Fertility recovery despite the Covid-19 pandemic? Trends by age, parity and region in Finland 2015–2021

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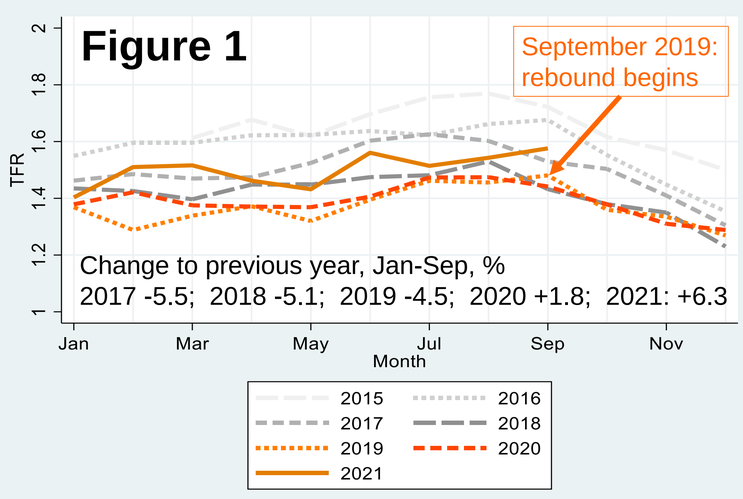
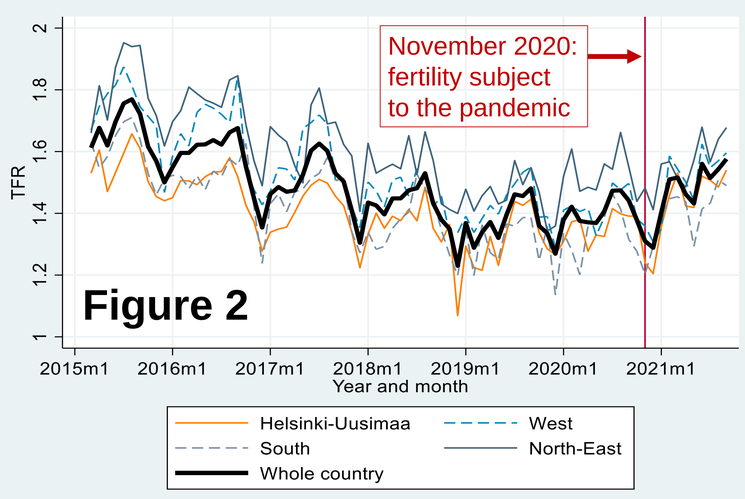
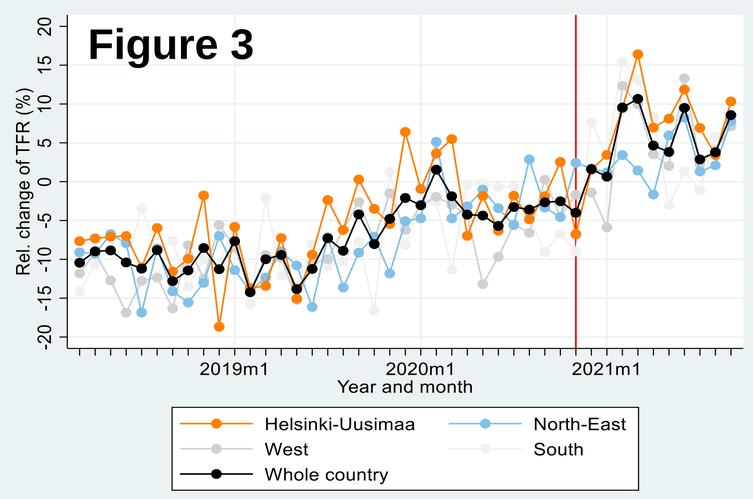
Background

