

Research suggests poor childbirth experiences reduce birth rate

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In her doctoral thesis, Johanna Joensuu, MSc, investigated the childbirth experiences of those who gave birth in the Hospital District of Helsinki and Uusimaa (HUS) from 2012 to 2018. According to the study, childbirth experiences have, on average, weakened in Finland between 2012 and 2018.

"Even though the share of negative experiences has slightly increased, most mothers still consider their deliveries in Finland as a positive experience overall," Joensuu says.

A total of 40% of [first-time mothers](#) and 60% of women who had previously given [birth](#) considered their childbirth experience very positive. Only 10% of the former group and 4% of the latter gave a negative assessment of their experience.

The registry dataset used in the study covered more than 120,000 deliveries, approximately one-third of the children born in Finland in the period 2012–2018.

A negative childbirth experience reduced the likelihood of having another child

Poor childbirth experiences have several negative effects on the birth rate: in the study, negative experiences decreased by one-fifth the likelihood of a subsequent birth during the seven-year follow-up period. Based on the follow-up dataset, negative childbirth experiences extended the time between births by 1.4 years compared to those whose experience was positive.

"Delaying attempts to have another child also poses challenges from the perspective of fertility, as more than half of the first-time mothers are over 30 years of age," Joensuu says.

According to Joensuu's assessment, a reduction in birthing classes and changes in the organization of maternity services, among other things, underlie increasingly negative childbirth experiences.

The [doctoral thesis](#) posits that negative childbirth experiences are also

associated with the induction of labor.

"However, it must be noted that inductions are usually reasoned, which can in itself expose you to a more weak childbirth experience," Joensuu says.

Better experiences through good care

According to Joensuu, the experience of giving birth can be affected with good care.

"Childbirth includes a lot of unforeseen elements, which is why appropriate and trust-building childbirth preparation classes and care where consideration is given to the mother's wishes have a key role in ensuring that [mothers](#) have positive childbirth experiences," Joensuu says.

Discussing negative experiences after the fact with a professional is particularly important in preventing long-lasting adverse effects.

"With the [birth rate](#) at its lowest in our [modern history](#), the [childbirth](#) experience is one of the relevant factors that can be influenced," Joensuu sums up.

More information: Thesis: [helda.helsinki.fi/items/ff070c ... 55-af6f-fc08f4f0eaae](https://helda.helsinki.fi/items/ff070c...55-af6f-fc08f4f0eaae)

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