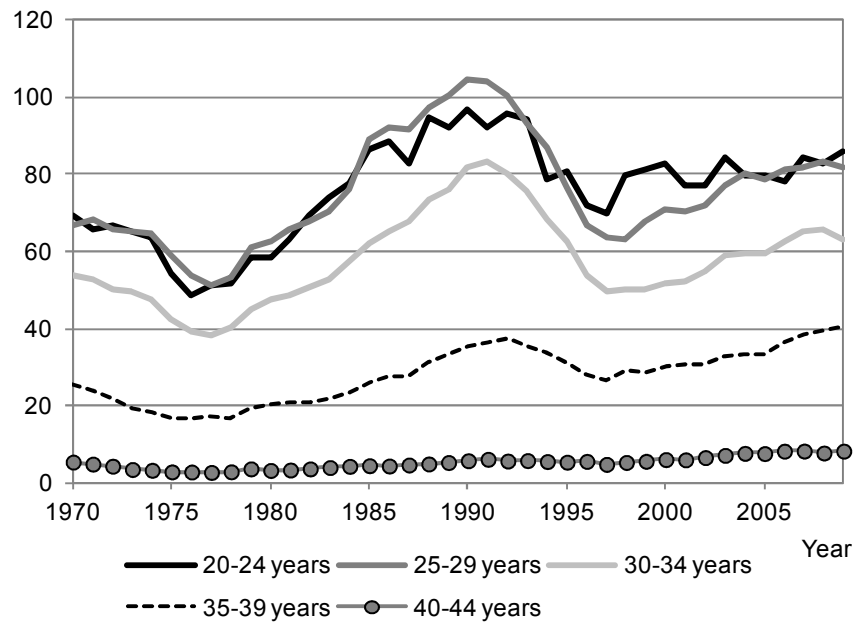


### A third child – a new trend?

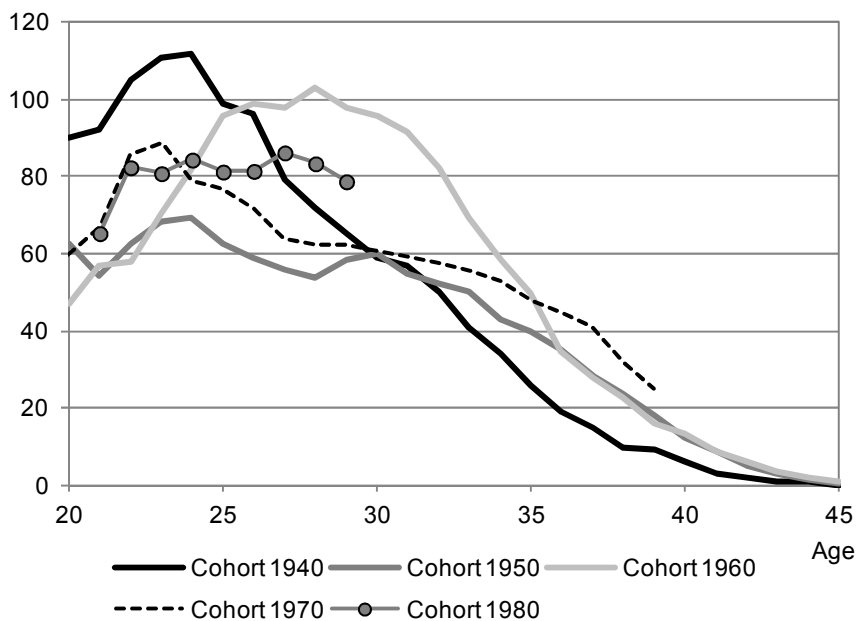
#### Extended abstract

The study focuses on third-birth fertility. The reason for this is the recent increase of third-birth fertility. The level is not as high as during the baby boom years around 1990, but has increase since the late 1990s. For example, women born in 1980 are now more likely to have a third child than women born ten years earlier.

