

Mental Health Consequences of Not Meeting Fertility Intentions: Life Course Dynamics

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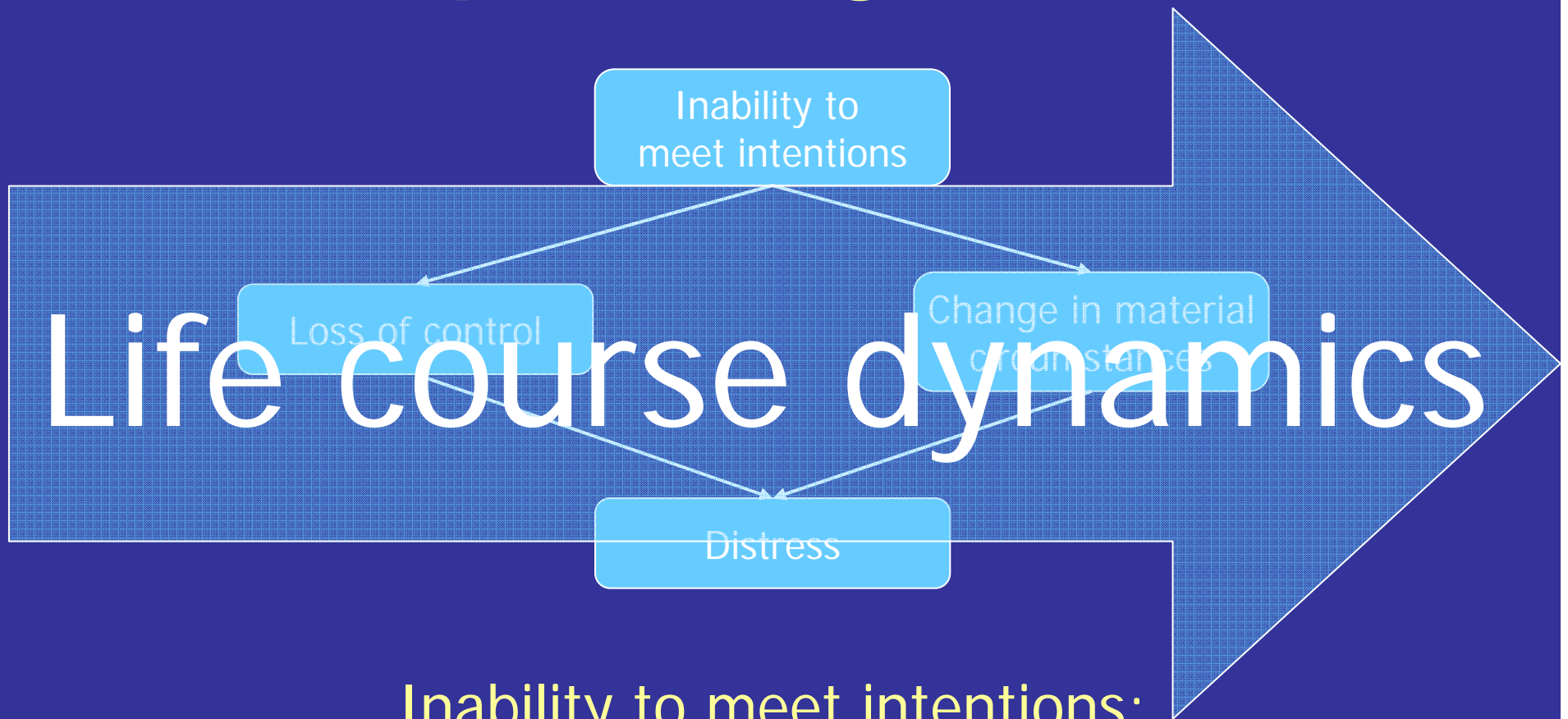
Context

- Majority of individuals do not realize their intentions
 - 34% met their intentions
 - 25% had more children than they intended
 - 41% had fewer children than they intended
 - Mean individual gross error
 - 1 child per person

Source: Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan 2003. Table 1

What are the mental health consequences of individuals not meeting their intentions?

