

*European Sociological Association*

*Geneva, 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011*

RS07 : Arts, Culture and Public Memory  
- Generative sources of memory -

**Collective memories  
and turbulent times:  
An international comparison**

A. Martenot, S. Cavalli, E. Guichard & C. J. Lalive d'Epina



**UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE**

CENTRE INTERFACULTAIRE  
DE GÉRONTOLOGIE

# Research questions

## A double comparison:

- **International:**

How the recent economic crisis (2008/09) shapes public memories in Latin America and Europe?

- **Intergenerational:**

Are those memories structured according to the age in terms of generational differences?

# Theoretical background

- The memory of historical events is different according to individual's age.
- People retain especially changes which occurred during their adolescence and early adulthood (« critical age »).

(Schuman & Scott, 1989; Schuman & Rodgers, 2004)

# Research CEVI

Changements et événements au cours de la vie  
Changes and events across the life course

An international study:

Argentina - Belgium - Bresil - Canada - Chile  
China - France - Italy - Mexico - Switzerland

International coordination: S. Cavalli & C.J. Lalive d'Epina  
(CIG, University of Geneva)

<http://cig.unige.ch/recherches/cevi.html>

# Questionnaire

Let us now consider the main changes and events which occurred in your country and in the world during your life. What are the ones which most struck you?

*(You may answer up to four events)*

**1. Description:** .....

.....  
.....

**Why did this event strike you ?** .....

.....  
.....

**Year(s):** ..... **Your age at that moment:** ..... **Place of the event:** .....

# Method

- Open-ended questions
- 5 age-groups :  
20-24, 35-39, 50-54, 65-69 and 80-84 years old
- Non-random sample, stratified by age and gender
- Self-administered questionnaire
- Data collected by graduate students

# Data collection

Country	Date	Place	N
Argentina	2004	Gran Buenos Aires	579
Belgium	2009	Province of Liège	580
Chile	2009	Gran Concepción	623
Italy	2009	Padoue and region of Venetia	670
Mexico	2005 to 2007	City of León City of Zamora	684 256
Switzerland	2009	Canton of Geneva	633

