

Researcher wonders about parents of the future

August 15 2013, by Anne Craig

New research out of Queen's University indicates that women are changing their views on bearing children.

According to data from an [online survey](#), [evolutionary biologist](#) Lonnie Aarssen and former [undergraduate student](#) Stephanie Altman say there has been a rapid rise in the 'childfree' culture, with fewer women opting to have children. Instead, women are focusing on their own legacies – a rewarding career, fame, contributing to new ideas and making discoveries.

"In the past, women have been denied the opportunity to choose whether or not to have children," says Dr. Aarssen. "Now, according to our survey, there is more of a [negative relationship](#) between fertility and legacy. We only found this in women though, and that's probably because men don't have to be involved through the whole pregnancy process."

Members of the Queen's community were invited by email to participate in this online survey. 1,115 people responded, including 351 males and 764 females. While both men and women expressed the same overall desire for 2.2 children, the women with a high fertility preference also tended to have little interest in achieving fame.

The women who indicated a desire to have few or no children tended to have a strong interest in goals associated with their legacy.

Responses from males were quite different, with data indicating that there was no conflict between building their own legacy and having children.

Economists and politicians are now expressing concern over the implications of a childfree culture, worrying that women not having children or not having as many children could lead to a population crash. However, Dr. Aarssen says the current trend in North America will reverse itself should more women and men find themselves driven by an attraction to parenthood.

The [research paper](#) was recently published in *The Open Behavioral Science Journal*.

More information: benthamscience.com/open/openarticles/V006/37TOBSJ.htm

Provided by Queen's University

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