

Stable employment encourages the decision to become a parent

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The results of a scientific study focusing on the Italian academic community have been published in PLOS ONE. Women face greater obstacles because they experience longer periods of job insecurity than men

In academia, where careers are often characterized by years of job insecurity, employment stability strongly influences the decision to become a parent for both men and women.

This is what emerges from the study “[The Best Time to Become a Parent: The Relationship between Tenure and Fertility Among Academics](#)” just published in the scientific journal PLOS **One** and carried out by researcher **Olga Gorodetskaya** from the Institute for Evaluative Research on Public Policies at Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK-IRVAPP) with **Agnese Vitali** (University of Trento), **Valentina Tocchioni** (University of Florence) and **Alessandra Minello** (University of Padua).

The research is based on original data from a large sample of academics at Italian universities and shows that, for both men and women, the birth of a first child is generally postponed until they secure stable employment.

According to the study, among childless women, achieving employment stability is associated with a significant increase in the intention to have children in the near term. The data also show that, for women, employment stability has the greatest impact if it is achieved by the age of 35.

*“The gender gap in academia,” **Gorodetskaya** explains, “is not just about careers, promotions, or scientific productivity-it’s also about the concrete possibilities of becoming a parent. In academia, as in many other sectors, job insecurity can persist for many years. Moreover, it does not affect men and women equally. As shown [in another study I previously published with Agnese Vitali](#), men tend to secure stable positions more quickly, whereas women face longer periods of job insecurity. Today, many women who want to have children must balance career aspirations with their*

reproductive timeline, as employment stability often comes when the reproductive window is already very narrow. Moreover, since women's fertility begins to decline at an earlier age than men's, this may further reduce fertility rates among academics compared with their male peers. All this can result in a greater probability of not having children at all or in any case of having on average fewer than men who work in the same field. Our study shows that, for women in particular, achieving employment stability is crucial: securing a permanent position by the age of 35 significantly increases the likelihood of becoming a mother. At older ages, the benefits of employment stability diminish: the likelihood of becoming a mother declines with age, and securing a stable position no longer leads to a significant increase in the probability of motherhood. Parenthood is not merely an individual concern or a career issue; it is a social responsibility that academia must also address."

By contrast, the study found that, after the birth of a first child, achieving employment stability is not associated with having additional children, for either women or men. The crucial phase therefore remains the one in which one decides whether to become a parent for the first time.

The research originated as part of Olga Gorodetskaya's PhD project (FBK-IRVAPP) at the University of Trento and was later further developed into a scientific article published in PLOS One.

The study is freely available at the following link:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0353232>

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<https://magazine.fbk.eu/en/news/stable-employment-encourages-the-decision-to-become-a-parent/>

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