# Percentage of individuals mentioning socio-historical changes

<b>Belgium</b> (2009) <i>N</i> = 571		<b>Italy</b> (2009) <i>N</i> = 621		<b>Switzerland</b> (2009) <i>N</i> = 610		<b>Argentina</b> (2004) <i>N</i> = 572		<b>Chile</b> (2009) <i>N</i> = 623		<b>Mexico</b> (2005-07) <i>N</i> = 750	
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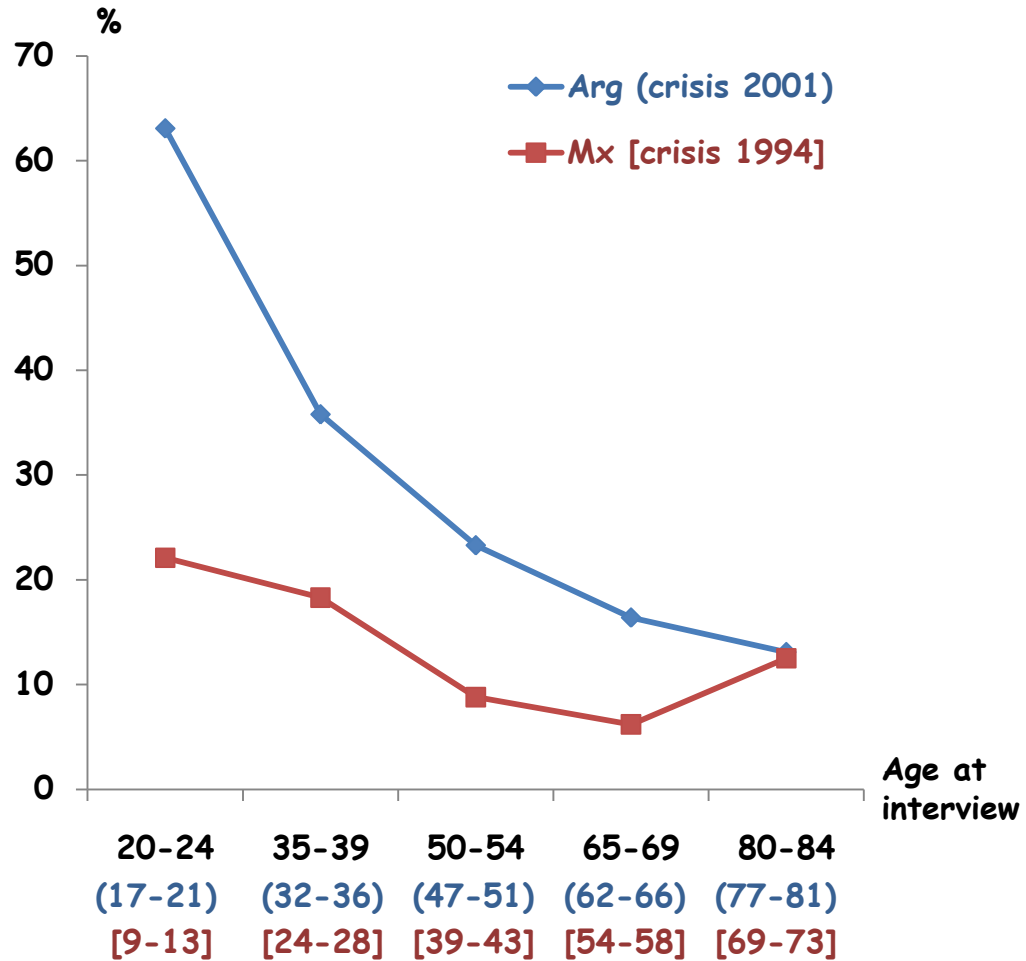
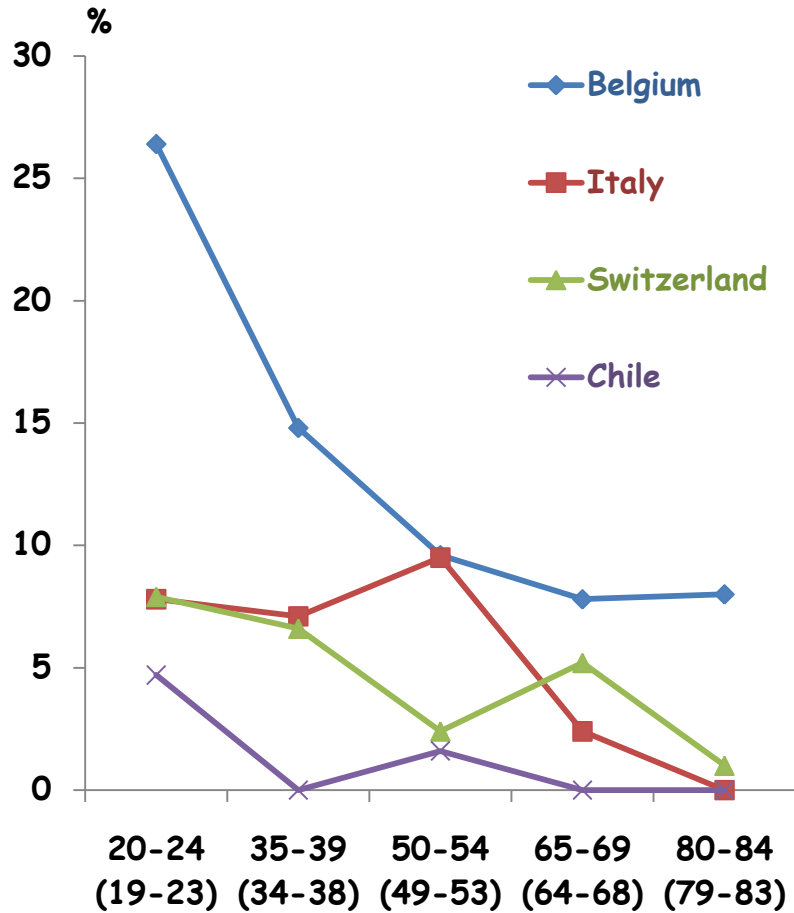
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# Reasons for mentioning the « 2008/09 economic crisis » in Europe (n)

