

# **Epidemics and Fertility Change: Responses to Zika and COVID-19 in Singapore**

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## Objectives

- Compare **changes to fertility plans** in response to the 2016-2017 Zika and 2020 Covid epidemics in Singapore
- What drives change: health or socio-economic factors?
- Consider accumulative effect of Covid shortly after Zika

## Literature

- Fertility plans are flexible in response to external shocks (Trinitapoli & Yeatman 2011)
- **Replacement vs decline** affected by resources and access to contraceptives (Finlay, 2009; Weeratunga & Dissanayake 2010)

## Recent literature

- Brazilian women with higher exposure to Zika had more pregnancy-related concerns about Covid and tended to delaying childbearing during the pandemic. (Marteleteo et al. 2021)

## Methods

- Singapore: Low fertility (TFR 1.1) and almost no extra-marital childbearing (3%)
- Survey 407 married women at peak childbearing age (25-34)
- 3 waves: mid-2018, May 2020 (lockdown), Nov 2020
- Fertility plans measured as **delay, reduce, bring forward, increase**

## Results

- **Bigger response to COVID than Zika** (17% delayed, vs 7%)
- Mixed responses post-lockdown; 7% brought forward in Nov 2020
- Women who delayed during Zika were more likely to respond to Covid, either by delaying or bringing forward ( $p < 0.05$ )

## Discussion

- **“Scarring”**: Women draw from their experience with Zika in reacting to Covid (Marteleto et al. 2021)
- **Selection**: Risk-averse women react similarly to epidemics
- Women who delayed during Zika try to **“catch-up”** during Covid