

# Education not to blame for increasing childlessness in Europe

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The increasing proportion of the population who prefer to remain childless is a major social problem for many European countries. However this trend has not (so far) been the result of the expansion of education. This is the conclusion of new research, published in the journal *Population Studies*.

The researchers, Eva Beaujouan, Zuzanna Brzozowska and Kryštof Zeman of the Vienna Institute of Demography, looked at trends in [childlessness](#) among women born in the period 1916-65 in 13 European countries. They found that after the baby boom that followed the Second World War, the proportion of women who remained childless rose continuously in Western Europe. In the state-socialist countries the proportion started to rise after the end of the Communist era. Initially, there was a difference in the proportion who were childless between the least educated and those who held a secondary school diploma, but the difference gradually disappeared as most women became diploma-holders. That largely explains why the expansion of education did not affect overall childlessness levels.

For the period covered by the study, women graduates were always much more likely than other educational groups to remain childless, but until recently the proportion of women who were graduates was too low to affect the overall level of childlessness. The recent massive increases in this proportion may have a more general effect. On the other hand, it is possible that as the proportion grows, the level of childlessness among women graduates will decline towards that of less educated [women](#).

**More information:** Eva Beaujouan et al. The limited effect of increasing educational attainment on childlessness trends in twentieth-century Europe, women born 1916–65, *Population Studies* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/00324728.2016.1206210](https://doi.org/10.1080/00324728.2016.1206210)

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