



Factors influencing men's and women's decisions about having children

The fertility literature is replete with reasons for delayed child bearing and the decline in large families. But what shapes men's and women's thinking about whether or not to have children?

ROBYN PARKER AND MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Fertility behaviour is likely to be an outcome of various psychological, social and life course forces that influence individuals' perceptions of the choices available to them and the resources they have (or may have at some point in the future) to pursue those choices. The forces are complex and interwoven, and some can be seen in the macro-level trends apparent in most developed countries – trends such as delays in starting a family, which are bound up with concomitant delays in leaving home, marrying, and entering the labour force. A brief summary of some of the key factors underlying fertility decisions is presented by Weston in this edition of *Family Matters* (p. 4).

As Weston notes, financial and employment factors are typically seen as prime influences on fertility behaviour. Such factors include threats to financial security and thus the need to invest in education and career development, the direct and indirect financial costs of having children and associated impact of having children on career development, and the difficulties of combining work with family life. In addition, many non-financial costs of having children have been discussed in the literature, including loss of lifestyle options – losses that may be accentuated by current values, some of which apparently lead to considerable investment of time and energy spent in raising each child. Weston also notes that while some costs are known, others are unknown, and some authors maintain that the unknowns encourage people to err on the side of caution.

The fragility of relationships also appears to have contributed to the fall in the total fertility rate. Given today's high rate of relationship breakdown, the potential impact of starting a family or having

another child could be expected to feature in couples' thinking. After almost three decades of access to no-fault divorce, there is a general awareness of the potential fragility of relationships (Parker 2002) and of the range of negative consequences of relationship breakdown. The quality of the marital relationship appears to influence fertility behaviour – couples in unhappy marriages are less likely than other couples to have a(nother) child (Lillard and Waite 1993). Psychologically, the benefits of having a(nother) child may be seen in terms of offspring adding purpose and meaning to adult lives and the prospect of "immortality by proxy" (Hoffman and Manis 1979; Schoen, Kim, Nathanson, Fields and Astone 1997).

The *Fertility Decision Making Project* was conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in 2004 in partnership with the then Office of the Status for Women (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet).¹

A national random sample of 3,201 people aged between 20 and 39 years participated in a telephone interview that gathered information about current circumstances, relationship and fertility history, past and present preferences and expectations of having (more) children, and attitudes towards a range of fertility-related issues.

A key feature of the project was its focus on gathering both retrospective and prospective data, and on obtaining *couple* data to allow for the assessment of the degree of congruence between partners' views and expectations and whose views carry the greater influence in predicting fertility decisions and outcomes.

Typically, fertility studies examine only a few of the wide range of issues that may contribute to a decision



as to whether, when, and how many children to have. One of the aims of the *Fertility Decision Making Project* was to foster a clearer understanding of the importance of particular factors influencing fertility behaviour posited by numerous researchers in the past decade. Items addressing some main themes in the literature were constructed, and respondents were asked to indicate the importance of each in their thinking about having or not having children.

This article describes the items that were most commonly considered to be important by men and women and identifies the items for which differences occur based on parental and relationship status.

At this early stage of analysis of the data from the *Fertility Decision Making Project*, the overall patterns of difference, rather than the statistical significance of those differences, are of interest for their value in guiding future, more sophisticated analyses of the factors that influence fertility decisions. Furthermore, we note the inter-relatedness among the variables considered here – with each other and with other variables (such as age) not yet analysed – that may limit the capacity to provide comprehensive explanations of these findings.

Factors important when considering whether to have or not have a child

A set of 28 items was constructed to tap into the main themes discussed in the literature as contributing to the fertility choices and decisions made by individuals and couples. Respondents were asked to indicate, on a scale of 0 to 10, how important each factor was when thinking about having or not having a child. High scores (8-10) indicated that the factor was considered important to the respondent. Table 1

sets out the 28 items contained in the survey and lists them according to the proportion of men and women rating each as important.

