

Baby talk

Four couples across Canada navigate the complicated question: Should we have a child?

ANN HUI > GENERATIONS REPORTER
THE GLOBE AND MAIL
PUBLISHED 4 HOURS AGO
UPDATED 53 MINUTES AGO



How do couples decide whether or not to have children?

For decades now, economists and policy makers have debated Canada’s declining fertility rates. In 2024, that figure plunged to 1.25 births per average woman, placing Canada among the ranks of “ultra-low fertility” countries.

Over the past year, The Globe and Mail has been looking at the myriad factors that go into young people’s decisions to have fewer kids, or no kids at all. When asked individually, younger women and men cite a range of considerations – everything from housing affordability to career concerns, and fears around the state of the world.

In Canada’s major cities, fertility rates are in steep decline. What happened?

But for most families, it takes two to come to that decision – at least here in Canada, where about three-quarters of children are raised in two-parent families.

So what happens when the question moves from individual to couple? How do couples make the decision, together, on what shape their families will take? And what happens when their views don’t align? Or, as is often the case, when things don’t go as planned?

It’s a discussion that, for many couples, is a complicated one. A discussion that’s deeply personal, and tightly woven with so many other values – from how we feel about our work, our own identities, to our attitudes about the world around us.

“When those values are activated, couples get emotional,” said Patrick Hay, a Vancouver-based registered counsellor who works with families. “Emotional isn’t a bad thing. It just means that it’s personal and very, very important.”

The Globe spoke with four couples across Canada who let us in into the complicated, ever-shifting, and, yes, emotional conversation they're having around kids.

David Friedland and Alon Coret

Age: 34 and 33 | **Hometown:** Ottawa

"Life serves up whatever life serves up"



ALEXA MAZZARELLO/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

For David and Alon, it was never a question of whether to have kids, but rather, when.

The couple, who were married in 2023, are planners. They wanted to be established in their careers – in the case of Alon, who's a pediatrician, to be finished with residency and all of his other medical training.

But since early last year, the couple has been settled in their own home in Ottawa, with a dog and a cat. Now they're looking at growing their family. For the past year-and-a-half, they've been working with Anova, a fertility clinic, and successfully produced 10 embryos. They're now in the process of trying to find a surrogate.

David: I grew up in a big family in Edmonton. I just loved having, like, that full house, the chaos of 10, 15 people in the kitchen, where everybody's passing each other dishes to take out or bring back, or locate chairs, and someone's spilled something on the carpet.

Alon: And I grew up in a smaller family, with one sibling. So it was always very important for me to grow our family. A bigger family, a big, busy, happy, loud, chaotic family was sort of always my dream.

I think it's just having a sense of having people in your corner in this world. Just having a bit of a crew to lean into.

David: I wanted two kids. Somebody else in this room *[points to Alon]* wanted three kids. We've compromised on ideally having four kids *[laughs]*. But we will see how child one goes.

Alon: As much as we talk about these numbers – we can make whatever draft plan we want. And then life serves up whatever life serves up. I think our real answer is that we would love to have as big of a family as we're able to, which in our situation is really not in our control in many ways.



Friedland and Coret often go from feeling immense gratitude to have the choice to be able to build a family here, to feeling emotionally drained at the ups and downs along the way.

ALEXA MAZZARELLO/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

David: Alon was much more active in terms of doing the initial research and understanding the timing. I thought we were going to have a little bit more time. So it was an educational process for me to understand that just because you're going to start the process doesn't mean it's going to happen tomorrow.

Alon: We explored different ways, and ultimately wanted to go through a gestational surrogacy journey. From some very preliminary research, I understood that that can really take anywhere from three, four, five years – sometimes more.

David: It's really hard to learn about same-sex couples going through surrogacy in Canada. And really hard to find resources in a way that is digestible.

Alon: We sort of flip flop between different feelings. On one hand, there's immense gratitude because we live in a country that allows people like us to get married and to build a family, which is very special to Canada and definitely not the case in most of the rest of the world. And to have family and friends who are celebrating us in this journey.

At the same time, it's a really complicated, emotionally draining and expensive journey. [They've had to pay out of pocket for most of the costs, which typically run well into six figures.] We just have to call it what it is. I think oscillating between those two emotional extremes is what the last year and a half has been.

David: We've very much been on the same page. This is the life that we're building together. This is the family we're building together. And this is going to continue being our priority until we're there.