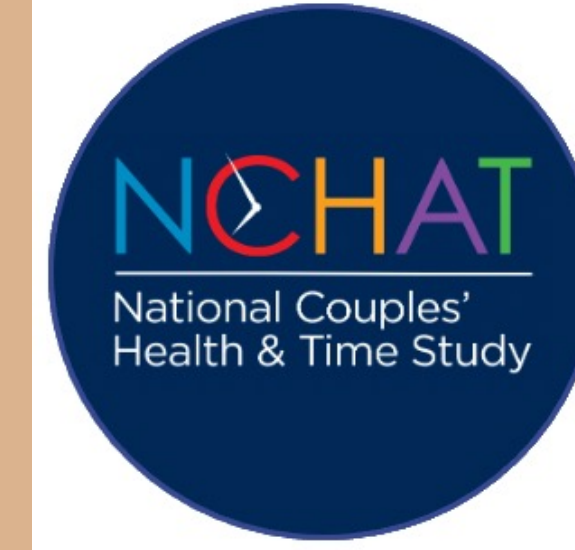


# Fertility Intentions During the Pandemic

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## Research Questions

There have been well-documented declines in births due to the pandemic. Less is known about how and why the underlying fertility intentions that drive fertility behavior have changed. This work uses unique data collected during the pandemic to examine intentions and identify fertility-related stressors and rationale. Specifically, we ask

1. During the pandemic, how did fertility intentions change, and what affects short-term intentions?
2. How are pandemic stressors associated with intentions?
3. What reasons are linked to delayed fertility?

## Data

### National Couples' Health and Time Use Study

- Population based sample of married and cohabiting couples September 2020-April 2021
- Analytical sample: men and women who intend to have any children (n=806)

### Key Fertility Measures:

**Fertility Plans Change:** "Since the coronavirus pandemic began have your plans to have children changed?" (no change, longer, sooner)

**Fertility Intentions:** "Do you intend to have a child in the next year?" (yes, no, not sure)

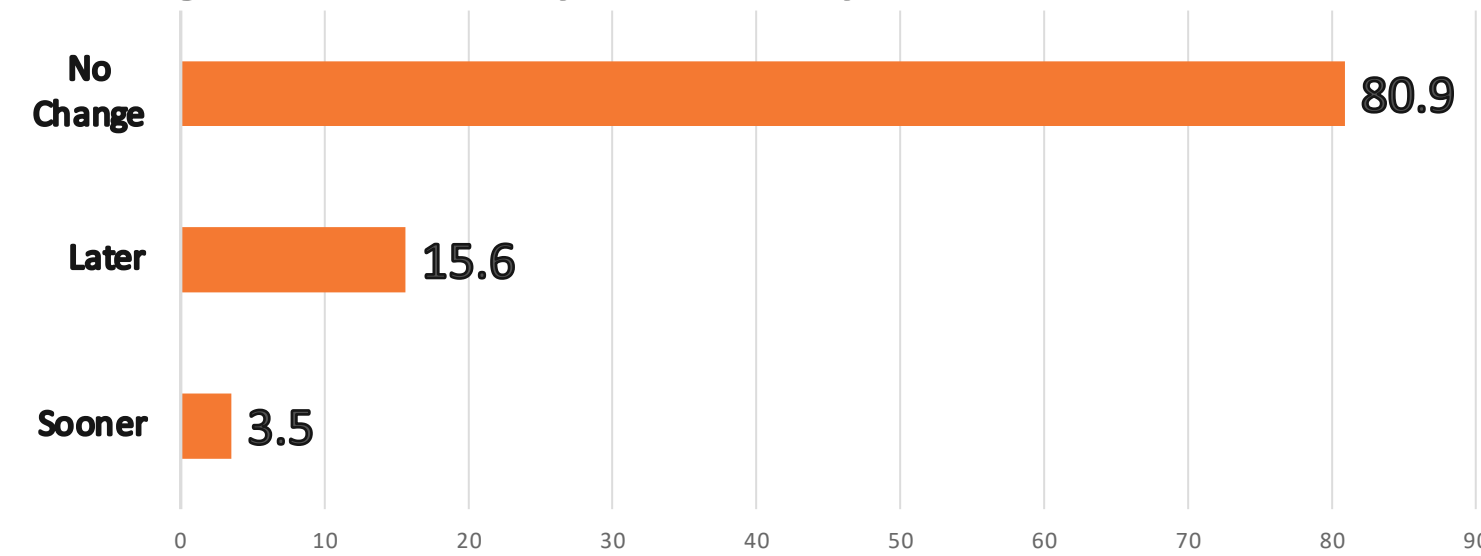
**Fertility Rationales** (among those not having a child in next year, n=711): Importance of select reasons for not having a child w/in year: unpredictable future, economic worries, health concerns, unsure about relationship (1=not important to 5=very important)

