

Uncertainty and lifestyle are reasons to postpone having children in Finland

October 4 2022, by Mari Peltonen



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According to a recent study published in *Marriage & Family Review*, the main reasons to postpone or renounce childbearing were uncertain life situation and lifestyle preferences.

The study is based on representative survey data from the Finnish Family Barometers in 2015 and 2018 conducted by Väestöliitto, the Finnish Family Federation.

The participants were men and women aged 20–44 who postponed or were not planning to have (more) children. The participants were asked to rate the importance of various reasons for such decision from a predetermined list.

Three main groups of reasons to postpone or not to have children

According to the researcher Kateryna Golovina from the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies the study identified three main groups of reasons to postpone or not to have (more) children: uncertain life situation, lifestyle preferences, and completed fertility.

"Uncertain life situation emerged as the strongest factor behind the decision to postpone or not to have children," Golovina states.

It comprised many dimensions of uncertainty, ranging from perceived [financial situation](#) and own or spouse's unfinished studies to size of apartment and challenges in combining wage work and childcare.

Lifestyle preferences was the second main factor for decision to postpone or not to have (more) children.

"It means that adults did not want to change their current lifestyle and preferred to do other things in life than childbearing."

Completed fertility factor means that people already completed their childbearing goals.

The study further examined which groups of people were more likely to report which reasons to postpone or renounce childbearing (based on their socio-demographic characteristics), as well as whether the recent sociocultural changes, such as widespread use of [social media](#) and increased work-related attitudes ("workism") were related to these reasons.

Overall, participants with a more stable life situation, infrequent social media use, and lower work-orientation were less likely to report uncertainty as a reason to postpone or renounce childbearing. On the other hand, childless adults, especially women, who used social media frequently and were more work-oriented were more likely to list lifestyle preferences as a reason to postpone having (more) [children](#).

The first systematic examination

This study provides the first systematic examination of reasons with which adults explain their decision to postpone or renounce childbearing during [fertility decline](#) in Finland in the 2010s. Overall, these findings suggest that [policy makers](#) should consider uncertainty (both objective and perceived), as well as [lifestyle](#) preferences when introducing measures to support family formation and new family policies.

In terms of further research, the data was collected before the

COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, so it would be important to investigate how reasons to postpone or renounce childbearing have changed during the times of escalating crises.

More information: Kateryna Savelieva et al, Reasons to Postpone Childbearing during Fertility Decline in Finland, *Marriage & Family Review* (2022). [DOI: 10.1080/01494929.2022.2083283](https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2022.2083283)

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