**Number of third-born children per 1 000 women with two children by age of mother 1970–2009**

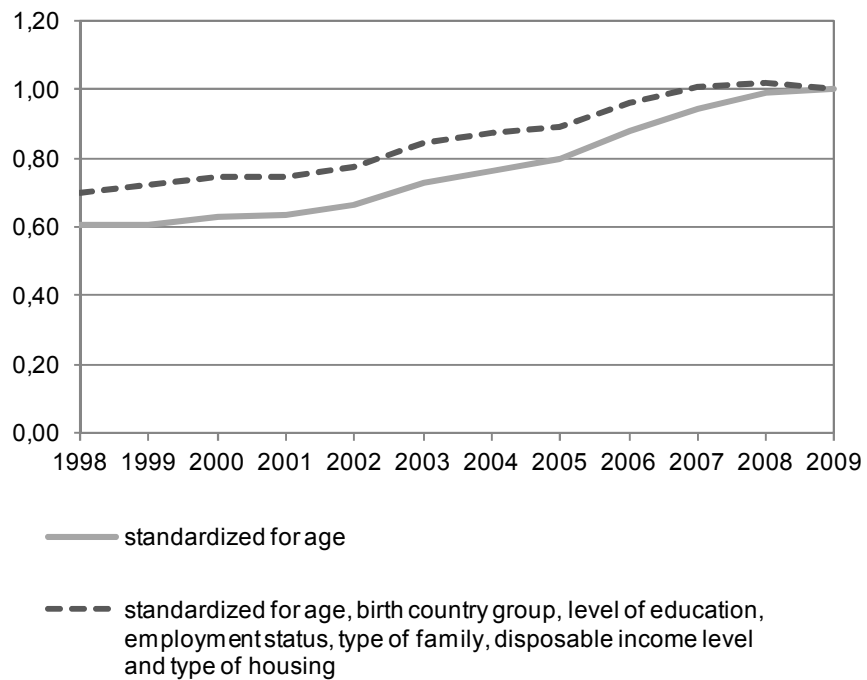


**Number of third-born children per 1 000 women with two children by age of mother. Women born 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970 and 1980.**

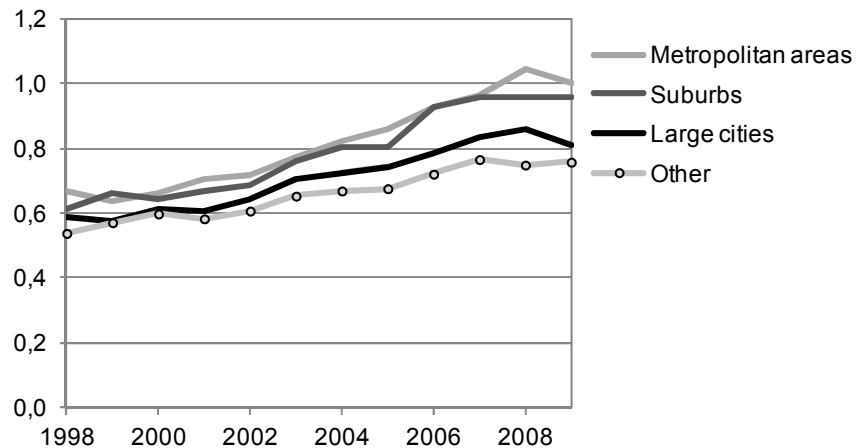


How much of the increase is explained by changes in socio-economic and demographic factors? In a cox proportional hazard regression the relative risk for having a third child for two-child mothers is explored. When controlling for socio-economic and demographic changes since the late 1990s, it turns out that the upward trend only partly has socio-economic and demographic explanations. A reasonable explanation is that having a third child is a *new trend* and it seems that this new trend is stronger in metropolitan areas and in the suburbs. Today the probability to have a third child is greater in metropolitan areas but a change seems to have occurred sometime during the mid-1990s. Before that time, third-birth fertility was much higher in other types of municipalities, but now the highest third-birth fertility is found in metropolitan areas.

