

New study published on fertility awareness among American university students

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A groundbreaking study lead by Chapman University professor Brennan Peterson, Ph.D. on fertility awareness of American college students will be published in the May 5th edition of *Human Reproduction*—a top-tier international journal in reproductive biology. It is the first such study on fertility awareness among American undergraduate university students. In the USA, the postponement of childbearing is reflective of contemporary social norms of delaying marriage, pursuing education and securing economic stability prior to having a baby. However the awareness of the impact of age on fertility among American college students is low.

Dr. Peterson, an expert in infertility, and the lead author on the study, notes, "The findings from this study show that while undergraduate university students in our sample believed they are educated about fertility issues, they consistently overestimate the ages at which fertility declines in women, as well as their chances of success if they used fertility treatments to achieve pregnancy. It is important that men and women are educated regarding fertility issues so they make informed reproductive decisions, rather than relying on inaccurate information which may ultimately result in involuntary childlessness."

Infertility – or the inability to conceive or give birth to a child after one year of regular sexual relations without the use of contraceptives – impacts between 80 million to 160 million people in the world today. In the United States, 4.3 million married couples (15%) have been diagnosed with infertility.

For women, fertility rapidly declines between ages 35 and 37. Couples who unknowingly delay pregnancy past a woman's window of fertility may be faced with involuntary childlessness and unexpected cope with the stresses of infertility. When a couple is diagnosed with infertility they are likely to experience unexpected stress, increased depression and changes to their social family networks. These stresses, coupled with the burdens of fertility treatments, can be an enormous challenge for couples which often takes years to resolve.

Infertility has many causes which are often not preventable (e.g., irregular ovulation, low sperm count). However, avoiding the decline in fertility associated with age is well within a person's control. Despite this, many young men and women are unaware of the exact nature of the relationship between fertility and age and new research conducted at Chapman University suggests American [college students](#) lack fundamental awareness of reproductive issues as well as the impact of age on fertility—overestimating their chances to get pregnant at ages when pregnancy is unlikely. For example, young people see celebrities having children into their 40's and conclude that they can wait and "simply" get fertility treatment to get pregnant later in life.

More information: The research, called Fertility awareness and parenting attitudes among American male and female undergraduate university students (HUMREP – 11 – 1203.R1) is published in *Human Reproduction*, [doi:10.1093/humrep/des011](https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/des011)

Provided by Chapman University

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