Overall, it can be seen from Table 1 that most men and women considered the same seven items to be important, although not necessarily in the same order. Both for men and women, the top three ranked items in terms of importance when considering whether to have or not have a child were the same. These were whether they *could afford to support a child* and the whether the *male and female partners would be good parents*. All three of these items can be seen as relating to the overall ability to provide support to the child, either financially or in terms of parenting. A further three items were endorsed by more than 50 per cent of men or women: *having someone to love* (57 per cent men; 46 per cent women); the *security of the male partner's job* (53 per cent men; 57 per cent women); and the *female partner's age* (49 per cent men; 56 per cent women). These items could be considered as representing a set of “core” issues or conditions that form the basis of respondents' thinking about having or not having children.

Concern about the male partner's job security links directly with the notion of providing for a(nother) child, while the importance attached to the female partner's age probably reflects beliefs about the timing of children with respect to a woman's ability to conceive and bear a(nother) child. The comparatively common endorsement of an item reflecting the emotional dimension of having children (in contrast to the more practical concerns) *having someone to love*, stands out among the top group of items.

A similar item, *adding purpose and meaning to life*, was considered important by 45 per cent of

men and 39 per cent of women, placing it as the 8th most commonly endorsed item for men and the 11th most common for women. Together, these results that reflect the importance of the more emotional aspects of having children demonstrate that many respondents' thinking about having children, was not a straightforward, unidimensional process.

Men compared with women

In general, the proportions of men and women who regarded each item as important were quite similar. However, men and women varied by 10 or more percentage points on five of the 28 items. For three of these items (that a *child would make their partner happier*, *having someone to love*, and *having at least one son*), the proportion of men who rated the issues as important was higher than for women, but women were more inclined than men to attach importance to the items relating to the *time and energy available for the male partner's career* and the *stress and worry of raising a child*.

The largest difference between men and women arose for the item concerning whether *having a(nother) child would make the partner happy* (men 37 per cent compared with women 23 per cent). This can be interpreted in different ways.

Perhaps men are more likely than women to discount their own feelings about having children where they perceive their partners' preferences for having children to be particularly strong. Alternatively, it may indicate that some men think that women's fulfilment is closely tied to having children, while women are less inclined to think this way about men.

Men were also more likely than women to report that they considered *having someone to love* to be an important issue when thinking about having children (57 per cent compared with 46 per cent). That close to half of the women and more than half of the men emphasised this aspect of the emotional benefits of having children suggests that the emotional benefits of having children are salient to both men and women. However it would seem that, in this sample, men were more likely than women to be cognisant of, or at least more likely to acknowledge, the role that the emotional aspects of having children plays in the process of deciding to have or not have a(nother) child. Women, it would seem, tended to focus on the more practical aspects of having children.

The issues for which the proportion of women clearly exceeded the proportion of men were related to the male partner's career and to the raising of children. Forty per cent of women indicated *time and energy for the male partner's career* was important compared with only 30 per cent of men, while 34 per cent of women considered the *stress and worry of raising children* an important component of their thinking compared with 24 per cent of men. These findings may reflect an acknowledgement of the centrality of both parenting and work roles in the family, highlighted by more women than men because of women's tendency to play a greater role in the everyday care of children. And since it is typically women who give up or at least reduce their hours in paid work after the birth of a child, their focus may be directed towards the capacity of their partner to support the family on a reduced income.

Beliefs about family composition were reflected in the endorsement of items about having more than one child, or at least one child of each sex. Men and women appear to have similar views about only-child families, with 40 per cent and 37 per cent respectively attaching importance to *giving a child a sibling*. However, the particular combination of sons and daughters, while not endorsed by large numbers of respondents, was more likely to be something that men rather than women considered important. Specifically, men were more likely to consider *having at least one male child* important (23 per cent) than were women (12 per cent).