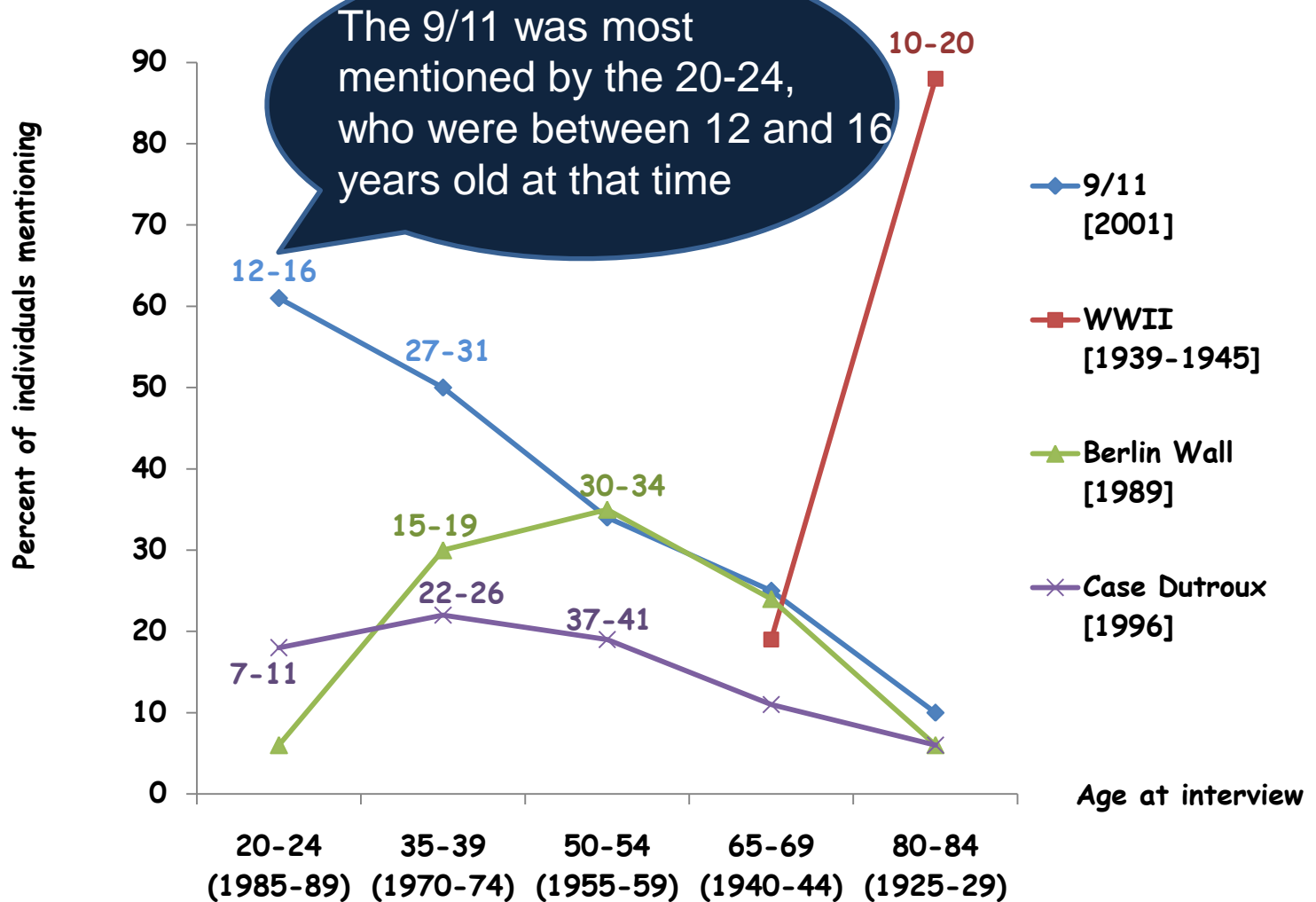
	Belgium	Italy	Switzerland
<b>Global economic context</b> ("capitalism", "globalization")	27	6	15
<b>Real economic effects</b> ("unemployment", "prices rise")	22	4	7
<b>Personal effects</b> ("fear of future", "loss of employment")	27	24	7
Total of mentions	76	34	29



