

What is the ideal age to have a child?

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Despite increases in age at first birth over the past several decades in the United States, there is little research into how individuals conceptualize the ideal age to have a child.

To explore what age individuals consider "ideal" for having a first [child](#) and how individuals speak about an age being ideal, CUNY SPH alumna Andrea Melnikas and Associate Professor Diana Romero led a study of male and female young adults in greater New York. The findings were published in the *Journal of Family Issues*.

The study found that many participants identified factors, such as steady employment and acceptable housing, that needed to be "in place" before having a child. Many [female participants](#) mentioned the need to have a child before a certain age to mitigate decreased fertility at older ages. Some respondents also noted a number of things they wanted to accomplish personally before "settling down" to have a child, such as traveling or finishing a degree.

"We were interested to find that among participants in our study, marriage is still considered an important factor to achieve prior to having children," Melnikas says.

The authors also found that the most common age range reported as ideal for having a first child, the early 30s, is higher than the mean age at first birth in both New York and New Jersey.

This work is part of the larger Social Position and Family Formation

project, a unique data set examining [family](#) formation decision-making that is both a large qualitative sample and includes male participants, a group often left out of research on fertility intentions.

More information: Andrea J. Melnikas et al. Ideal Age at First Birth and Associated Factors Among Young Adults in Greater New York City: Findings From the Social Position and Family Formation Study, *Journal of Family Issues* (2019). [DOI: 10.1177/0192513X19875762](https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X19875762)

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