

### Having children or not? Women's and men's attitudes towards having children, the case of Sweden

The fertility in Sweden fluctuates significantly over time and has increased during the last decade. In 2008 the total fertility rate was 1.9 children per woman, an increase from 1.5 in 1999. The long observed increase in age at first birth seems to have leveled off during the last few years and the percent women remaining childless may decrease somewhat for the cohorts born in the 1970s compared to those born in the 1960s. To get better knowledge about how women and men regard childbearing and forming families Statistics Sweden conducted a survey during the spring 2009. The sample contained 7 000 women aged 20-40 and men aged 20-44 that were either childless at the end of 2008 or that had their first or second child during 2006.

#### Composition of the sample and response rate

Women				Men			
<b>Childless 2008-12-31</b>				<b>Childless 2008-12-31</b>			
Age	Sample	Responses	Response rate (%)	Age	Sample	Responses	Response rate (%)
20-24	196	97	49	20-26	198	72	36
25-27	194	90	46	27-29	194	74	38
28-30	194	99	51	30-32	194	71	37
31-33	194	105	54	33-35	194	65	34
34-36	194	92	47	36-38	194	67	35
37-40	194	87	45	39-44	194	66	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 166</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1 168</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Had first child in 2006</b>				<b>Had first child in 2006</b>			
Age at first birth	Sample	Responses	Response rate (%)	Age at first birth	Sample	Responses	Response rate (%)
20-24	195	102	52	20-26	196	73	37
25-27	194	113	58	27-29	194	110	57
28-30	194	146	75	30-32	194	109	56
31-33	194	130	67	33-35	194	111	57
34-36	194	125	64	36-38	194	98	51
37-40	196	137	70	39-44	194	87	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 167</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1 166</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Had second child in 2006</b>				<b>Had second child in 2006</b>			
Age at second birth	Sample	Responses	Response rate (%)	Age at second birth	Sample	Responses	Response rate (%)
20-24	195	86	44	20-26	196	77	39
25-27	194	95	49	27-29	194	87	45
28-30	194	113	58	30-32	194	97	50
31-33	194	130	67	33-35	194	96	49
34-36	194	135	70	36-38	194	92	47
37-40	196	142	72	39-44	194	103	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 167</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1 166</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>3 500</b>	<b>2 024</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>All men</b>	<b>3 500</b>	<b>1 555</b>	<b>44</b>

Most of those that have not had children yet want to have children in the future. There does not seem to have been any reduction in the percentage of those who think they will one day have children. This applies despite that the questionnaire was answered during an economic recession. Compared to a similar survey from 2000, there is roughly as large a percentage answering yes or maybe to the question of whether they think they will ever have children.

*Do you think you will have children in the future? Percent*

<b>Childless women and men living with a partner</b>							Total	Number of respondents
	Yes	Maybe	Probably not	No	No reply			
<b>Women</b>								
Age 20-27	87±8	8±6	5±5	1±2	-	100	85	
Age 28-33	75±10	21±9	3±4	2±2	-	100	84	
Age 34-40	33±10	34±10	15±8	16±8	2	100	88	
<b>Men</b>								
Age 20-29	89±7	6±7	-	-	4	100	51	
Age 30-35	74±10	16±8	6±5	3±4	1	100	72	
Age 36-44	38±15	17±11	12±10	29±14	4	100	48	

<b>Childless women and men <i>not</i> living with a partner</b>							Total	Number of respondents
	Yes	Maybe	Probably not	No	No reply			
<b>Women</b>								
Age 20-27	68±10	16±9	10±7	3±4	3	100	84	
Age 28-33	50±11	35±11	7±6	4±5	4	100	82	
Age 34-40	14±8	42±12	20±10	20±9	5	100	65	
<b>Men</b>								
Age 20-29	74±10	14±8	3±4	6±5	4	100	81	
Age 30-35	58±15	27±14	10±10	2±5	2	100	40	
Age 36-44	12±8	46±12	23±11	17±9	2	100	69	

The most common reasons for not yet having had children is that they wanted to do other things first or did not feel mature enough. Among women and men without partners, the lack of a partner was the most common reason why they were childless. This applies especially to older people. Many also named the time it takes to find the right partner, a large percentage of childless women and men have previously had one or more cohabitational relationships.

For a long time it has been most common to have two children. This pattern also appears to be holding strong into the foreseeable future. Even presently many childless people state that they would like to have two children. In the younger age groups it is more common to want three or more children whereas the older women and men more often state that they would like to have one child.

*How many children would you like to have? Percent*

<b>Childless women and men living with a partner</b>									
	None	One	Two	Three	Four or more	Not sure	No reply	Total	Number of respondents
<b>Women</b>									
Age 20-27	-	6±6	48±12	26±10	2±4	14±8	4	100	83
Age 28-33	-	10±7	52±11	16±8	3±4	17±8	1	100	81
Age 34-40	-	22±10	49±12	8±7	-	15±9	6	100	72
<b>Men</b>									
Age 20-29	-	3±4	32±15	31±15	6±9	22±14	6	100	51
Age 30-35	-	7±6	63±12	8±7	2±3	14±9	7	100	69
Age 36-44	3±7	19±15	43±15	8±9	-	21±14	6	100	39
<b>Childless women and men <i>not</i> living with a partner</b>									
	None	One	Two	Three	Four or more	Not sure	No reply	Total	Number of respondents
<b>Women</b>									
Age 20-27	1±2	2±4	38±12	26±11	8±7	18±9	6	100	76
Age 28-33	-	10±7	39±12	14±8	5±5	28±11	4	100	76
Age 34-40	6±7	13±10	37±14	13±10	4±6	19±11	8	100	52
<b>Men</b>									
Age 20-29	2±4	2±2	51±13	17±10	4±5	15±9	10	100	77
Age 30-35	-	18±12	39±16	26±14	5±7	12±10	-	100	39
Age 36-44	4±5	16±10	54±14	5±6	9±8	8±8	5	100	50

The survey results also show that many have problems getting pregnant, when they postpone having children to higher ages. Among the older childless women a large proportion have tried but not succeeded in getting pregnant. Many of these have sought help from for example ovulation testing and artificial insemination in order to have children.

Questions about the ideal age of childbearing and expectations of how having children would influence different aspects of life, such as the opportunities on the workplace, the relationship with one's partner and the possibilities to what one wants, are also included in the survey.