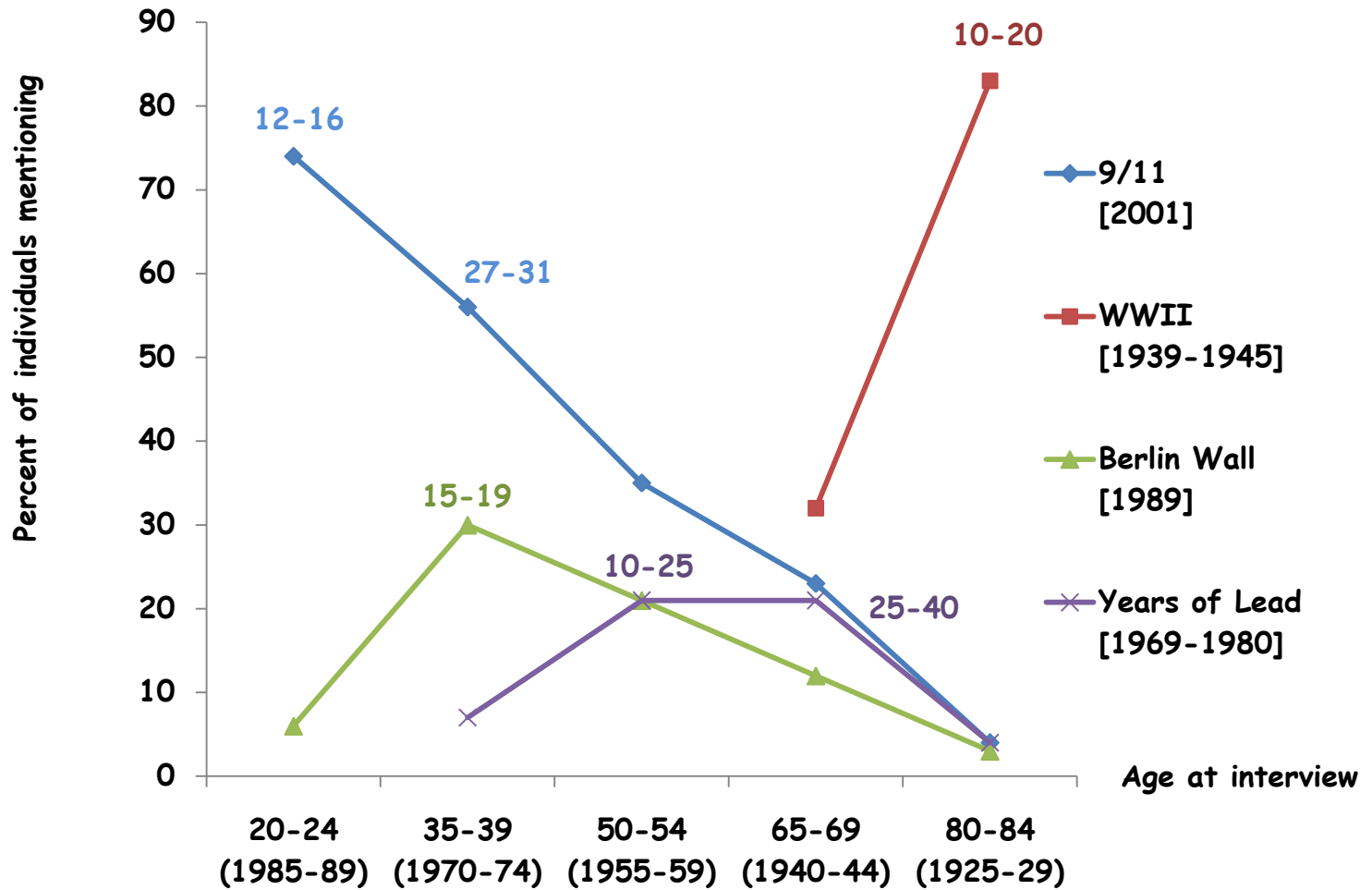
# Percentage of individuals mentioning an important economic crisis by country and by age



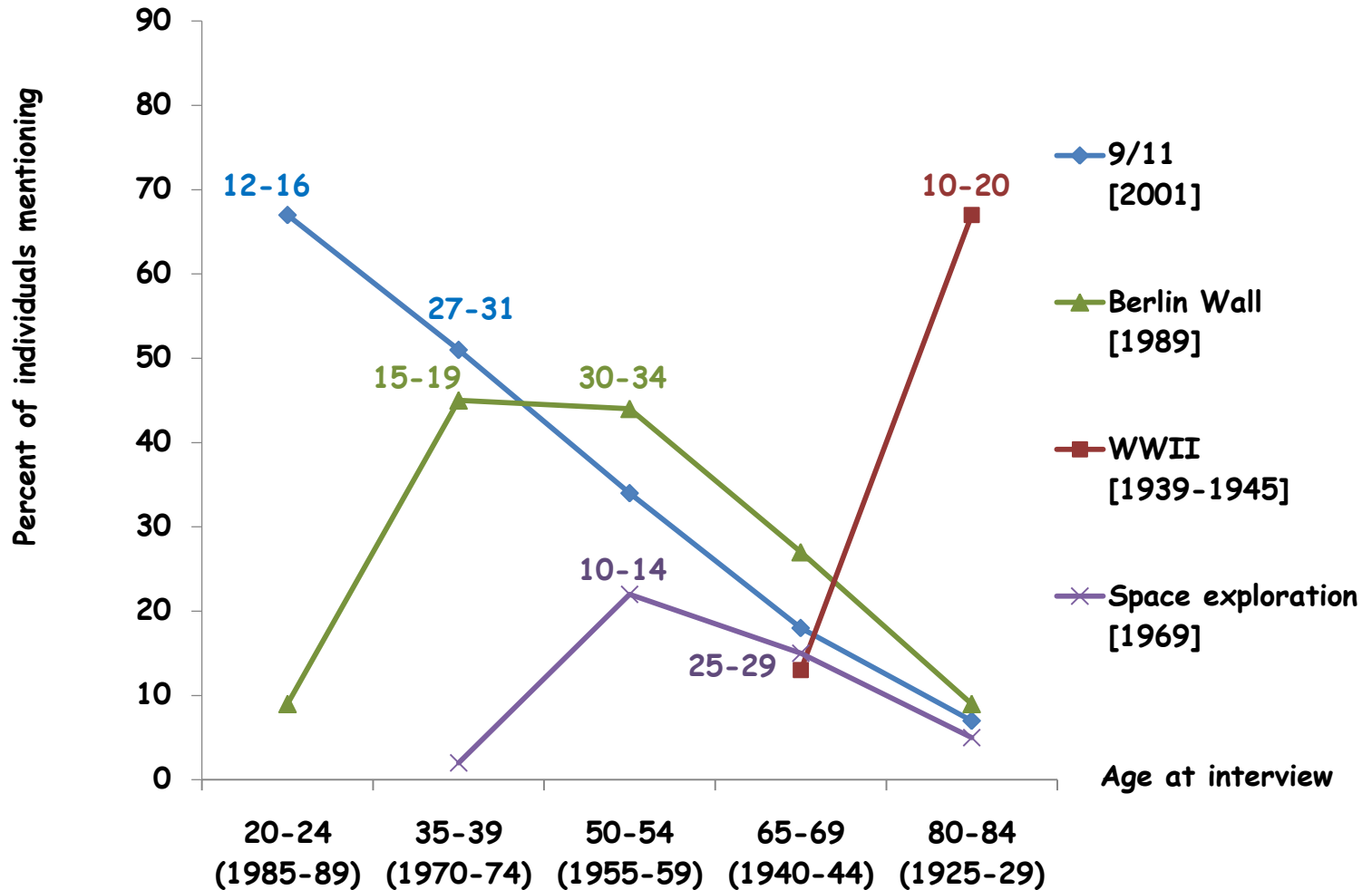
# Belgium (2009) (%)



