FP-18-09 Childbearing Desires, Intentions, and Attitudes Among Women 40-44

Karen Benjamin Guzzo

Bowling Green State University, kguzzo@bgsu.edu

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Desires to Have a Child in the Future

The first section examines the proportion of women aged 40-44 who want to have children, having responded affirmatively to the question “Looking to the future, do you, yourself, want to have a(n)other baby at some time in the future?” Again, mothers aged 40-44 are compared to childless women 40-44.

Intentions to Have a Child in the Future

Examines the proportion of women who responded affirmatively to the question “Looking to the future, do you intend to have a child?” The figure compares those who already have children to those who do not have children.

More than twice as many childless women reported wanting to have a child in the future than women who already had children.

In 2002, slightly more than one in three childless women aged 40-44 wanted to have a child compared to one in six mothers.

In 2013, 42% of childless women wanted to have a baby in the future compared to only 20% of their peers who already had children.

Feelings About Not Having Children Among Childless Women

The percentage of childless women who intended to have a baby in 2002, 2008, and 2013.

There was an increase of ten percentage points in the percentage of women intending to have another child intending to have another child.

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As with desires to have a child, the proportion of women aged 40-44 who intended to have a child in the future was always higher among childless women than among mothers.

In 2002, 16% of childless women intended to have a baby in the future, rising to around 18-19% in the later years.

Among women with children, only 3% intended to have another child in 2002 and 2006, but the percentage rose to 5% in 2013.

Comparing the percentage of women who want a child (Figure 1) with the percentage of women who actually intend to have a child (Figure 2), it is apparent that fewer women aged 40-44 expected to fulfill their childbearing desires.

In 2016, less than half of childless women aged 40-44 who wanted to have a baby intended to have a baby.

The proportion was even lower among mothers aged 40-44, with roughly one-fourth of those who wanted another child intending to have another child.

The percentage of childless women who reported wanting to have a child declined from about a third in 2002 to about a fifth in 2013.

There was an increase of ten percentage points among childless women aged 40-44 who reported that they would be bothered “not at all” if they did not have children, from 36% in 2002 to 46% in 2013.

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Desires to Have a Child in the Future

The delay in parenthood over the past few decades has led to a small but steady increase in childbearing among older women.

The shifting age profile of first-time childbearing suggests that women all at the end of their childbearing years may still be considering having children in the future. This project examines trends in desired and intended childbearing among women 40-44, as well as attitudes about childlessness, drawing from several cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) representing the years 2002, 2006, and 2013.