



## [Antenatal fear of childbirth and its association with subsequent caesarean section and experience of childbirth.](#)

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**Abstract:** Objective To investigate the prevalence of fear of childbirth in a nationwide sample and its association with subsequent rates of caesarean section and overall experience of childbirth. Design A prospective study using between-group comparisons. Setting About 600 antenatal clinics in Sweden. Sample A total of 2662 women recruited at their first visit to an antenatal clinic during three predetermined weeks spread over 1 year. Methods Postal questionnaires at 16 weeks of gestation (mean) and 2 months postpartum. Women with fear of childbirth, defined as 'very negative' feelings when thinking about the delivery in second trimester and/or having undergone counselling because of fear of childbirth later in pregnancy, were compared with those in the reference group without these characteristics. Main outcome measures Elective and emergency caesarean section and overall childbirth experience. Results In total 97 women (3.6%) had very negative feelings and about half of them subsequently underwent counselling. In addition, 193 women (7.2%) who initially had more positive feelings underwent counselling later in pregnancy. In women who underwent counselling, fear of childbirth was associated with a three to six times higher rate of elective caesarean sections but not with higher rates of emergency caesarean section or negative childbirth experience. Very negative feelings without counselling were not associated with an increased caesarean section rate but were associated with a negative birth experience. Conclusions At least 10% of pregnant women in Sweden suffer from fear of childbirth. Fear of childbirth in combination with counselling may increase the rate of elective caesarean sections, whereas fear without treatment may have a negative impact on the subsequent experience of childbirth.

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