**Relative risks for women with two children to have a third child 1998-2008 relative to 2009**



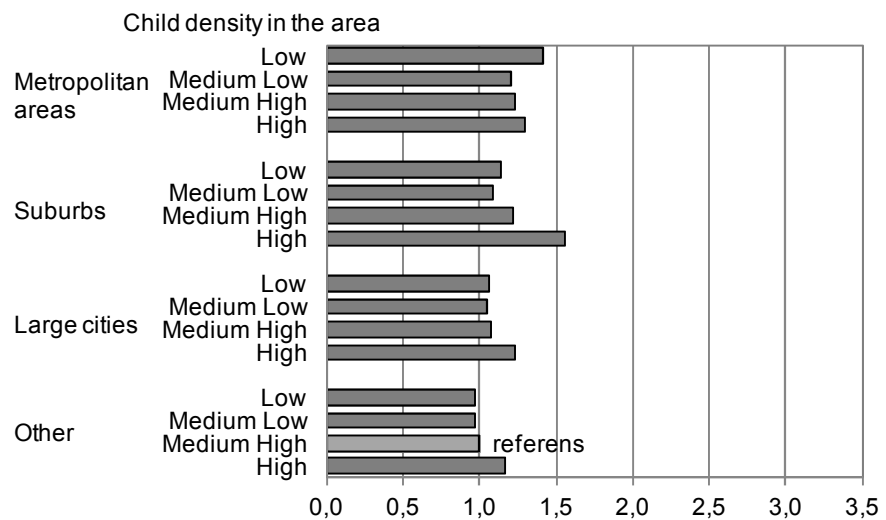
**Relative risks for women with two children to have a third child by type of municipality 1998-2008 relative to metropolitan areas 2009.**



Standardized for age, birth country group, level of education, employment status, type of family and disposable income level.

Thus it seems likely that additional explanations to the third-birth fertility increase exist, beyond structural changes. Such an explanation could be the presence of social interaction effects. In this study, neighbourhood effects are in focus. Is it more common for mothers of two children to have a third child if they live in a neighbourhood where others have had many children? In this register study we have information on child-densities in 7 200 neighborhoods 1997–2008. The neighbourhoods have been divided into groups depending on type of municipality and child density (average number of children per family with children) in the neighbourhood. It turns out that the propensity to have a third child is greater among those who the previous year lived in an area with high child density. This applies especially to two-child mothers who lived in detached houses in metropolitan areas and in the suburbs. The results apply even after controlling for differences regarding age, birth country group, educational level, employment status, disposable income level, type of family and dwelling size. The results apply also after controlling for selective moves. In other words, it is not only couples that have recently moved in and who have planned to have a third child who raise third-birth fertility in child-dense areas.

**Relative risks for women with two children to have a third child by type of neighbourhood 1998-2009**



Standardized for age, birth country group, year, level of education, employment status, type of family and disposable income level.

**Relative risks for women with two children to have a third child by type of neighbourhood 1998–2009**

Type of municipality	Barntäthet	Detached Houses	Rental	Tenant ownership
Metropolitan	Low	..	1,16***	1,46***
	Medium Low	1,31***	1,04*	1,16***
	Medium High	1,47***	0,99	0,93
	High	1,50***	1,11***	1,01
Suburbs	Low	..	0,87	1,18*
	Medium Low	1,20***	0,94**	0,98
	Medium High	1,34***	0,97	1,02
	High	1,74***	1,22***	1,17*
Large cities	Low	1,29**	0,93*	0,93
	Medium Low	1,10***	0,95*	0,96
	Medium High	1,09***	1,02	0,96
	High	1,23***	1,14***	1,11*
Other	Low	0,91	0,86*	0,96
	Medium Low	1,00	0,91***	0,82***
	Medium High	1	1	1
	High	1,15***	1,17***	1,25***

Standardized for age, birth country group, year, level of education, employment status, type of family, disposable income level and dwelling size (only detached house)

\*\*\* $p < 0,0001$ ; \*\* $p < 0,01$ ; \* $p < 0,05$

.. Too few observations

A possible interpretation of the relationship of high child density and high third-birth fertility could be the presence of neighbourhood effects – that mothers are affected by their neighbours in the decision to have a third child. However, other explanations for the relationship are possible. One explanation could be selective moves that not are taken into account in this study. Couples who plan to have many children might already at an early stage have moved into a neighbourhood suitable for families with many children. It could also be true that the effect caught up in the model is due to other contextual effects – mothers could be influenced by other factors in the neighbourhood rather than being affected by the childbearing of their neighbours.

To confirm the presence of neighbourhood effects when it comes to childbearing more studies are needed.