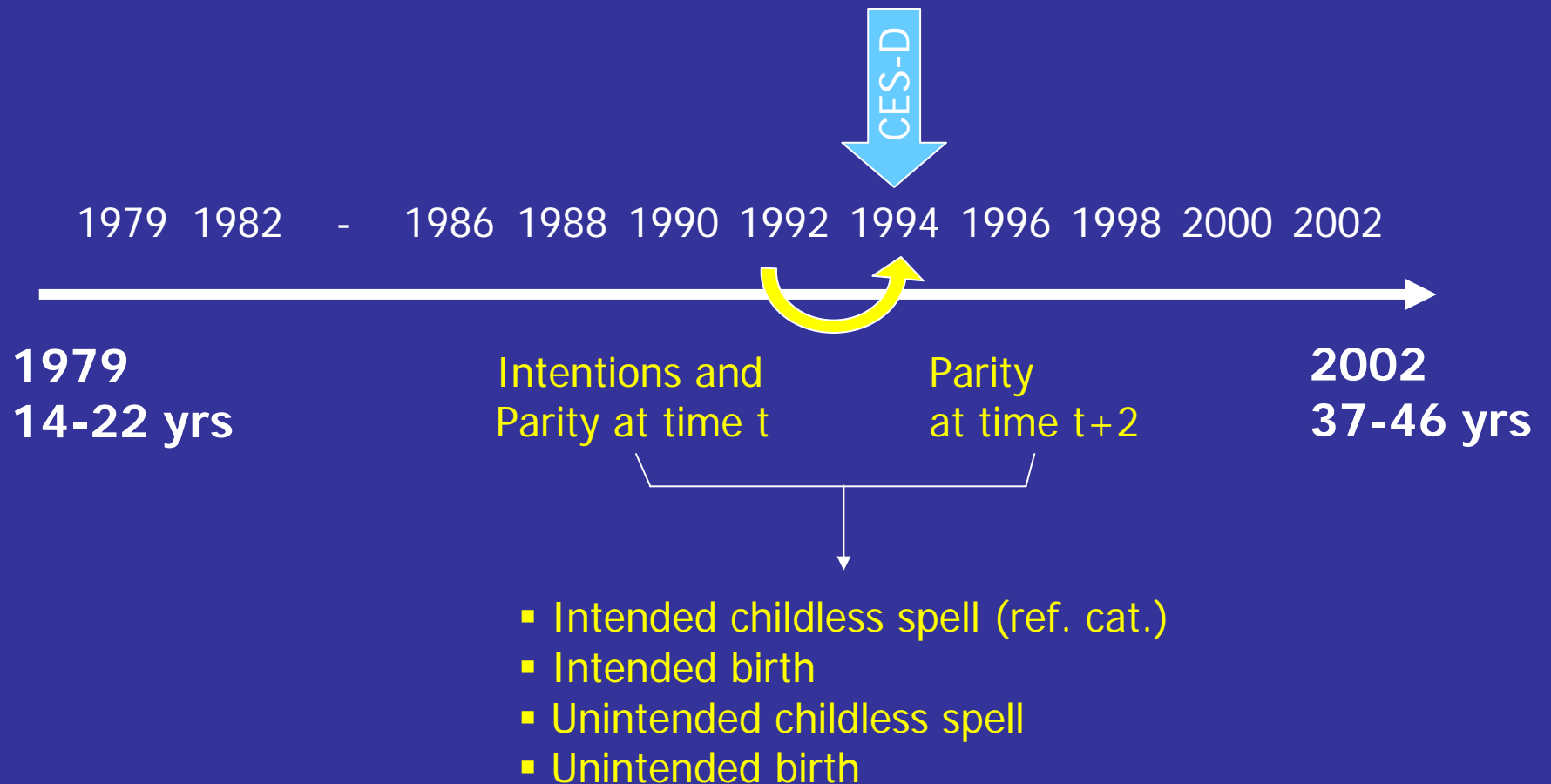
Conceptualizing Distress



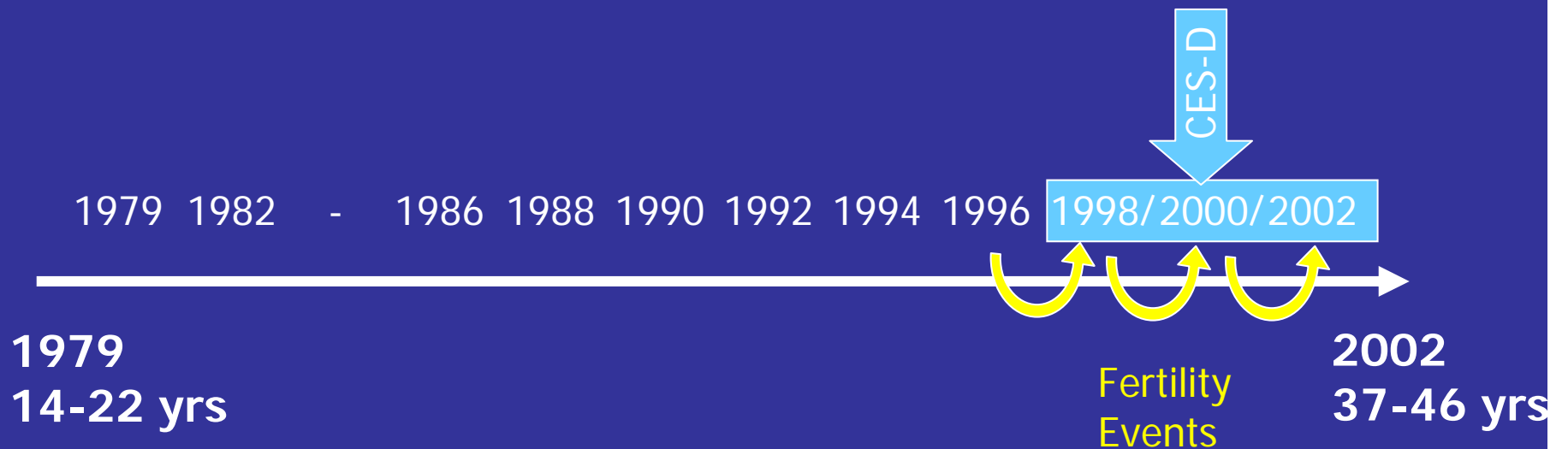
Inability to meet intentions:
undesirable life event + chronic stressor

