

Too old to be sure: Swinging fertility timing intentions of childless men and women over the life course

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In the context of delayed parenthood, most studies have focused on the gap between planned and actual births, overlooking adjustments in the intended timing of first birth. Given the close link between the timing of first birth and the realization of intended reproductive plans, it is important to study how individuals adapt their intended age of first childbirth over life course. Using Data from a German Family Panel (pairfam), this study conducts a descriptive analysis to explore how childless individuals' intended age for their first child evolves over time, particularly in relation to their age and partnership status. The findings reveal a significant pattern of fluctuating fertility intentions, particularly among older childless individuals. A key phenomenon identified is termed "Swinging Intenders", where individuals' plans for parenthood swing back and forth in response to changes in partnership status and advancing age. This study highlights that while people frequently postpone childbearing, they also experience notable shifts in their fertility timing intentions, especially as they age. The interplay between partnership dynamics and fertility intentions highlights the complexity of reproductive decision-making in later life.