Other differences between men and women, while perhaps notable, were not especially large and, with the exception of "having someone to love", the items were not among those endorsed by the majority of respondents. Given the exploratory nature of this section of the *Fertility Decision Making Project* these findings can only be regarded as indicative of

Table 1 Issues of importance in having children as rated by men and women

Issues of importance in having children	Men %	Women %
Afford support child	65	67
Female partner make a good parent	65	58
Male partner make a good parent	63	60
Having someone to love	57	46
Male partner's job security	53	57
Female partner's age	49	56
Uncertain that relationship will last	47	47
Add purpose/meaning to life	45	39
Male partner's age	42	42
Male partner established in job/career	41	37
Giving child(ren) a brother/sister	40	37
Finding good affordable childcare	40	46
Child would make partner happier	37	23
Female partner's job security	34	38
Child would be good for relationship	32	27
Ability to buy/renovate/move home	32	30
Time/energy for male partner's career	30	40
Suitable world for children	30	29
Female partner established in job/career	29	37
Time for leisure & social activities	27	24
Time/energy for female partner's career	26	24
Stress and worry of raising child	24	34
Have at least one/another boy	23	12
Ability to make major purchases	22	22
Too much stress on relationship	22	26
Other children would miss out	19	22
Have at least one/another girl	18	16
Child difficult to raise	11	15

some aspects of respondents' lives that are worthy of further examination.

Parents compared with those without children

When we reconsider the differences between men and women but also take into account whether they were already parents or not, a clear pattern appears. More often than not, where there was a difference of 10 percentage points or more, it was the childless respondents who were most likely to consider an item to be important compared with respondents who were already parents. Interestingly, there were 12 such cases for men but only four such instances for women. Only one item was endorsed as important by noticeably more respondents with children than those without: *other children would miss out* – and this difference was observed only for women. These results are shown in Table 2.

The difference in the proportion of childless men and fathers (respectively) who emphasised the various issues was greater than 15 percentage points on five issues: *their job security* (59 per cent compared with 39 per cent); *whether their partner would make a good parent* (72 per cent compared with 52 per cent); *whether the men themselves would make a good parent* (69 per cent compared

with 50 per cent); *how well they were established in their job/career* (47 per cent compared with 29 per cent); and *their ability to support a child* (71 per cent compared with 54 per cent). All except the second last of these items are among the top five items in Table 1.

Notable differences for several other items ranged from 10 to 13 per cent. The issues contained in those items related to the emotional benefits of children, the effect of having a child on the partner and the couple relationship, job security for the female partner, and the time and energy available for both men's and women's careers. Importantly, all of the items on which men with children and those without differed were concerned with parenting, the stability of the relationship or the security of employment for one or other of the partners.

For women, the main difference between those with and without children concerned their own job/career. Childless women were more likely than mothers to stress the importance of *their own job security* (47 per cent compared with 32 per cent) and *how well they were established in their career* (37 per cent compared with 23 per cent). Slightly smaller differences were found with respect to *whether they would be a good parent* (64 per cent

Table 2 Percentage of respondents rating items as important: parental status by gender

	Men		Women	
	With children	Without children	With children	Without children
Afford to support child	54	71	64	73
Female partner make a good parent	52	72	54	64
Male partner make a good parent	50	69	55	66
Having someone to love	48	61	44	50
Male partner's job security	39	59	56	60
Female partner's age	49	49	59	51
Uncertain that rship will last	40	51	43	51
Add purpose/meaning to life	41	48	38	41
Male partner's age	43	42	45	36
Male partner established in job/career	29	47	34	42
Finding good affordable childcare	37	41	45	49
Giving child a brother/sister	39	41	35	41
Child would make partner happier	28	41	22	24
Female partner's job security	26	37	32	47
Ability to buy/renovate/move home	26	35	29	32
Child would be good for relationship	24	36	26	28
Suitable world for children	28	30	28	31
Time/energy for male partner's career	23	34	40	40
Female partner established in job/career	24	32	23	37
Time for leisure & social activities	23	29	23	26
Time/energy for female partner's career	20	30	22	28
Stress & worry of raising a child	22	25	36	32
Have at least one/another boy	18	25	12	13
Too much stress on relationship	23	21	29	22
Ability to make major purchases	18	24	22	21
Other children would miss out	23	18	26	16
Have at least one/another girl	16	19	17	14
Child difficult to raise	10	11	14	16

compared with 54 per cent), or whether *their partner would be a good parent* (66 per cent compared with 55 per cent).