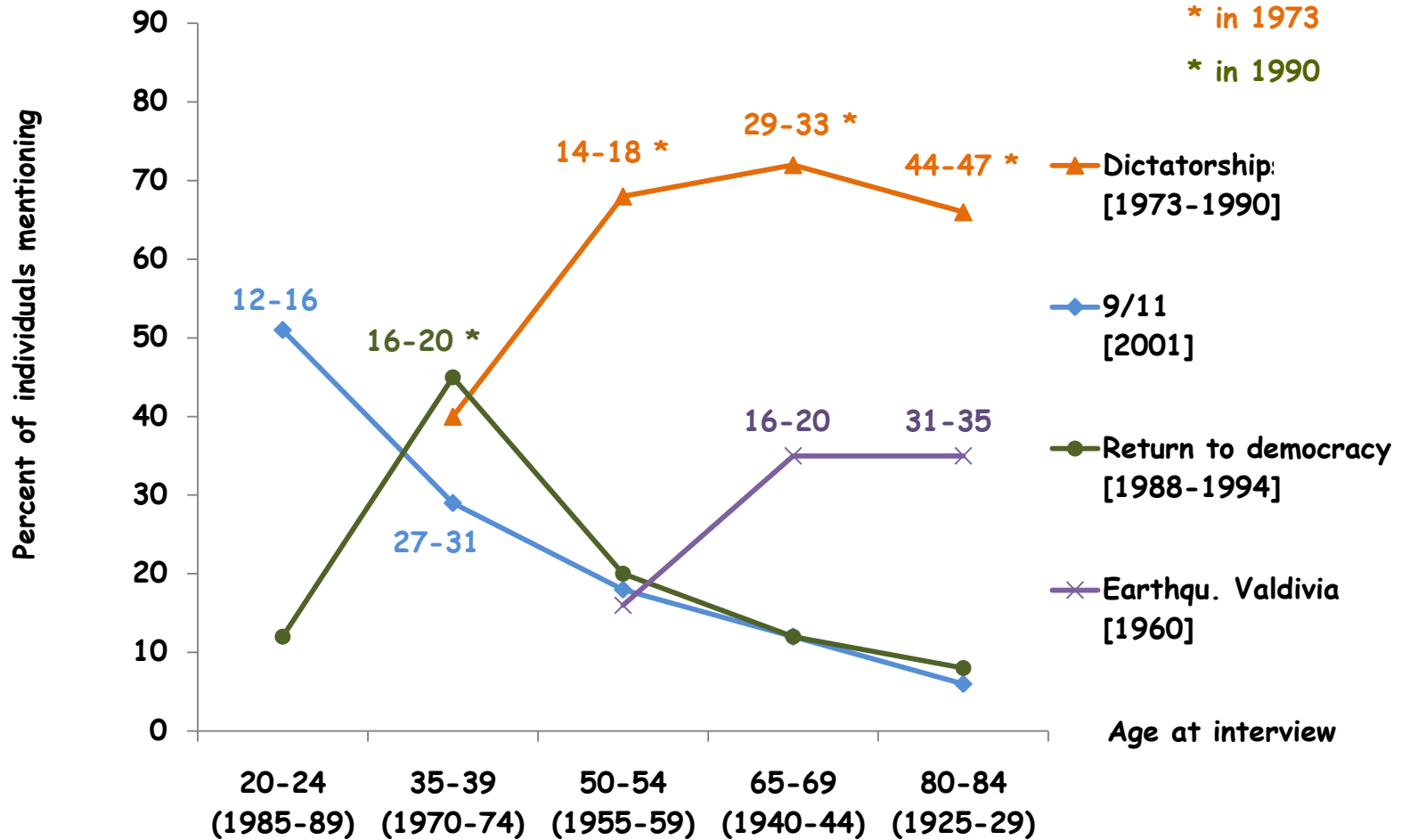
# Italy (2009) (%)



