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## Who are the parents that have children with shared residence? – The case of Sweden

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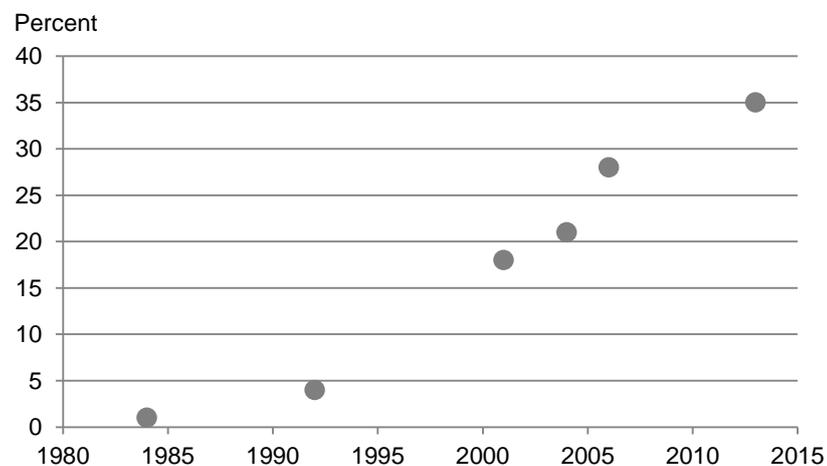
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### Introduction and background

Today one in four children in Sweden have parents who have separated or never lived together. During the last decades shared residence has increased among children with separated parents in Sweden. When a child has shared residence the child lives equal time with both parents alternating between the mother's and the father's household. Shared living arrangements increase the child's access to both parents after a union dissolution.

In the middle of the 1980's only 1 percent of children with separated parents in Sweden had shared residence. In 2012/2013 the share was 35 percent.

### Shared residence among children with parents living apart. Percent



Sources: Statistics Sweden, Living Conditions Surveys (ULF/SILC), 1984–2006; Statistics Sweden, Different families live in different ways, 2012/13

This study aims to give insight about the characteristics of parents choosing shared residence for their children.

There are only a few earlier studies concerning parents that choose shared residence for their children. According to a survey conducted by Statistics Sweden on behalf of The Ministry of Social Affairs in 2010 shared residence is more common among parents with high incomes. Shared residence is least common among parents with primary education as their highest level of education. In this study, level of income and education has been studied separately (Governmental Committee on Economy and Cooperation between Separated Parents, SOU 2011:51).

According to a study from Norway (Kitterød & Lyngstad, 2012) with data from 2004 there is a correlation between shared residence and parents' socioeconomic status. The likelihood of shared residence was higher in families where the father had a high income and the mother was highly educated. In Norway, shared residence is not as common as in Sweden. In 2004, when the survey was conducted, 11 percent of children with separated parents had shared residence. A survey conducted in 2012 shows that the share of children in Norway having shared residence had increased to 25 percent (Lyngstad, Kitterød & Nymoen, 2014).

### **Data and methods**

The study is based on a survey sent to the parents of 15,000 children in 2012/2013. The children have been randomly selected among all children not living with both their parents (their parents still living in Sweden and being alive). The survey has been sent to both parents. The coherence between the answer of the mother and the father is good (in cases where both parents have answered the survey). The survey has been supplemented with various control variables from registers. The response rate among parents is 37 percent and the response rate from the perspective of children is 58 percent (where at least one parent has responded).

The method used is logistic regression with the dependent variable being if the child has shared residence. The independent variables used are sex and age of the child, time since separation, parent's background, type of municipality, age at first birth, family type, educational attainment and income level. Separate models are run for fathers and mothers.

### **Results**

The first model includes independent variables on the child's sex and age and the time since separation. Results show that shared residence is more common if the child is 6–12 years, compared to younger and older children. Mothers have shared residence more often if the child is a boy than if it is a girl. This does not apply for fathers. Shared residence is more common if the separation occurred the last few years than if it occurred longer time ago. This may indicate that shared residence is more common today than previously, but it may also indicate that shared residence is common directly after a separation but as time goes by the child lives more or entirely with one parent.

In the next model variables on parents' demographic characteristics are included. The results show that shared residence is more common if the parents are born in Sweden than if they are born abroad. It is less common with shared residence if the parents were young when the first child was born. Mothers who are married or cohabiting have children with shared residence more often than single mothers. There are no differences among fathers who are married/cohabiting or single.

In the third model variables on parents' socioeconomic characteristics are included. In general it seems that the relationship between socioeconomic factors and shared residence is stronger for fathers than for mothers. The results for fathers indicate that shared residence is more common the higher the level of education and the level of income. As for fathers, shared residence is least common among mothers with the lowest educational level and the lowest level of income. However, there are no significant differences between mothers with

upper secondary education and mothers with a higher level of education or between mothers who have an average level of income and a high level of income.

In the second model a variable was included showing the parents type of municipality. Results show that parents living in metropolitan areas more often have children with shared residence than parents living in other types of municipalities. When the socioeconomic variables are included in model 3 much of the difference between the different types of municipalities disappears. The differences in shared residence between municipality types seems to be explained by differences in level of education and income.

**Table 1**  
**Have children with shared residence. 2012/2013. Odds ratios.**

Variables	Mothers			Fathers		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Child's sex</b>						
Boy	1	1	1	1	1	1
Girl	0,82**	0,82**	0,81**	0,89	0,9	0,89
<b>Age of child</b>						
1–5 years	0,53***	0,53***	0,62***	0,63**	0,68**	0,81
6–12 years	1	1	1	1	1	1
13–18 years	0,66***	0,66***	0,57***	0,48***	0,46***	0,41***
<b>Time since separation</b>						
Have never lived together	0,08***	0,09***	0,10***	0,09***	0,10***	0,10***
Up to 2 years	1,30**	1,48	1,48	1,06	1,14	1,17
3–5 years	1	1	1	1	1	1
6–9 years	0,67***	0,63***	0,64***	0,83*	0,85	0,86
10–14 years	0,37***	0,34***	0,35***	0,52***	0,53***	0,58***
At least 15 years	0,21***	0,20***	0,21***	0,23***	0,27***	0,31***
<b>Background</b>						
Born in Sweden		1	1		1	1
Born abroad		0,34***	0,43***		0,30***	0,39***
<b>Type of municipality</b>						
Metropolitan areas		1	1		1	1
Larger towns		0,88	0,95		0,80**	0,88
Other municipality types		0,77**	0,87		0,67***	0,81*
<b>Age at first birth</b>						
Women –24 /Men –26 years		0,63***	0,77***		0,64***	0,73***
Women 25–31/Men 27–33 years		1	1		1	1
Women 32–/Men 34– years		0,88	0,84		0,96	0,98
<b>Type of family</b>						
Married or cohabiting		1	1		1	1
Single		0,69***	0,68***		1,01	1,13
<b>Educational attainment</b>						
Primary education			0,72*			0,49***
Upper secondary education			0,92			0,74***
Tertiary education			1			1
<b>Level of income</b>						
Low			0,41***			0,36***
Medium low			0,67***			0,66***
Average			1			1
Medium high			1,04			1,07
High			1,13			1,56***

## References

Kitterød, Ragni Hege and Jan Lyngstad (2012). Untraditional caring arrangements among parents living apart: The case of Norway. *Demographic research* 27: 121–152

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Committee on Economy and Cooperation between Separated Parents, SOU 2011:51 *Fortsatt föräldrar – om ansvar, ekonomi och samarbete för barnets skull*. Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Sweden.