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The Impact of COVID-19 on Fertility behaviour and Intentions in Moldova

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BACKGROUND

The Generations & Gender Survey began fieldwork in Moldova in January 2020. By March 2020, 3,000 interviews had been conducted but fieldwork was paused due to the onset of the pandemic. Fieldwork restarted again in July 2020 and continued until November. Using data from the survey, to form pre and post estimates of fertility intentions and contraceptive behaviour this paper aims to:

1. Identify changes in fertility intentions and contraceptive behaviour
2. Assess whether these changes differed across socio-economic groups
3. Assess whether these changes differed between rural and urban populations

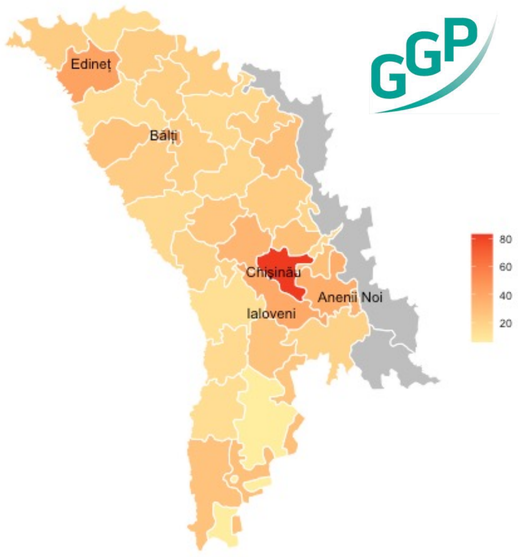

Fig 1. Cumulative Cases of COVID-19 per thousand as of 21st December 2020

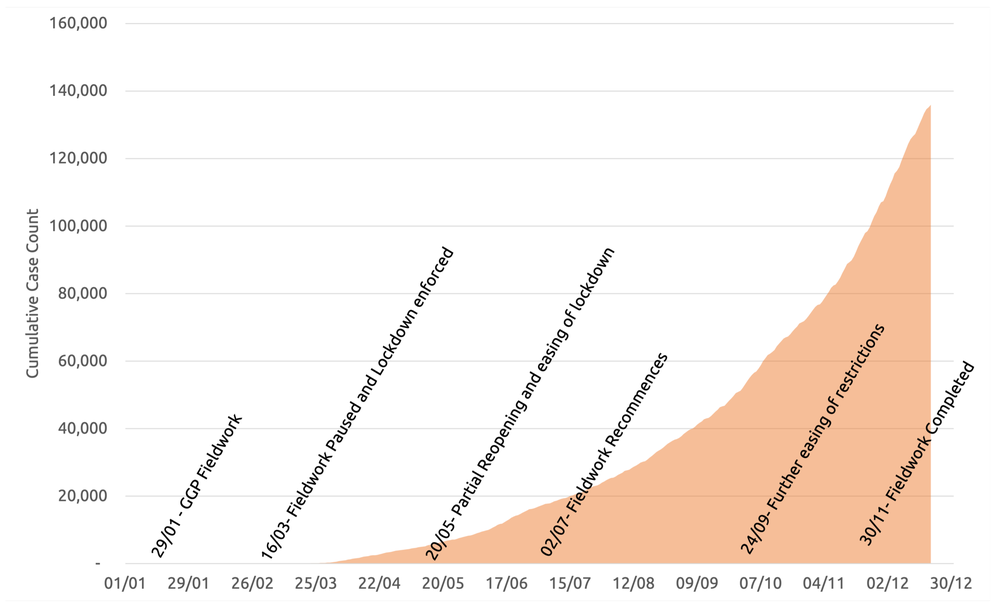

Fig 2. Cumulative Cases of COVID-19 and timeline of events

METHODS

For the analysis we restricted the sample to those who were aged 18-49 and were in a cohbaiting relationship at the time of the interview. The four dichotomous dependent variables were:

1) Did you have sexual intercourse in the past 4 weeks? *(Yes or No)*
2) Are you or your partner using or doing any of these things to prevent pregnancy at this time? *(Condom, Pills, Intrauterine Device (IUD), Diaphragm, Foam/Cream/Jelly/Suppository, Injectables, Implants, Pesona, Morning after pill, Withdrawal, safe period method, vaginal ring, female condom)*
3) Are you or your current partner trying to get pregnant? (*Yes or No)*
4) Do you intend to have a/another child during the next three years? *(Definitely yes, probably yes, coded as yes, other answers coded as no)*

Tabela 1. Dependent Variables

	(1) Pre Lockdown		(2) Post Lockdown	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
Had intercourse	0.852	0.356	0.886	0.318
Contraceptive Use	0.389	0.488	0.408	0.492
Trying to Conceive	0.087	0.282	0.059	0.235
Fertility Intention	0.331	0.471	0.350	0.477
Observations	734		1909	

A logit model was run each dependent variable with an indicator for Pre/Post Lockdown and the following controls.

