

Submission to Nordic Demographic Symposium: Poster  
2018-11-27

*Childbearing across Partnerships in Europe*

Elizabeth Thomson, Johan Carlson Dahlberg and Signe Svallfors  
Stockholm University Demography Unit

Contact: Elizabeth Thomson, [elizabeth.thomson@sociology.su.se](mailto:elizabeth.thomson@sociology.su.se)

**Study background.** Increasing rates of parental separation throughout Europe have generated an increasing pool of parents at risk of re-partnering. Most parental separation and re-partnering occurs during the childbearing years, so that the newly formed step-families are at risk of producing additional births, and around half of such couples do so. These sequences of partnership and childbearing events produce the phenomenon that is commonly referred to as “multipartner fertility”, i.e., having children with more than one partner.

**Objectives.** Empirical studies of childbearing across partnerships have been generated in several wealthy countries where parental separation rates are quite high. They include descriptive information about the prevalence of the phenomenon, but vary in the way the population at risk is defined. In this study, we use comparable data and identical definitions to generate comparable estimates of childbearing with more than one partner.

**Data and methods.** We use the Harmonized Histories, most but not all generated from the Generations and Gender Programme ([www.ggp-i.org](http://www.ggp-i.org)). We estimate the prevalence of parents who have children with more than one partner and the parity progressions at which they do so, separately for women and men. We use all countries for which partnership and birth histories are known to be robust: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

**Results.** The proportion of mothers with two or more children who have children with more than one partner varies from 6.5 % in Georgia to 22.8 % in the Czech Republic. For fathers, the corresponding figures are from 7.2 % in Georgia to 17.4 % in the Czech Republic. These estimates are not yet weighted for survey design or nonresponse. A complete excel file is available on request.

**Main conclusions.** The results demonstrate that childbearing with two or more partners is uncommon but not rare. Because our estimates are based on individual women and men rather than couples they underestimate the proportion of families with children having different sets of parents.