What is noteworthy about the above findings is that, while mothers were just as likely as childless women to regard the top five (“core”) issues as important, fathers were less inclined than childless men to stress these issues. Of all four groups (men and women with and without children), fathers were the least inclined to emphasise *their job security (or the male partner’s job security)* (39 per cent compared with 56–60 per cent), and *their ability to support a child* (54 per cent compared with

capacity to provide an adequate environment for raising children.

One of the differences noted earlier between men and women was that women were more likely to consider the *stress and worry of raising a child* as important compared with men (34 per cent to 24 per cent, respectively). Interestingly, when parental status is taken into account, the gap between men and women in terms of importance actually increases because importance moves in opposite directions. That is, it is higher for women with children than those without, but is lower for men with children than those who are still childless. This may

The patterns of results suggest the importance of each partner’s work and parenting roles as considerations when thinking about having a child.



64–73 per cent). For the other three “core” issues, smaller differences emerged in the patterns of responses of fathers and mothers.

The item that women with children were noticeably more likely than childless women to regard as important concerned *whether other children would miss out* (26 per cent compared with 16 per cent) perhaps reflecting a sense that parents want to provide for the needs of each child as best they can, and that an additional child would stretch the family resources to the point that the ability to meet all their children’s needs may be compromised. While not considered important by a large proportion of respondents overall, this result is noteworthy because the issue is linked to the

add weight to the point made earlier that women rate this item highly because they sense they will bear the brunt of the everyday stress and worry of raising children.

In the previous section it was noted that men were more likely than women to consider as important in the decision to have a child, *whether a child would make their partner happy* (men 37 per cent; women 23 per cent) and that having a child would give you *someone to love* (men 57 per cent; women 46 per cent). Once parental status is taken into account, this difference can be seen primarily as a characteristic of childless men, with men with children actually responding in much the same way as women (irrespective of whether they had children).

It was also found earlier that men were more likely than women to see as important *having at least one/another boy* (23 per cent compared with 12 per cent, respectively). Comparing parents with childless respondents reveals that fathers are not as concerned with this point as childless men, although this may simply reflect the fact that men who were parents may have already had at least one son and that fathers who still saw this as important may have had only daughters to date.

Overall then, parents seemed less inclined than childless respondents to attach importance to many of the considerations listed. This may suggest that the salience of those issues declines when couples become parents and many of the “unknowns” become “knowns”. On the other hand, these issues may be less important at the outset for those who decide to become parents, compared with those who are putting off parenthood or who have decided not to have children. To the extent that many of the items can be seen to represent the costs of having children, this initial analysis suggests that those costs may not end up being as critical as respondents believe they would be prior to starting a family.

Table 3 Percentage of respondents who had children, by relationship status, age and sex

	Married	Cohabiting	Single
Men aged 20-29			
Never had children	51.1	74.3	94.7
Ever had children ^a	48.9	25.7	5.3
Number of respondents	94	105	414
Men aged 30-39			
Never had children	20.6	61.9	72.6
Ever had children ^a	79.4	38.1	27.4
Number of respondents	277	84	237
Women aged 20-29			
Never had children	33.3	62.2	76.9
Ever had children ^a	66.7	37.8	23.1
Number of respondents	246	196	437
Women aged 30-39			
Never had children	12.1	40.3	41.6
Ever had children ^a	87.9	59.7	58.4
Number of respondents	634	119	281

^a Female respondents and female partners who were pregnant were considered as having had this (single) child.