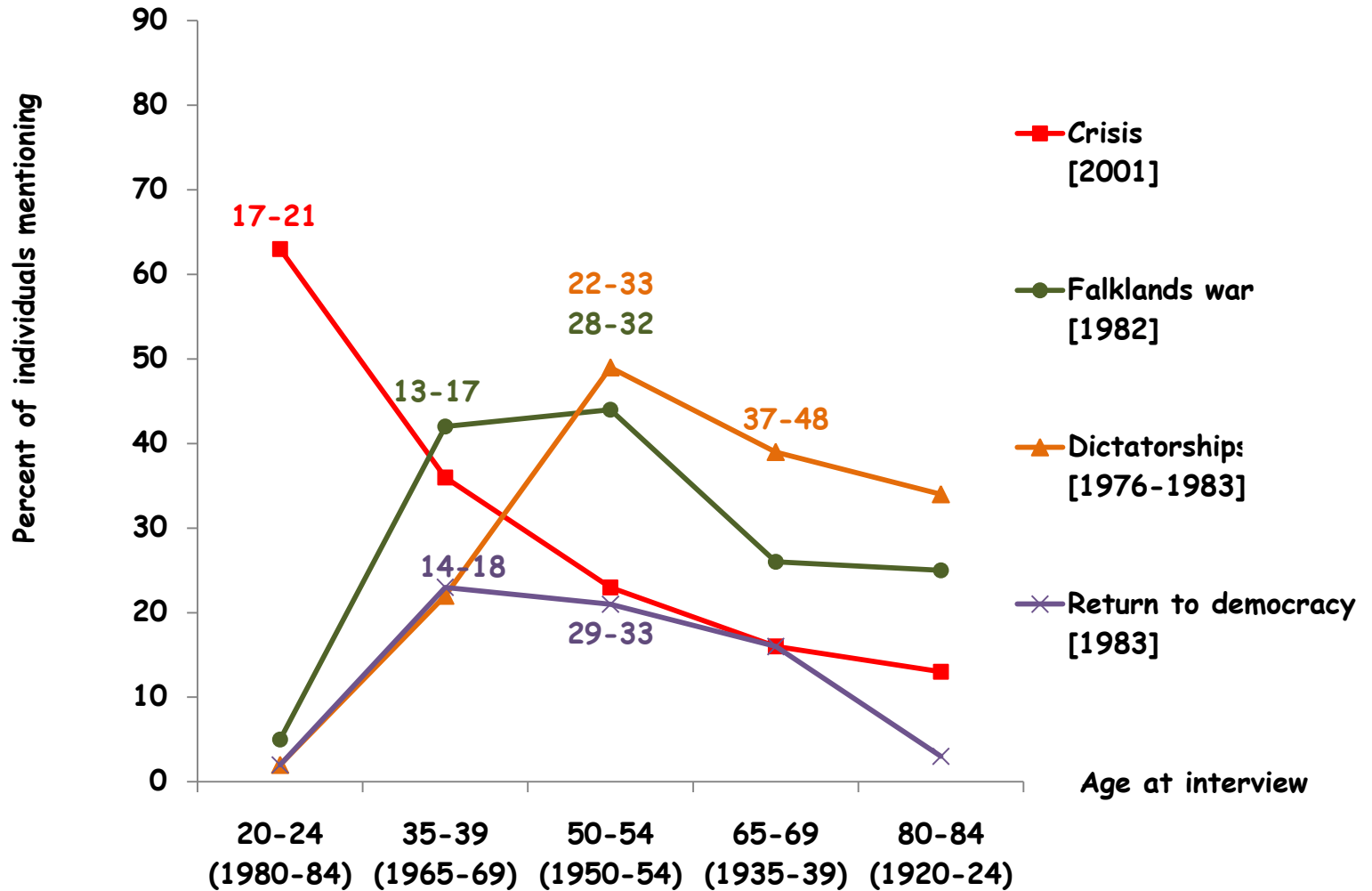
# Switzerland (2009) (%)



