

Women who opt for caesarean aren't too posh to push - just SCARED - The women too scared to give birth naturally

by FIONA MACRAE - 6th February 2008 Daily Mail

Almost half the women who choose to have a caesarean delivery are not "too posh to push" - they are simply too scared, researchers say.

Many mothers-to-be elect to opt for a C-section for non-medical reasons because they are afraid of the unpredictability of a natural delivery, according to a study.

Some are terrified that their baby will die or be injured during the birth, while others worry about losing control during labour.

The latest research - the first of its kind - contradicts the widely-held theory that many women have elective caesareans because they are "too posh to push".

The scientists involved, from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, asked 496 mothers-to-be about their attitude towards childbirth.

The women, all first-time mothers, were divided into three groups: those who had opted for a C-section for medical reasons; those who elected to have the operation for other reasons; and those who planned to have a natural delivery.

Almost half - 43 per cent - of those having elective caesareans had a fear of childbirth which was so severe that it affected their health.

In contrast, the figures for women having a natural birth or a caesarean for medical reasons were just 13 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.

The study, published in the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, also found that women who were scared of giving birth were looking forward to motherhood less than the other prospective parents.

It is thought that many of the women's fears stemmed from conversations with friends and relatives who had bad experiences of labour themselves.

Researcher Dr Ingela Wiklund said: "The fact that 43 per cent of the women in our study requesting a caesarean section suffered from a clinically significant fear of childbirth is startling.

"Women suffering from significant childbirth fear indicate that they are less self-confident, unhappy, afraid that the child will be injured and don't long for the child.

"This clearly emphasises the need for pre and post-natal support."

She added that more research was needed to determine why women request C-sections for non-medical reasons.

A second study in the same journal found that one in 14 prospective mothers is afraid of childbirth, with fear more likely in those suffering from depression and anxiety.

Professor Philip Steer, the journal's editor and a practising obstetrician, said that women who choose to have C-sections are carefully counselled on the advantages and disadvantages of the operation.

"The overall C-section rate in the UK is high but comparable to other Western countries," he added.

"If we are to lower numbers, we need to understand sympathetically why some women, with no medical reasons, are choosing to have caesareans.

"Healthy women are sometimes criticised for choosing a C-section over a normal delivery.

"This study reveals that a psychological reason may be behind elective caesareans.

"Some women may be too scared, rather than too posh, to push."

The latest figures showed that 23 per cent of all babies delivered in Britain's hospitals in 2005/2006 were born by C-section.

The figure is more than twice that recorded 15 years ago.

180,000 babies are born by caesarean section in the UK each year.