Tabela 2. Independent Variables

	(1) Pre Lockdown		(2) Post Lockdown	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
Age	36.413	7.677	35.819	7.618
Sex of Respondent [Ref = Female]	0.357	0.479	0.327	0.469
Education Level	0.337	0.473	0.361	0.481
Employment Status	0.658	0.475	0.654	0.476
Number of Coresident Children	1.598	1.145	1.553	1.044
Urban Resident	0.475	0.500	0.335	0.472
Willingness to answer	0.655	0.476	0.653	0.476
Observations	734		1909	

RESULTS

Tabela 3. Results of logistic regression on pre & post population [Log Odds]

	(1) Had sex	(2) CU	(3) CU	(4) Trying	(5) Intention	(6) Intention
Post Lockdown	0.326**	0.138	0.0515	-0.608***	0.00208	-0.0359
	(2.58)	(1.66)	(0.46)	(-3.98)	(0.02)	(-0.32)
Age	-0.0129	-0.0240***	-0.0237***	-0.0267**	-0.117***	-0.117***
	(-1.65)	(-4.77)	(-4.72)	(-2.91)	(-18.53)	(-18.54)
Sex of Respondent [Ref = Female]	1.175***	-0.218**	-0.215**	0.0985	0.714***	0.715***
	(8.83)	(-2.90)	(-2.85)	(0.68)	(8.24)	(8.25)
Number of Coresident Children	-0.0799	0.0421	0.0431	-0.674***	-0.572***	-0.573***
	(-1.53)	(1.18)	(1.21)	(-8.48)	(-12.59)	(-12.60)
Higher Education [Ref = No]	0.241	0.382***	0.376***	-0.0467	-0.0204	-0.0213
	(1.77)	(4.58)	(4.49)	(-0.29)	(-0.21)	(-0.22)
Working	0.385**	0.187*	0.185*	0.103	-0.0222	-0.0180
	(3.21)	(2.27)	(2.25)	(0.64)	(-0.24)	(-0.19)
Urban	0.164	0.0316	-0.0994	0.0231	0.272**	0.270**
	(1.23)	(0.38)	(-0.71)	(0.15)	(2.87)	(2.85)
Willingness to answer [1-10]	0.0591	-0.407***	-0.411***	0.203	0.00303	0.00806
	(0.49)	(-5.26)	(-5.30)	(1.29)	(0.03)	(0.09)
Others Present	0.0783	0.377***	0.377***	-0.350	-0.0770	-0.0762
	(0.48)	(3.81)	(3.82)	(-1.59)	(-0.67)	(-0.67)
Post Lockdown X Urban			0.194			
			(1.16)			
Drop in Income=1						0.0661
						(0.66)
Post Lockdown X Drop in Income=1						0
						(.)
Constant	1.611***	0.263	0.323	-0.597	3.979***	3.978***
	(4.70)	(1.19)	(1.42)	(-1.48)	(15.01)	(15.01)
Observations	2289	2230	2230	2220	2114	2114

t statistics in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

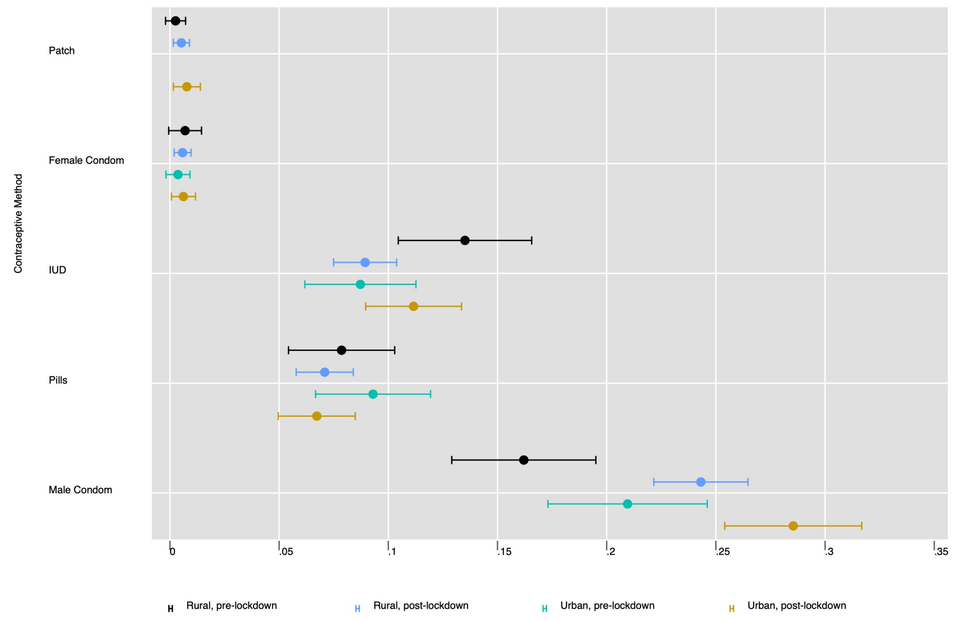

Fig 3. Marginal effects at the mean of contraceptive use pre and post lockdown

CONCLUSIONS

1. There was a 34.5% drop in individuals trying to conceive immediately post lockdown, reflecting a sharp dip in short term fertility intentions
2. Long term fertility intentions were unaffected. GGP is longitudinal, it will be crucial to return and see who was able to actually realize these intentions.
3. Access to modern contraceptives was maintained but particularly in rural areas there was noticeable shift from medical assisted methods (i.e. IUD) toward self administered methods like male condoms. This may have consequences for femalle autonomy in contraceptive use and access to medical professionals in discussing contraceptive use.

Full text of the paper is available via the QR code. It is also forthcoming in PLOSone

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