## Analyses

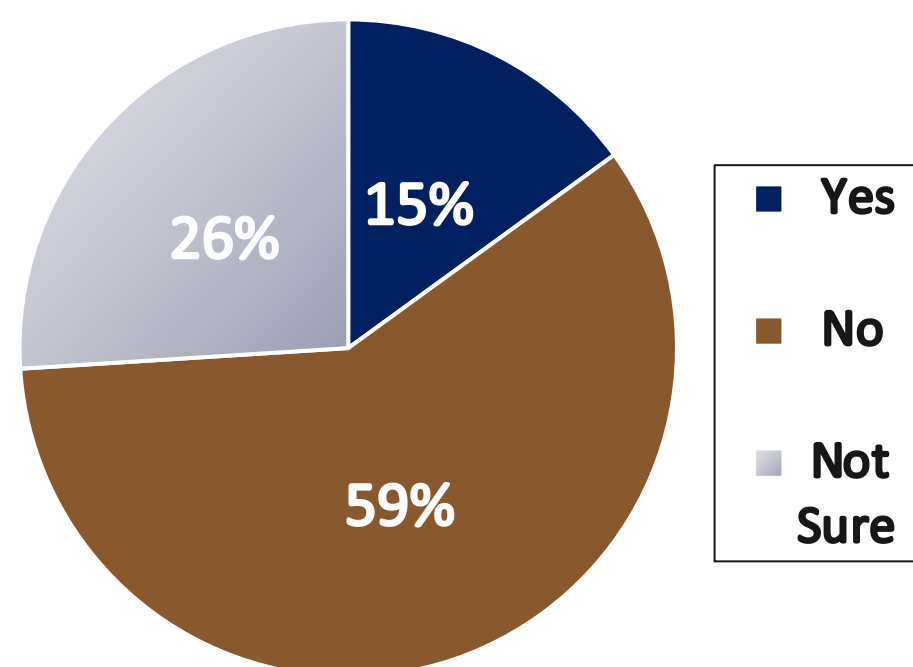
- 1) Predict fertility within next year using logistic regression (yes vs. no/not sure) with indicators of COVID stressors.
- 2) Among those not intending a child within the year, predict generalized uncertainty rationale (unpredictable future) with COVID stressors and economic indicators.

## Fertility Intentions and Timing

### Change and Stability in Fertility Intentions



### Timing of Fertility Intentions: Intend in the Next Year



- One in five couples who intended any children changed their plans, most often to delay
- Only 15% intended to have a child in the next year

## COVID Stress and Fertility Intentions

Table 2. Logistic Regression Estimates of Fertility Intentions in the Next Year

COVID Stressors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Disrupt Life	-0.84 *				-0.78 *
Economic		-0.35 +			-0.10
Health			-0.14		0.03
Relationship				-0.68 *	-0.53 +