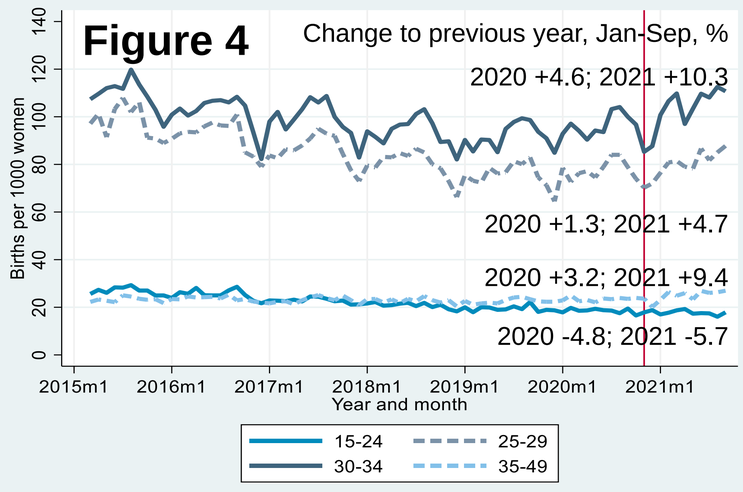
Finland‘s unprecedented fertility decline since 2010 ended by 2020[1,2]. Previous studies on the relationship of the Covid-19 pandemic with fertility have mainly analyzed total numbers of births, thereby potentially overlooking population heterogeneity[3,4]. This study assesses ongoing fertility trends in Finland from 2015 to September 2021 by subnational region, age group, and parity. While the country as a whole has been modestly hit by the pandemic, the region Helsinki-Uusimaa and the younger population have been affected more[5], potentially with stronger effects on their fertility.

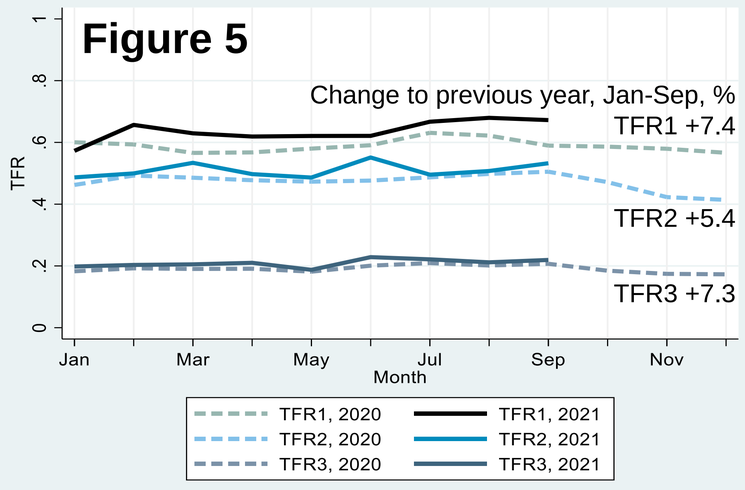
Main findings

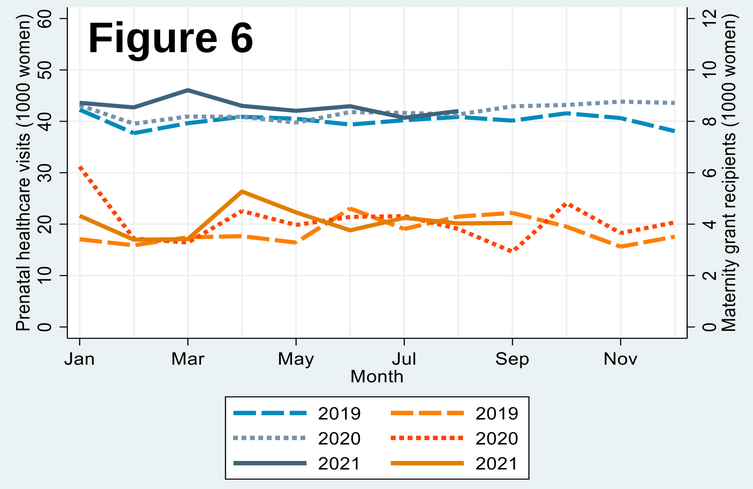












Sep 2019 marked the beginning of a fertility rebound in Finland (Fig. 1). Increases have occurred across regions (Fig. 2). Unlike in 2020, they were stronger in 2021 in Helsinki-Uusimaa (9%) than in other regions (3-6%) (Fig. 3). Increases in 2020 and 2021 occurred in all but the youngest age group, and relative increases in 2020 and 2021 were strongest in women aged 30–34 and 35–49 (Fig. 4). Unlike absolute increases, relative increases in 2021 were rather similar across parities (Fig. 5). In the coming months, a stable fertility trend can be expected (Fig. 6).

Method

We used monthly aggregate data on preliminary numbers of births and preliminary numbers of women by woman‘s age group, subnational region of living, and parity, until Sep 2021. We calculated monthly age-specific and total fertility rates, and changes therein.

Conclusions

Since late 2019 Finland has experienced a fertility rebound across several population sub-groups, with some variation in the strength of the increase. While an overall strong negative pandemic effect on fertility in this context seems unlikely, a fertility-boosting effect cannot be ruled out (e.g., stronger increase in Helsinki-Uusimaa in 2021). However, the fertility increases during the hitherto Covid-19 pandemic in Finland need to be viewed at least partially as a continuation of existing fertility trends.

References

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