**What are the
life course dynamics of
fertility events and
psychological distress?**

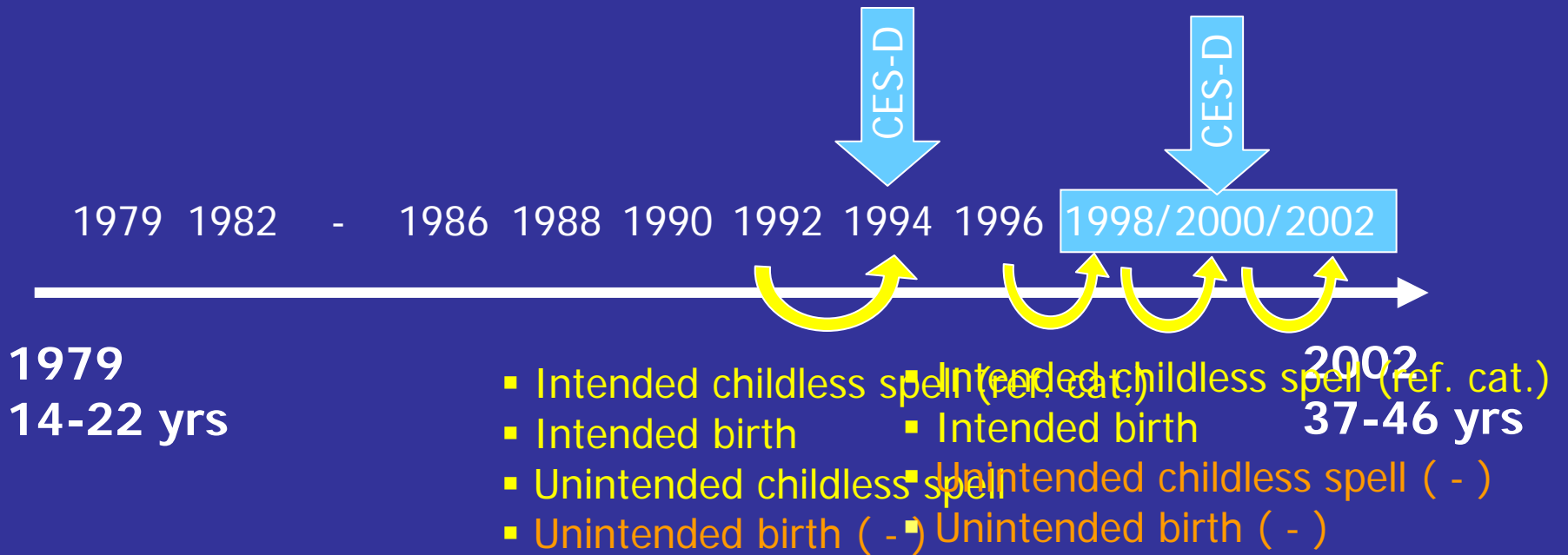
Short-term effects: Early 30s



Short-term effects: late 30s/early 40s



Hypotheses



Analyses

- OLS regression on depression scale (CES-D) of four fertility events, with intended childless spell as reference category
- Weighted analyses with robust standard errors adjusting for intra-household correlation
- Controls:
 - Baseline depression (CES-D)
 - Gender, race, education, changes in marital status, changes in household income (log of \$10,000, yr 2000 PPP)
 - Number of intended and unintended childless spells at baseline

Short-term effects

	Early 30s	Late 30s
Intended Birth	0.258 (0.291)	0.784 (0.975)
Unintended Childless Spell	0.239 (0.237)	-0.219 (0.355)
Unintended Birth	2.378 * (1.019)	1.321 (1.306)
...
...
Constant	2.911 ** (0.809)	3.449 * (1.486)
Observations	1866	626
R-squared	0.209	0.210

Robust standard errors in parentheses
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Likelihood of depression

- In the early 30s, unintended births significantly increase depression.
- In the late 30s, unintended births no longer significantly increase depression.
- Intended births and unintended childlessness do not increase depression, regardless of the life course period.

