

CHILDLESS BY CHOICE

*Society's View
of Women
without
Children*



SELF-INDUGENT

"Every time I hear about people's problems with their children, I think, I dodged a bullet. I worry occasionally about finding myself alone in a big indifferent world, but I also know that children can be the ones who put you in a facility against your will, steal from you, or otherwise break your heart. No regrets so far. Interestingly, though, I often daydream about step or foster children. I guess I feel as if I have a lot of hard-won wisdom to share, if anyone wanted to hear it"
-Christie L. (Rigg)

Society, as a whole, likes to shame women into believing that having a child is not only their right, but their duty. Many women often have to hear things like, you'll regret not having kids one day, or, "who will take care of you when you're old"?



LACKING

"I have read people who say you can never understand real deep love unless you have a kid, and while I don't doubt that they have a fierce love for their own children, I do find that type of statement offensive. I have experienced incredible love and passion—as well as done a lot of things I never would have had the opportunity to do, such as travel and maintain a degree of spontaneity in my life—if I had chosen to have kids." —Trix M. (Rigg)



NO PURPOSE



CAREER OBSESSED

Despite what society as a whole may believe, many women come to the decision of not having a child thoughtfully and with purpose. There are many reasons why women may choose not to have children and they do not include reasons of selfishness and a lack of purpose in their lives. Many women chose to live life beyond the burden of what is expected of them by society.

It's time to break the stigma surrounding women who don't want children—they're not selfish, but they do value their independence, and that's not a bad thing.



SHALLOW

Is it selfish not to have children? Or is it actually more selfish to have a child, knowing that you don't actually want one? For most women who choose this life, it's not that they couldn't or wouldn't love a child if they had one, they just don't want to.

While some people look at me pityingly, I am thrilled with my life and my decision not to have children. I have choices so many of my friends and acquaintances don't, because I don't have the financial and time obligations that result from having children. People say I'm selfish, but how is it selfish to not bring children into a world which already has plenty?" - Johanna R. (Rigg)



SELFISH



Women who don't have children often live happier and more fulfilled lives than those who do (Shpancer).

It is more common for women with higher levels of education to choose to remain childless.



LONELY

On average, about 15% of women choose never to have children.

Annotated Bibliography

DePaulo, Bella. "The Truth About Women Who Never Have Kids." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, 3 Aug. 2019, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/living-single/201908/the-truth-about-women-who-never-have-kids.

This article summarizes a study published in 2019 by the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill that was conducted over the course of 33 years and compared data from 4,500 women born between 1957 and 1965. The study asked women 19 times, throughout the years they were most likely to have children, whether or not they expected to actually have any children. The study found that the older a woman got and claimed to not expect children, the more likely she was to be correct about her expectation. 14% of study participants never had any children. The study examines the reasons for the women not having children and the reasons for having them. Only 2% of the women stated consistently over the years that they did not expect to have children, and never did.

Gillespie, Rosemary. "Voluntary childlessness in the United Kingdom, Reproductive Health Matters", 1999, 7:13, 43-53, DOI: [10.1016/S0968-8080\(99\)90111-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0968-8080(99)90111-8)

This UK study examines the different paths that women take in their decision to not have children, namely, women who have always known and women who postponed until it was too late.

Hoem, Jan M., et al. "Education and Childlessness." *Demographic Research*, vol. 14, 2006, pp. 331–380., doi:10.4054/demres.2006.14.15.

This Swedish study found a correlation between voluntary childlessness and level of education. According to their findings, the higher the woman's level of education, the greater the chance she would choose to remain childless.

Khazan, Olga. "How People Decide Whether to Have Children." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 9 May 2018, www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/05/how-people-decide-whether-to-have-children/527520/.

This article is meant to be a guide for people on the fence of whether or not they want to have children. It looks at the steady incline of childlessness between the 1970's and now and states that these days, about 15% of women choose not to have children- and most of them have known they don't want them from the time they were teenagers.

Rigg, Susannah. "10 Women Look Back On Living Childfree By Choice." *SELF*, www.self.com/story/childfree-by-choice-women.

This article explores the answers of ten different women who all decided not to have children. Basically, it asks them if it's a decision that they regret. All of the women are well-past child bearing years and have had time to reflect on their life choices.

Overwhelmingly, the women were not upset about their decision to not have children.

Shepard, Tory. "Childfree by Choice: Stop Telling Me I'll Change My Mind Later." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 1 June 2019, www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jun/02/childfree-by-choice-stop-telling-me-ill-change-my-mind-later.

This article's author reminisces about the times of unsolicited strangers telling her that she'd change her mind about not wanting children. She muses over the awkward glances and comments and the need for most people to come to a conclusion for why she must not want children. This article also references a study published in 2011 by Kansas State University that examines "baby fever" in both men and women and what drives it.

Sholl, Jesse. "Childless by Choice." *Experience Life*, 11 Sept. 2020, experiencelife.com/article/childless-by-choice/.

This article reviews a book written by sociologist, Amy Blackstone, PhD to dispel rumors around people who choose a life without children and looks at the many reasons that people choose not to have kids.

Shpancer, Noam. "Why So Many Are Satisfied Being Childless by Choice." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, 29 Dec. 2019, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/insight-therapy/201912/why-so-many-are-satisfied-being-childless-choice.

This article makes the bold claim that women who don't have children are often happier than women who do. The author examines society's views of children being necessary to live a meaningful life. The article states that research shows that children often lead to a more stressful marriage. The author also points out that while women who decide not to have children are often viewed as selfish, it may actually be more selfish to have children when you look at it in the sense of our carbon footprint on the earth.

Yasa, Dilvin. "The Women Who Regret Becoming Mothers." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 June 2017, www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-

relationships/meet-three-women-who-have-had-second-thoughts-about-becoming-mothers-20170615-gwrj4c.html.

In this article, out of Australia, examines a book by sociologist Orna Donath, who studied women who actually regretted having children. The main reasons for this regret were the feeling that they weren't suited for the job, and the never-ending responsibility that lasted even into becoming grandmothers.

Zacharek, Stephanie. "Why I Have Zero Regrets About My Childless Life." *Time*, Time, 3 Jan. 2019, time.com/5492622/stephanie-zacharek-childless-life/.

The author of this article discusses the fact that women change so much throughout life and the woman you are in your twenties may look very different from the woman you are in your forties. Her goal is to break the stigma for women who don't want to have children.