

Disorders, diseases associated with childlessness identified

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Mental-behavioral disorders, congenital anomalies, and endocrine-nutritional-metabolic disorders are most strongly associated with childlessness, according to a study published online Dec. 18 in *Nature*

Human Behaviour.

Aoxing Liu, Ph.D., from the University of Helsinki, and colleagues examined 1,035,928 men born in 1956 to 1968 and women born in 1956 to 1973 in Finland and 1,509,092 born in Sweden to the completion of their reproductive lifespan in 2018. Using a [population](#) and matched-pair case-control design of siblings discordant for childlessness (71,524 full sisters and 77,622 full brothers), sociodemographic and reproductive information was associated with 414 diseases across 16 categories.

The researchers found the associations were strongest for mental-behavioral disorders (especially among men), congenital anomalies, and endocrine-nutritional-metabolic disorders (strongest among women). New associations were identified for inflammatory and [autoimmune diseases](#). The associations were dependent on age at onset; singlehood and education were mediators of the associations.

"We have comprehensively described the associations between different diseases, particularly those with onset prior to the peak reproductive age, and the chance of being childless over a lifetime," the authors write. "This evidence can be used as a basis for future studies focusing on prioritizing [health interventions](#) to counter involuntary childlessness."

More information: Aoxing Liu et al, Evidence from Finland and Sweden on the relationship between early-life diseases and lifetime childlessness in men and women, *Nature Human Behaviour* (2023). [DOI: 10.1038/s41562-023-01763-x](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01763-x)

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