

Genetics, social trends lead moms to delay having children

Women are starting families later in life despite an apparently stronger genetic drive to have children when they are younger, according to Oxford researchers.

The team arrived at the conclusion after studying the DNA of nearly 7000 women and working out how large a role genetics plays in the age at which women start a family and the number of children they have.

The scientists looked for similarities in the genetic make-up of women who became mothers at different ages. They found that DNA explained about 15% of the variation in the ages of first-time mothers, and about 10% of the difference in how many children they had.

Melinda Mills at Oxford University said that until now sociologists had focused on non-biological explanations for women delaying motherhood, such as the rise of contraception, continuing education, and playing a greater role in the labour market.

“What we see in this study is a clear genetic component linked to the age of mothers when they have their first child, and to the number of children they have,” she said.

The study did not identify specific genes that are associated with having children earlier or later in life, but Mills said that a follow-up study that should be published soon will highlight a number that are involved. “It’s not one gene, but a combination of genetic variants that makes you more prone to having your children later or earlier,” she said.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Genetics plays role in deciding at what age women have first child, says study](#)