

Is the future too bleak to have kids? Some men think so

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Across medical and social sciences, the reasons men choose to have children and their understanding of fertility awareness have been seriously understudied. Maja Bodin wants to address the issue in her

research paper, "A wonderful experience or a frightening commitment? An exploration of men's reasons to (not) have children."

Her findings were part of a wider study into fertility awareness which included an opportunity for men to talk about fertility with a midwife.

Before the conversation, the men filled out a questionnaire aimed at capturing the social demographics of the group. However, it concluded with two open-ended questions: why you would want to have [children](#), and why would you not want to have children?

"Most studies just assume that people want children, and if asked whether you do or do not, it's just a 'yes' or 'no' or 'maybe' answer. They stop there, they do not ask why.

"There are studies showing that many people just go with the flow, especially men. They haven't really thought so much about why they want children. But I am questioning whether this is true, I think that they just never got the question," said Bodin.

The results of these two questions were analyzed and resulted in five categories: images of being a dad, passing something on, [personal development](#) and self-image, the potential relationship with the co-parent, and practical circumstances and prerequisites.

Some men had a vision about parenthood and family life and looked forward to the experience. They longed for children and thought it would be joyful and that having children is the meaning of life; they described children as cute, funny, nice.

On the other hand, some men didn't particularly like children and thought they were annoying or difficult to handle. They also felt they were not up for the task or did not see themselves as the 'daddy type.'

"One of the most common reasons to want children was to pass something on to the next generation, either genes or social heritage, traditions and values—they wanted to see a small version of themselves.

"Others did not want to pass on their genes because they had some disease, or referred to over population, climate change and the future looking bleak. Some thought it would lead to personal development: that they would learn, and the experience would enrich their lives. Others had the opposite view that it would mean they could not do what they wanted."

Bodin collected the data at sexual health clinics in Uppsala and Stockholm. The mean age of participants was 28 years; 72 percent wanted to have children with one-fifth wanting a child within two years.

Bodin was surprised that these questions, which were just a very small part of a bigger study, contained a lot of information and variety in the answers. Although most men wanted children, many of them also gave reasons why they would not want children.

"It shows there are a lot of people who think about pros and cons, and that reproductive decision-making is not as straight forward as it may seem," added Bodin.

More information: A wonderful experience or a frightening commitment? An exploration of men's reasons to (not) have children.
mau.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1401585&dswid=-2495

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