# Chile (2009) (%)



# Argentina (2004) (%)

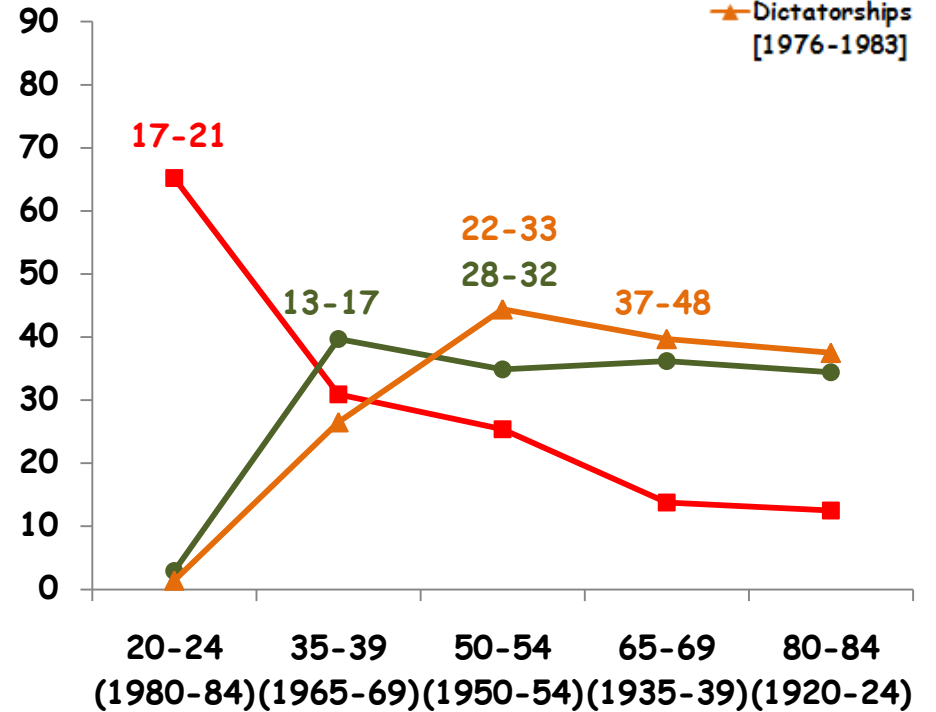
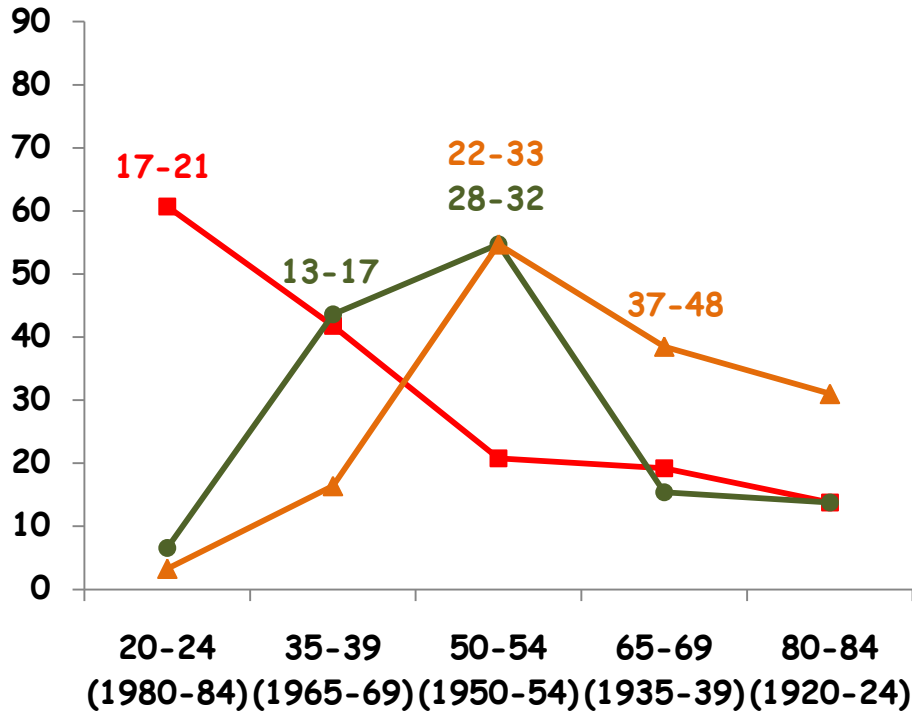