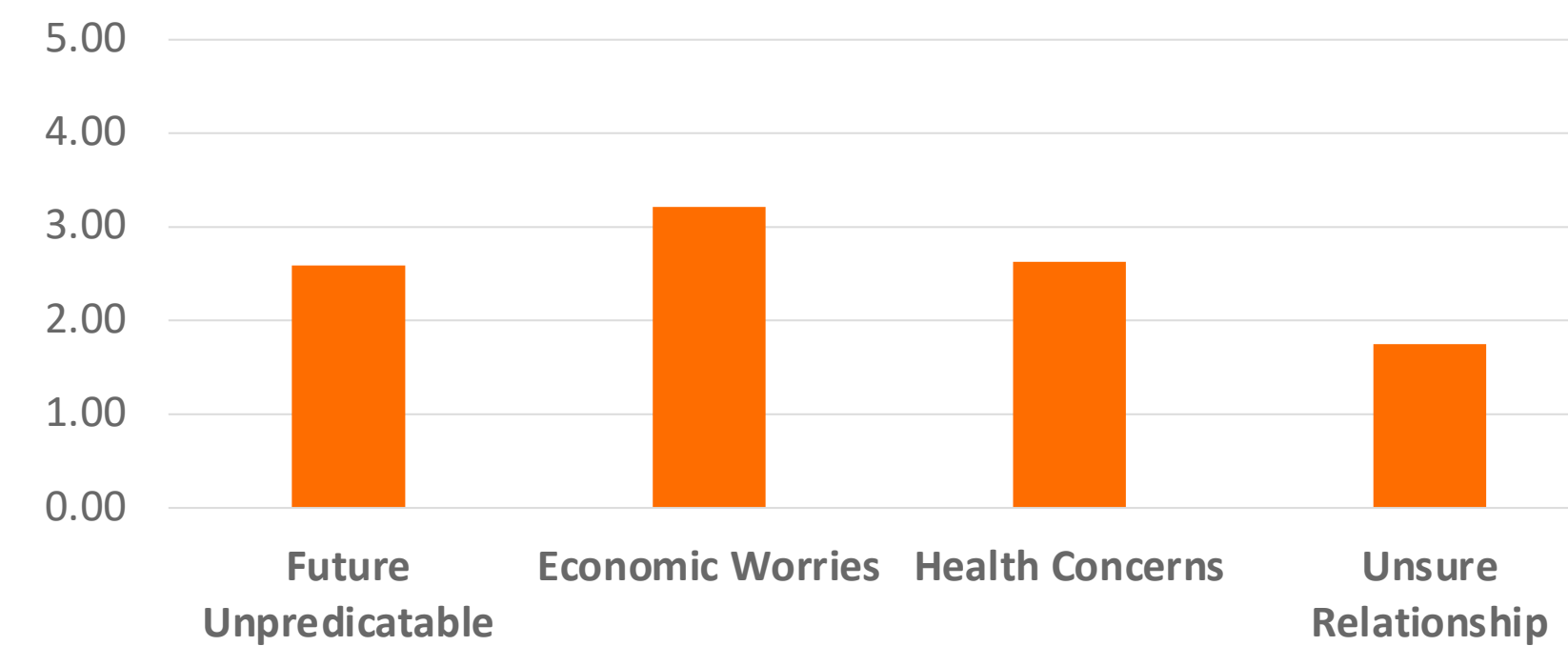
Source: National Couples' Health and Time Use Study

Note: Weighted analyses

+ p < 0.10, \* p < .05, \*\* p < .001, \*\*\* p < .0001

Model includes income, economic hardship, education, age, number of children, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, marital status, and month of survey

## Rationales for Delaying Children



Among those who did not intend a child within the next year, nearly half reported (47%) that economic worries were pretty or very important

- 31% reported health reasons were pretty or very important, followed by 28% for unpredictable future & 12% for being unsure about their relationship

## COVID Stress and "Future Unpredictable" Rationale

Table 3. OLS Regression Estimates of Future Unpredictable Rationale

	Model 1	Model 2
Disrupt Life		0.13
Economic Stress		0.39 ***
Health Stress		0.34 ***
Relational Stress		-0.11
Economic Hardship	0.66 ***	0.12
Log HH Income	-0.13 ***	-0.04

Source: National Couples' Health and Time Use Study (n=711)

Note: Weighted analyses

+ p < 0.10, \* p < .05, \*\* p < .001, \*\*\* p < .0001

Model includes education, age, # of children, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, month

## Summary

- During the pandemic, of partnered individuals who intended children, the majority did not change their timeline for having children, though only 15% intended to have a child in the next year
- Intending children more than a year later was more common those who experienced stress, particularly pandemic disruption and relational
- Of those who intended to have a child more than a year in the future, the more general measure of future unpredictability was linked to economic and health stress
- Findings are consistent with the *Narratives of the Future* approach (Vignoli et al. 2020) as subjective perceptions loom large in fertility decision-making during an era of uncertainty