Clearly, gender and parental status have an impact on the importance of certain issues when respondents were thinking about having children. Because parental status was so clearly linked with relationship status in this sample (see Table 3), the proportions of respondents in each relationship status group (married, cohabiting, single) who attached importance to the target issues are reported here, to provide further detail in the picture emerging of the importance attached to the range of issues examined in this survey.

Comparison of relationship groups

Overall, married respondents were least likely to have rated an item important compared with cohabiting or single men and women, who generally responded in similar ways. Although some notable differences were found across relationship groups for women, there was a marked tendency for women to respond consistently regardless of whether they were married, cohabiting, or single, in particular for the items that were least commonly cited as important elements of their thinking about having children. These analyses do not take into account whether respondents already had children.

With respect to the five “core” issues identified earlier, the patterns of responses varied somewhat for

men and women. More than two-thirds of single (71 per cent) and cohabiting (67 per cent) men rated being *able to afford to support a child* as important, compared with just over half of the married men (55 per cent). Married men (57 per cent) were less likely than both cohabiting men (67 per cent) and single men (70 per cent) to consider the *capacity for their partner to be a good parent* as important. In relation to *their own capacity to parent*, the pattern was much the same: 54 per cent of married men attached importance to this compared with 64 per cent of cohabiting and 68 per cent of single men. The proportions of married and single male respondents differed notably in the importance attached to *having someone to love* (married 49 per cent compared with single 62 per cent) (and to its complementary item – the notion that having a child *adds purpose and meaning to one’s life* (married 39 per cent compared with single 49 per cent)). Married men were also least likely, compared with those who are cohabiting or single, to regard *their own job security* as important (40 per cent compared with 59 per cent and 58 per cent).

For women, the responses for the “core” items differed notably between those who were married and those who were single, with cohabiting women falling in between. Just over half of the married

Table 4 Percentage of respondents rating item as important: relationship status by gender

	Men			Women		
	Married	Cohabiting	Single	Married	Cohabiting	Single
Afford to support child	55	67	71	64	70	70
Female partner make a good parent	57	67	70	53	60	64
Male partner make a good parent	54	64	68	53	61	67
Having someone to love	49	56	62	45	51	47
Male partner’s job security	40	59	58	57	59	58
Female partner’s age	51	48	47	61	50	53
Uncertain that rship will last	34	50	54	37	45	59
Add purpose/meaning to life	39	45	49	41	41	37
Male partner’s age	43	39	43	47	37	38
Male partner established in job/career	28	46	47	32	42	42
Finding good affordable childcare	33	39	44	40	54	51
Giving child a brother/sister	37	47	40	38	40	36
Child would make partner happier	29	38	41	22	22	24
Female partner’s job security	24	35	38	30	40	47
Ability to buy/renovate/move home	23	37	35	27	34	32
Child would be good for relationship	25	32	37	26	27	28
Suitable world for children	26	25	33	26	33	31
Time/energy for male partner’s career	23	33	34	40	42	38
Female partner established in job/career	22	31	33	22	32	35
Time for leisure & social activities	23	31	29	23	29	24
Time/energy for female partner’s career	20	31	29	19	27	30
Stress & worry of raising a child	21	26	25	35	34	33
Have at least one/another boy	16	26	26	12	13	13
Too much stress on relationship	20	23	23	25	24	28
Ability to make major purchases	16	27	24	21	22	22
Other children would miss out	18	20	20	21	18	24
Have at least one/another girl	15	21	20	16	17	14
Child difficult to raise	10	10	12	14	15	15

women (53 per cent) and 64 per cent of the single women regarded their *own capacity to parent* as important. Similarly, 53 per cent of married women, 61 per cent of cohabiting women, and 67 per cent of single women attached importance to the *capacity of their partner to parent*. Married, cohabiting, and single women's responses were similar with respect to being *able to afford to support a child* (64 per cent, 70 per cent and 70 per cent respectively), *having someone to love* (45 per cent, 51 per cent, and 47 per cent respectively), and the *security of their partner's job* (57 per cent, 59 per cent, and 58 per cent respectively).