# Argentina by gender (2004) (%)

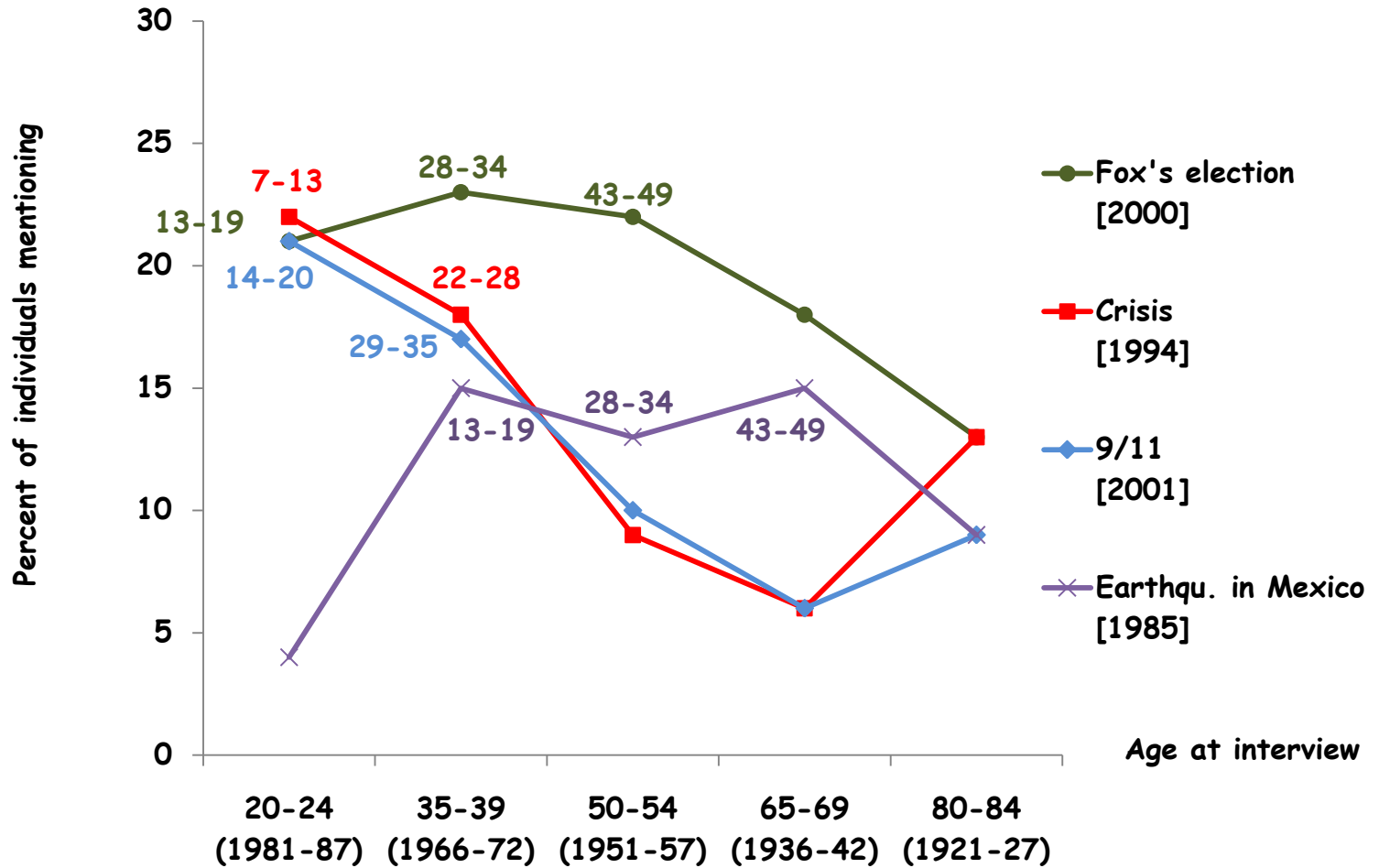
- Crisis [2001]
- Falklands war [1982]
- ▲ Dictatorships [1976-1983]

*Men*

*Women*



# Mexico (2005-2007) (%)





# Conclusion

- Geographical differences in memory  
*Europe versus Latin America*
- 2008/09 economic crises are not so much remembered  
*Exception of the young Belgian*
- Evidence for the Schuman's theory of a "critical age"
- However, certain events shape a trans-generational  
(national) collective memory  
*Ex.: dictatorships in Latin America*