

## High-fliers can afford more babies, study says

A study found highly educated women were more likely to be able to afford help that allowed them to raise larger-than-average families



Women at the top of the ladder are now earning so much money that they can afford enough help to have more children, even if they continue their careers Photo: Alamy

By Telegraph reporter

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Highly educated women are having more children than those who left education earlier because they can afford child care and household help, a new study suggests.

In previous generations women with university degrees tended to have fewer children because they pursued careers and put off starting a family for longer.

But a new study suggests that women at the top of the ladder are now earning so much money that they can afford enough help to have more children, even if they continue their careers.

Economists Moshe Hazan and Hosny Zoabi, of Tel Aviv University, Israel, found that while fertility rates among American women with some form of college education have largely stagnated over the last 30 years, among women with advanced degrees they have risen by more than 50 per cent .

American women without any form of high-school diploma have a fertility rate of 2.24 children. Among women with a high-school diploma the fertility rate falls to 2.09 and for women with some form of college education it drops to 1.78.

However, among women with college degrees, the economists found the fertility rate rises to 1.88 and among women with advanced degrees to 1.96. In 1980 women who had studied for 16 years or more had a fertility rate of just 1.2.

Hazan said highly educated women were more likely to be able to afford help that allowed them to raise larger-than-average families.

"You have a nanny, people to pick up your laundry and suits, buy you food from the local store for you to cook for dinner, and you can leave all the mess to the housekeeper in the morning," he said.

Although the research was carried out in the US, the team said it was likely to apply to the UK where income inequality between the richest and poorest is growing.

Siobhan Freegard, co-founder of Netmums, the UK online forum, said many women hope to have a third child but cannot afford it.

"It's the women who have good careers, who can afford a cleaner and a nanny who take the stress out of their lives, who can have three children," she said.

Ms Freegard said that the cost of childcare was so high in Britain that large families were unachievable.

The researchers also speculate that highly educated women are increasingly benefiting from advances in fertility treatment that enable them to spend more years at university without reducing their chances of future parenthood.

And there is already evidence that employers are becoming aware that paying for such technology could help them attract employees.

Apple and Facebook are offering to freeze eggs for female employees in an effort to attract more women on to their staff.

The research was published in the Economic Journal.

How we moderate

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