The patterns of responses to items related to respondents' job and career development and security were largely the same for men and women. Fewer married men and women attached importance to the *male partner being established in his*

with 40 per cent of the cohabiting men and 30 per cent of the single men). A less commonly endorsed item overall, the *ability to make major purchases* was more often cited as an important factor by single (24 per cent) and cohabiting (27 per cent) men compared with those who are married (16 per cent). Fairly similar proportions of married, cohabiting and single women respondents tended to consider being *able to make major purchases*, have *time for leisure and social activities*, or *buy/move/renovate their home* an important element to take into account.

Men in each relationship group were roughly equally likely to be concerned about *their own* or *their partner's age*. However, just over half of the single women (53 per cent) and half of the cohabiting women respondents attached importance to *their own age* compared with 61 per cent

The patterns of results suggest the importance of each partner's work and parenting roles as considerations when thinking about having a child.



career than cohabiting and single respondents (men: 28 per cent compared with 46 per cent and 47 per cent; women: 32 per cent compared with 42 per cent and 42 per cent respectively), the *security of the female partner's job* (men: 24 per cent compared with 35 per cent and 38 per cent; women: 30 per cent compared with 40 and 47 per cent respectively), the *female partner being established in her career* (men: 22 per cent compared with 31 per cent and 33 per cent; women: 22 per cent compared with 32 per cent and 35 per cent respectively), and the *time and energy available for the female partner's career* (men: 20 per cent compared with 31 per cent and 29 per cent; women: 19 per cent compared with 27 per cent and 30 per cent respectively).

Compared with those who were cohabiting or single, married men were also least likely to regard the *time and energy available to their career* as important (23 per cent compared with 33 per cent and 34 per cent), but married, cohabiting and single women were equally likely to express concern about the *male partner having time and energy for his career*. *Finding good affordable child care* was more commonly considered to be an important issue by single men (44 per cent) and single and cohabiting women (51 per cent and 54 per cent) than married men (33 per cent) and women (40 per cent).

Single and cohabiting men were also more likely to regard the *ability to buy/renovate or move house* important in comparison to married men (35 per cent and 37 per cent compared with 23 per cent respectively), who were also more likely to already own or be buying their home (72 per cent compared

of married women. And with respect to the *age of their partner*, fewer single women (38 per cent) and cohabiting women (37 per cent) indicated considerable concern, compared with 47 per cent of married women.

Concern about the *uncertainty in the relationship* was less likely to be reported by married men (34 per cent) than cohabiting (50 per cent) or single men (54 per cent), and by married women (37 per cent) compared with single women (59 per cent). This item was the only one on which single and cohabiting women differed from each other by more than 10 percentage points. Concern about the stability of the relationship was more likely to be reported by single women (59 per cent) than cohabiting women (45 per cent).

Married and single men also differed with respect to whether a *child would make their partner happier* (29 per cent of married compared with 41 per cent of single men) and whether a *child would be good for the couple relationship* (25 per cent of married compared with 37 per cent of single men). For other items that related to the effects of having a(nother) child on the couple relationship, concerns were reported in similar proportions by married, cohabiting and single respondents.

Men in all three relationship categories were similarly likely to attach importance to *having at least one daughter*. However, fewer married men (37 per cent) than cohabiting men (47 per cent) indicated that *giving an existing child a sibling* would be an important consideration for them. And married men (16 per cent) were less likely than

both cohabiting (26 per cent) and single (26 per cent) men to take *having at least one son* into consideration when thinking about having (more) children. Family composition items were of similar concern to women regardless of their relationship status.

