

Pregnancy Attitudes and Intentions in the Turbulent Times of COVID-19

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Background

- Attitudes toward pregnancy and family formation are shaped by
- Individual economic resources (Brauner-Otto and Geist 2018, Geist and Brauner-Otto 2017, Wiik 2009)
 - Individual social context (Hayford and Guzzo 2013, Sassler, Miller and Favinger 2009)
 - Social norms and societal context (i.e., Adler 1997, Adler 2002)

Why care about attitudes and intentions?

- More time-variant than behavior
- Insights into future demographic trends regarding fertility
- Attitudes allow for ambivalence and uncertainty

COVID x Intentions

- Sudden loss of child care and public school availability
- Sudden loss of economic resources
- Extreme levels of uncertainty regarding both health and (economic) well-being

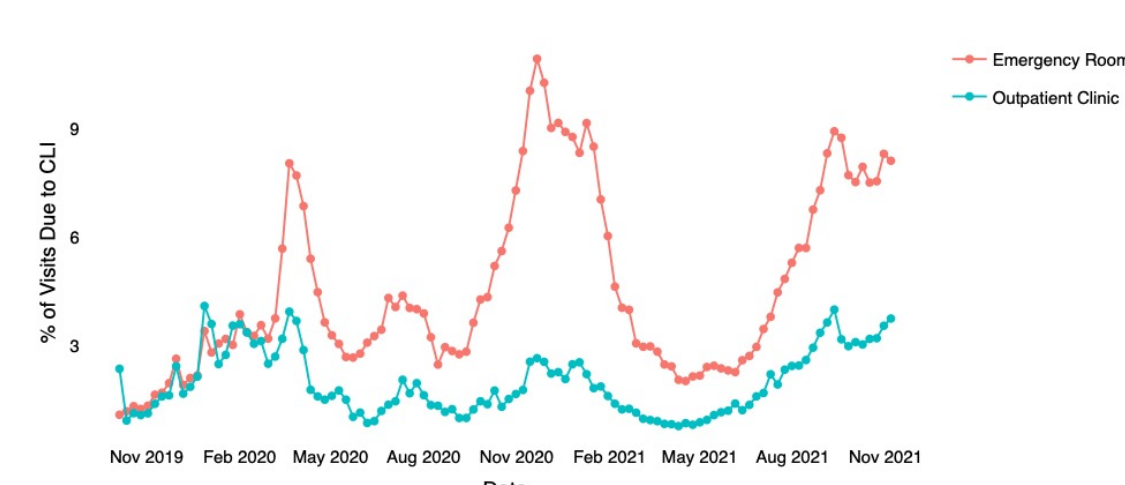
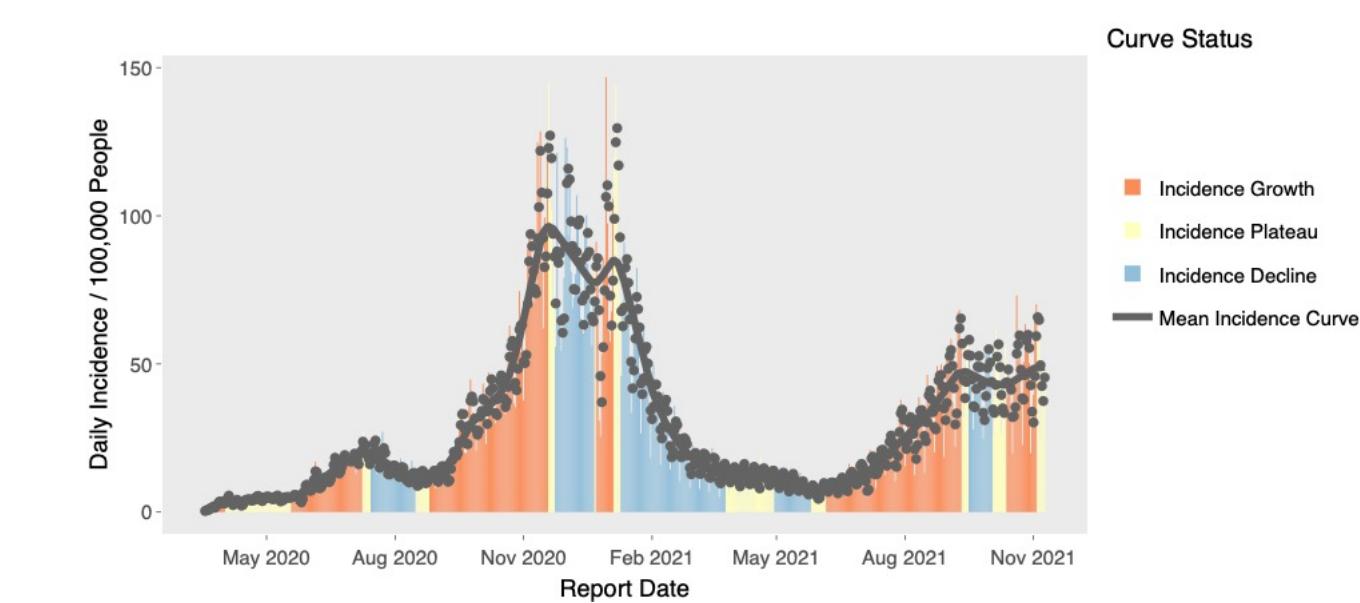
Research Question:

