

Report on the IUSSP Panel on COVID-19, Fertility, and the Family

The IUSSP Scientific Panel on COVID-19, Fertility, and the Family was established in 2023 to stimulate research on fertility and family dynamics in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The panel's main objectives are to advance scientific understanding of how the pandemic has shaped reproductive behaviors and family formation across diverse global contexts, with special attention to shifts in gender dynamics within fertility and family developments from before to after the pandemic. Additionally, the panel aims to improve the availability of methods training to analyze the impact of historic events, such as pandemics, on demographic processes and family dynamics. The panel seeks to build an inclusive scientific community that brings together researchers from all world regions, unifying perspectives from both the Global North and South.

Due to international moves of various key panel members, activities took some time to initiate. However, the panel has been and continues to be active in stimulating research activity on these themes.

Since its inception, the panel has organized and engaged in several activities to advance research on pandemic impacts on fertility and family dynamics. The panel's first major activity was the Pre-conference Workshop on Gender, Reproduction and Family Dynamics in the Post-Pandemic Era, held at the 30th International Population Conference in Brisbane, Australia (13-18 July 2025). The workshop took place on 13 July at the University of Queensland and was organized and led by panel co-chair Natalie Nitsche (Australian National University), along with Anna Kurowska (University of Warsaw) and Celia Karp (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health). About 25 participants attended the workshop, which featured five presentations on themes related to reproduction, family, and gender in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The presented research spanned four continents, covering a variety of regions worldwide. The discussions were highly engaged and insightful, turning the workshop into an inspiring forum for continued debates on COVID-19's impacts on family and fertility. As intended, presentations and discussions successfully unified perspectives from both the Global North and South, which proved particularly stimulating. The workshop would not have been possible without support from Ph.D. students Feier Chen and Xiaoxian Qiu from the School of Demography at the Australian National University, whose assistance was invaluable. The workshop program is available at: <https://iussp.org/sites/default/files/IUSSP%20Side%20Meeting%20Outlines.pdf>

In addition to the pre-conference workshop, panel co-chairs Natalie Nitsche and Joshua Wilde organized a session on COVID-19 impacts on fertility dynamics at the IUSSP Meeting in Brisbane. It featured current work on pandemic impacts on fertility with a focus on the Global South. Furthermore, Natalie Nitsche participated as a speaker in the IUSSP Plenary on "Crises, Shocks and Resilient Populations: Coping with Harsh Realities", which offered perspectives on how climate change, conflict, pandemics, and economic shocks interact with population dynamics. This plenary is contributing to the emerging subfield of crisis demography.

Looking ahead, Joshua Wilde is organizing a session on "Environment, Disaster, Conflict: Effects on Fertility and Reproductive Health" for the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America.

Moreover, the panel is currently in negotiations with the Population Council journal *Studies in Family Planning* for an edited Special Collection on the Impact of Pandemics on Fertility, Family and Reproductive Health Dynamics. While negotiations are not yet fully finalized, an open call for the special issue is likely to be announced in late 2025 or early 2026. This special issue will both accompany the Brisbane workshop and offer a publication forum for studies presented there, though conference paper publications will not be automatic as it will be based on an open call to the wider research community.

Beyond providing new evidence on the nexus between COVID-19 and fertility and family dynamics, the panel is dedicated to exploring advanced methodological approaches for studying the impacts of large-scale events and disasters on demographic processes. Activities around methods training are currently being developed by the panel and will be implemented in the future.

Overall, the panel has begun to fulfill its aim to establish a vibrant platform for advancing research on pandemic impacts on fertility and families, fostering international collaboration, and building capacity for studying how historic events shape demographic outcomes and family futures across diverse global contexts.