

Grandparents' support linked to number of offspring, child well-being

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Grandparents can significantly influence parents' decisions to have additional children and the well-being of grandchildren, according to a recent study completed at the University of Eastern Finland.

In his PhD study, Dr Antti O. Tanskanen observed that grandparents' help with childcare and [emotional support](#) are linked to mothers' willingness to have a second or a third child. Furthermore, parents of [small children](#) who obtain support from paternal grandparents are also more likely to have additional children. The involvement of maternal grandparents in the lives of their grandchildren was associated to fewer emotional and [behavioural problems](#).

The study also discovered that children who have their grandmother as their primary minder between the age of nine months and three years are more likely to be overweight at the age of three than children whose primary minder is their own parent. This indicates that grandparents' tendencies to invest in their [grandchildren](#) can also result in unintentional, negative consequences.

The results of the study are based on extensive surveys carried out in eight European countries: France, Norway, Bulgaria, Lithuania, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The study shows that in Europe, grandparents continue to be an integral part of the family, as they have been also before in history. In political decision-making, however, the significance of grandparents goes

unrecognised. According to Dr Tanskanen, the results give reason to think about the benefits of including [grandparents](#) in the realm of family policy.

More information: Tanskanen, A.O. & Rotkirch, A. (2014). "The impact of grandparental investment on mothers' fertility intentions in four European countries." *Demographic Research*, 30, 1–26.

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