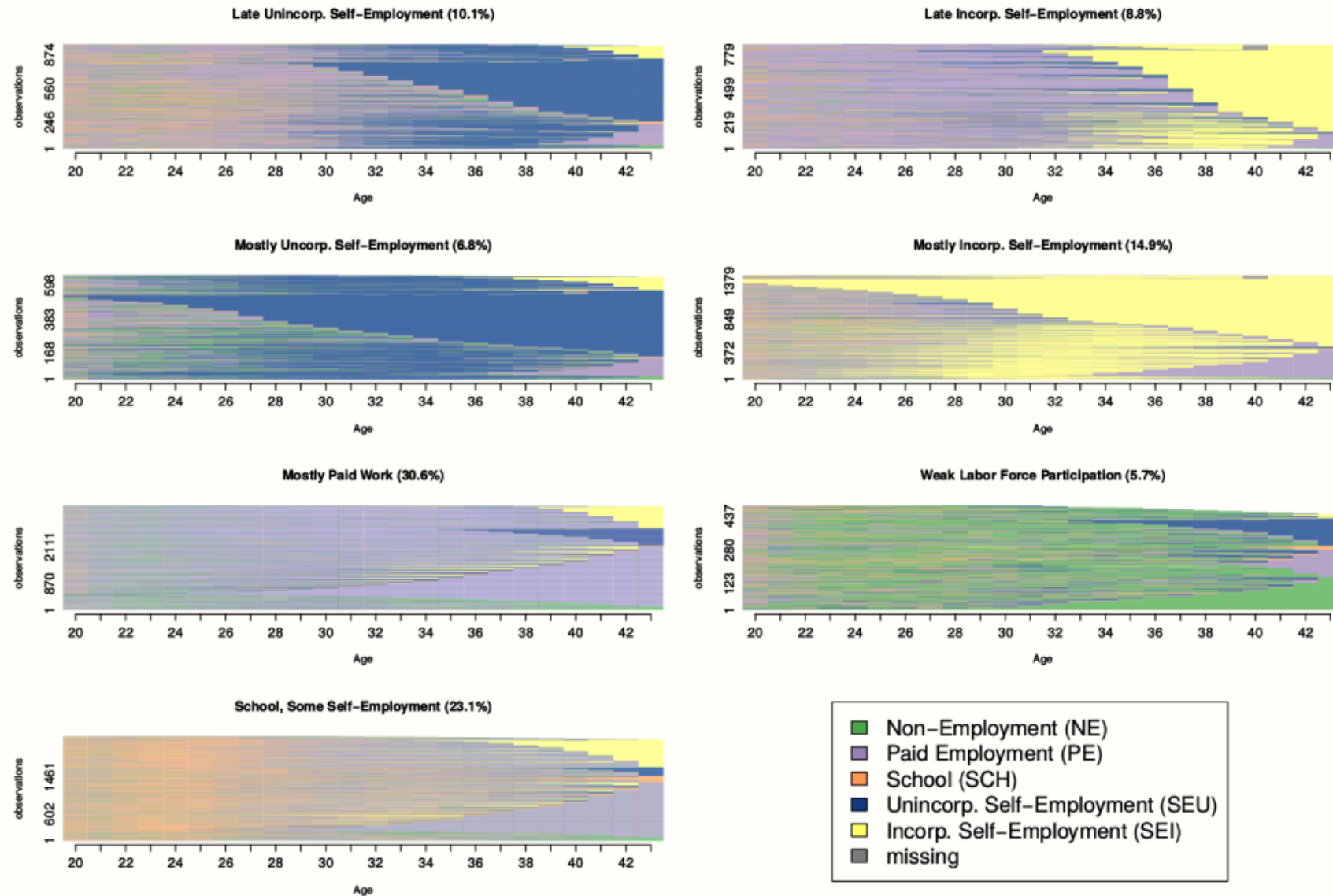


Figure 10: Distribution of partnership statuses in clusters 1–4



Source: Pairfam waves 1–6, own research.

Figure 3: Clusters of Life Cycles Involving Self-Employment (1970 birth cohort)



Notes: Figure shows life employment profiles of all Swedish males born in 1970 who are ever self-employed between 1990 and 2013.

Additional possibilities

If you measure changes in multiple life domains, you can opt for „holistic analysis“:

- Using „multi-channel“ sequences
- Using latent class analysis to distinguish role/state configurations and following up with sequence cluster analysis

If you have large datasets, you can uncover typologies using latent class analysis and then follow up with sequence analysis to describe clusters. Note that, however, sequence analysis can also be used and it does not require large sample or does not make any assumptions about the data distributions

Main references

<http://traminer.unige.ch/>