Conclusions

These data show that men and women have similar views about which are the most important issues in the fertility decision making process. It is also noteworthy that respondents did not only attend to the perceived costs of having children, and that individualistic concerns were not prominent in the thinking of the majority of respondents. As Table 1 shows, the emotional benefits of having children were high on the list of issues feeding into the process of deciding about having children.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that most respondents emphasised the ability to support a child, in both parenting and financial terms. By contrast, only one-quarter of men and women emphasised concerns about having time for leisure and social activities, and the ability to make major purchases. Rather, their focus was on being able to create and provide an ongoing financial and parenting environment in which to raise children.

Overall, respondents without children (who are, of course, more likely to be younger and unmarried) were more prone than those with children to emphasise many of the issues examined. As noted above, it may be that those who become parents are less prone than others to emphasise these concerns at the outset. On the other hand, these findings may suggest that some of the importance attached to fertility-related issues is entwined with the knowledge that comes from having already started a family. Both these processes may well occur.

Furthermore, married men and women were less likely than unmarried respondents to emphasise the capacity to parent, relationship stability, employment security, and becoming established in a job or career. Married men were also less likely than other men to express concern about their capacity to support and house a family, the specific structure of that family, the impact of a first or additional child on the couple relationship, and the emotional rewards of having a child.

Being parents, and married, may mean that these respondents have gone some way towards creating the kind of "human capital" that will support a family in the future – perhaps suggesting that the "unknowns" become less formidable when they become "knowns". Another possible explanation is that those who marry or who become parents tend to place less emphasis on these various issues at the outset. It should be pointed out that the patterns noted above typically were more apparent for men; for several issues, the proportions of women indicating that an item was important were similar regardless of their parental or relationship status.

While parental status and relationship status are closely inter-related, it is beyond the scope of this article to identify the relative importance of each of these characteristics in explaining the results.

The patterns of results suggest the importance of each partner's work and parenting roles as considerations when thinking about having a child. As noted above, the parenting capacity of each partner and the male partner's job security were clearly important to most respondents. In addition, women were more likely than men to express concern about the male partner's having the time and energy to put into his career and about the stress and worry associated with having a first or additional child. The latter concern in particular may be more commonly an issue for women than men because women are more likely to assume most of the responsibility for the everyday care of the children (see for example Baxter 2002; Bittman 2004; Morehead 2001).

It is apparent that the practical and emotional aspects of having, raising, and providing for children play a key role in men's and women's thinking about having or not having children, regardless of their parental or relationship status. More sophisticated analyses of these items will be conducted to further clarify the relative contribution of these key issues to respondents' intentions to have or not have children, and to their eventual fertility outcomes.

Endnote

1 This is now the Office for Women, Department of Family and Community Services.

References

- Baxter, J. (2002), "Patterns of change and stability in the gender division of household labour in Australia 1986-1997", *Journal of Sociology*, vol. no. 4, pp. 399-424.
- Bittman, M. (2004), "Parenting and employment: What time use surveys show", in N. Folbre & M. Bittman (eds), *Family Time: The Social Organization of Care*, Routledge, London.
- Hoffman, L. M. & Manis, J. D. (1979), "The value of children in the United States: A new approach to the study of fertility", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 583-596.
- Lillard, L. & Waite, L. (1993), "A joint model of marital childbearing and marital disruption", *Demography*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 653-682.
- Morehead, A. (2001), "Synchronising time for work and family: Preliminary insights from qualitative research with mothers", *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 355-369.
- Parker, R. (2002), *Why marriages last: A discussion of the literature*, Research Paper No. 28, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.
- Schoen, R., Kim, Y. J., Nathanson, C. A., Fields, J. & Astone, N. M. (1997), "Why do Americans want children?" *Population and Development Review*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 333-358.

Robyn Parker is a Senior Research Officer and **Michael Alexander** is a Principal Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

This article is adapted from Chapter 7 of a larger report by Ruth Weston, Lixia Qu, Robyn Parker and Michael Alexander, "It's not for lack of wanting kids": A report on the Fertility Decision Making Project, Prepared for the Office for Women, Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2004.