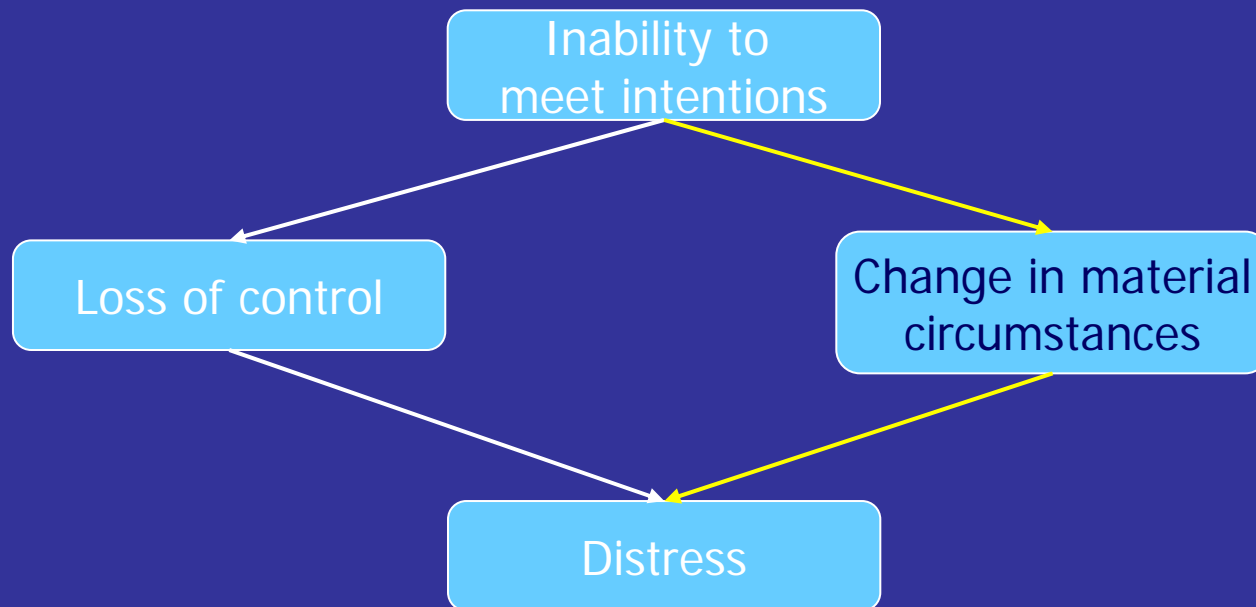
Short-term effects: By gender

	Early 30s		Late 30s	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Intended Birth	0.227 (.486)	0.007 (.334)	0.684 (1.268)	0.519 (1.013)
Unintended Childless Spell	0.444 (.388)	-0.005 (.313)	-0.056 (.675)	-0.107 (.423)
Unintended Birth	-0.107 (.714)	2.512* (1.059)	-- --	1.588 (1.249)

Tests of structural change

Intended Birth	chi2(1) = 0.15 Prob > chi2 = 0.7094	chi2(1) = 0.02 Prob > chi2 = 0.9198
Unintended Childless Spell	chi2(1) = 0.82 Prob > chi2 = 0.3685	chi2(1) = 0.01 Prob > chi2 = 0.9478
Unintended Birth	chi2(1) = 4.23 Prob > chi2 = 0.0401	
Complete model	chi2(19) = 51.12 Prob > chi2 = 0.0002	chi2(18) = 15.28 Prob > chi2 = 0.6434

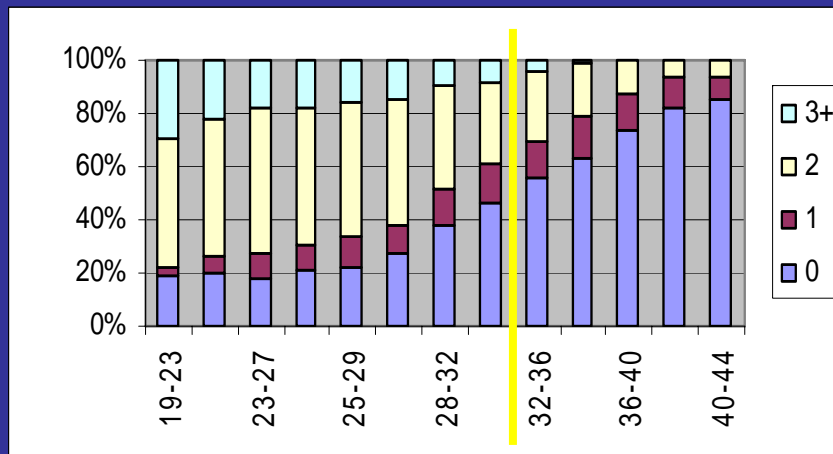
Conceptualizing Distress



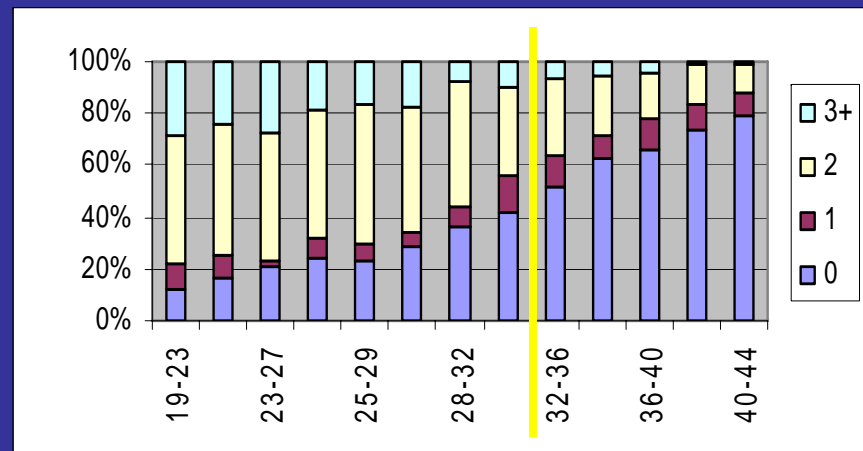
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Evolution of Intentions for Childless Individuals

Women



Men



Next steps...

- Long term consequences

Long-term effects



Next steps...

- Long term consequences
- Chronic Stress Framework