



**CENTER FOR THE ECONOMICS  
OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**  
The University of Chicago



# Invitation to an in-person conference on **The Factors That Reduce Fertility & The Policies that Enhance it** December 19-20, 2024 Budapest

## About the Initiative

Led by Professor James J. Heckman, the Family, Fertility and Human Development Initiative is a joint research project between the Center for the Economics of Human Development at the University of Chicago and the Family, Household, and Economy Research Center at Corvinus University.

Fertility decline is a global phenomenon, affecting nearly every country. While widely discussed in media and academic circles, analytically rigorous discussions often remain siloed within specific disciplines, applying field-specific approaches. There is, so far, no comprehensive synthesis and sifting of competing explanations.

We will carefully examine the data on marriage and cohabitation trends, and the sources of the trends, such as reduced marriage rates, reduced marital fertility, delay due to educational, and other career choices, and trends regarding environmental issues.

We will explore the lifecycle determinants of fertility, including:

- Educational attainment and sorting;
- Opportunity costs of childbearing and rearing, such as foregone earnings and childcare costs and housing markets;
- Macroeconomic considerations; and
- Tax and transfer policy.

Because standard economic explanations often fall short in predicting trends and differences, we will thoroughly document their predictive power. Additionally, we will consider how evolving

preferences for family and childbearing are influenced by changing perceptions of gender roles and alternative lifestyles. The impact of traditional values, future-orientedness, altruism, and religion will also be considered.

This is an evolving list. Discussions will be inclusive of multiple analytical perspectives as manifest through our initial workshops. The goal is to have a rigorous list of explanations and evaluations of policies and not a forced consensus as typical of many committee reports.

Our goal is a catalogue of different perspectives and an analytical synthesis. We seek a data-based genuine dialogue and not a forced consensus. Transcripts of discussions and positions will be a vital part of our project.

## About this Conference

Our kick-off conference aims to convene leading scholars and analysts from around the world to discuss the causes and consequences of fertility decline using data analyses to identify differences in fertility by socioeconomic status, religion, and culture. As a collaborative effort, we hope to assess the causes of these trends, evaluate the literature's explanations, and assess the effectiveness of pro-fertility policies and other cultural factors.

The conference will include workshop sessions to prepare interdisciplinary research questions for further investigation in the new year, with the ultimate goal of a special journal issue publication.

*learn more at [cehd.uchicago.edu/fertility](https://cehd.uchicago.edu/fertility)*