



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW RESEARCH: ONE-FIFTH OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN SAY COVID-19 IMPACTED THEIR PLANS OF HAVING CHILDREN

New research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies shows one in five Australian women changed their plans of having children because of COVID-19, and one in seven women indicated that COVID-19 likely impacted on when they would have children, with the majority of this cohort (92%) choosing to delay having children.

The *Families in Australia: Towards COVID Normal* study also found more than one in ten women surveyed had been trying for a first or additional child before the pandemic, but 18% had ceased trying to conceive at least partly because of the pandemic.

Lead researcher on the study, Dr Lixia Qu, said it was not surprising that women's attitudes towards pregnancy and fertility were impacted by the Covid crisis.

"The COVID-19 pandemic brought on a lot of uncertainty, so it makes sense that some women have reshaped their views about having children," said Dr Qu.

The study showed that financial security played a significant role in women's decisions around conceiving, with 62% of respondents who had stopped trying to conceive during COVID-19 having suffered employment loss, compared to 26% of respondents who had stopped trying to conceive for reasons other than COVID-19.

"When it comes to decisions around pregnancy and raising children, financial security is one of the most important parts of the decision-making process for many potential parents. They want to feel confident that they can provide for their future family, and unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to financial difficulties and concerns for some people," said Dr Qu.

For women without children, younger women (in their late 20s) were more likely than older women (in their 30s) to report that they would delay having children and that they would have fewer children as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"For older women, there is a declining chance to conceive associated with age, making them less inclined than women in their 20s to delay pregnancy," said Dr Qu.

The study found that of those who were currently pregnant, 22 percent reported their pregnancy timing was affected by the pandemic, and of this group, 44 percent indicated that their pregnancy came sooner than expected.

"Everyone's circumstances are different, and for some, the increased time spent at home and around their partner encouraged them to bring forward their plans to conceive, while others were motivated by plans such as weddings and travel being cancelled and opted to have children instead," Dr Qu said.

“In whatever way women’s plans for children have been impacted by COVID-19, it’ll be interesting to observe what mark this leaves on the nation’s future population,” she said.

The report *Impacts of COVID-19 on pregnancy and fertility intentions* is available at:

http://www3.aifs.gov.au/institute/media/docs/sgBtyhAerg/2106_4_FIAS_pregnancy_and_fertility_intentions.pdf

The report is part of the *Towards COVID Normal* series, the second survey in the Families in Australia Survey (AIFS’ flagship survey series). It ran from 19 November to 23 December 2020, when restrictions had been eased in most states. In total, 3,730 people participated, 86% of whom were women.

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