Did COVID affect pregnancy intentions and attitudes independent of its known effect on economic outcomes?

Data and Methods

Covid in Utah

- School dismissals in March 2020
- March to May 2020 "lockdown" (many restrictions remained in place longer)
- Summer 2020: mandatory mask orders
- October 2020: ICUs over capacity
- December 2020: vaccines become available



Source: Utah Department of Health

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Sample

HER Salt Lake

- provided free birth control to more than 7,400 people in Salt Lake County; 4,400 of those individuals enrolled in a longitudinal study and are helping us understand the social, health, and economic impacts that free contraception has on their lives. (<http://www.hersaltlake.org>). Participants were followed for 3 years (~2016/2017 until 2019/2020).

Covid Supplement Study

- Small subsample (~500) were re-interviewed in April, June, and October 2020

Outcome Measures

Pregnancy intentions

- "I do not plan on getting pregnant at any time in the future" (**Never**)
- "I am currently trying to get pregnant" (not an option at HER Salt Lake enrollment), "I would like to get pregnant in the next year," (**Now/Next Year**)
- "I would like to get pregnant in the next 2-5 years but not in the next year," (**2-5 Years**)
- "I would like to get pregnant in the next 5-10 years but not before then." (**5-10 Years**)

Pregnancy attitudes

- "How would you feel about getting pregnant in the next month?" response options 0 to 100
 - 0 → "worst feeling you can imagine"
 - 100 → "happiest you could possibly be feeling"

Methods

Multilevel mixed-effect logistic and linear models

Key Covariates

- employment status (indicating if they were unemployed or furloughed)
- Time (year 1, 2, and 3 follow-up, April, June, October 2020)

Controls

- age (in years); simplified race-ethnicity measure; number of children in the household; living with a romantic partner

Findings

Descriptive Statistics

	Enrollment	1-year FU	2-year FU	3-year FU	April 2020	June 2020	October 2020
Pregnancy Intentions (col %), select categories							
now	0*	2	3	4	5	3	3
next year	1*	5	6	7	5	7	6
never	34*	34	35	38	41	42	44
Attitudes (0-100)							
median	8	20	22	23	14	18	14
N	3,541	3,613	2,974	2,699	563	365	379

*Column percent for select pregnancy intentions. Numbers do not add up to 100 as not all possible intentions are included in the table.

Descriptive findings that proportion of those who "never" want a(nother) pregnancy is on the rise, "pandemic dip" in attitudes towards a hypothetical pregnancy.

Multivariate models that take into account demographics suggest that

- Unemployment/being furloughed and the pandemic period increases the odds of NEVER desiring a pregnancy and desiring one NOW/NEXT YEAR.
- Attitudes towards a hypothetical pregnancy become more positive during the pandemic, contradicting the bivariate findings NET of employment status

	never	year	Attitudes
Unemp./furloughed	+	+	
1 year follow up (FU)	+	+	+
2-year FU	-	+	+
3-year FU	-	+	+
Apr-20	+	+	+
Jun-20	+	+	+
Oct-20	+	+	+

Note: + indicates positive effect; (a)R>1; - indicates negative effect; aOR <1., significant at p<.0.05.

Conclusions and References

- Pandemic & economic uncertainty created a shift in pregnancy intention trends.
- Anecdotally, we know that the pandemic was a catalyst for people nationwide to reevaluate their personal & professional priorities & trajectories; this might explain a positive shift in attitudes towards hypothetical pregnancy when controlling for employment status.
- It is possible that the pandemic & economic crisis that followed had a differential interactive effect on people based on employment status and their sense of economic security.
- Future research may compare trends in pregnancy intentions between those who lost their jobs or were furloughed during the pandemic and those who maintained steady employment.
- Ongoing measurement of pregnancy intentions during natural disasters or other external shocks is an important future direction for research.

Selected References

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