

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Pregnancy Choices in the UK

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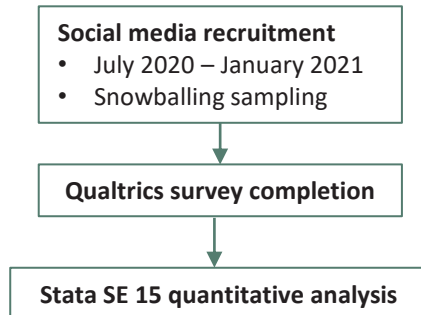
BACKGROUND

- COVID-19 pandemic has led to societal upheaval
 - limited support networks
 - unemployment
 - Increased burden on carers
- These may impact on women's decision making about pregnancy

OBJECTIVES

- Understand how the pandemic impacted
 - decision making related to pregnancy
 - abortion healthcare experiences in the UK

METHODS



Inclusion criteria (self-reported):

- had an abortion since January 2020 and/or pregnant and considered abortion
- Over 18 years old
- Able to read English
- Residing in the UK

Exclusion criterion:

- No physical ability to become pregnant

70% reported it was the wrong time to be pregnant, however, only 17% said this was directly due to the pandemic.

How worried were you about the not being able to afford a baby and/or childcare?

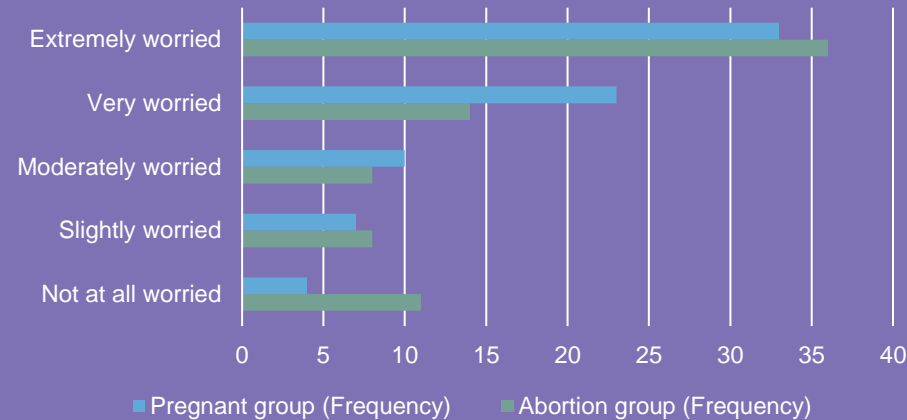


Figure 1. Survey results demonstrating participants' level of worry about not being able to afford a baby/childcare.

Half were "very" or "extremely" worried about being pregnant during the pandemic.

RESULTS

- 165 participants
 - Average age: 28 (18-43)
 - 42% household income of less than £20,000
 - Average gravidity: 3 (0-35)
 - 84% white, 5% mixed/multiple ethnic groups, 3% Asian/Asian British, 3% Black/Black British, 5% other/prefer not to say
- 53% had an abortion during the pandemic.
 - 85% <10 weeks pregnant; 86% had a medical abortion
- 47% were pregnant and ambivalent at the time of survey with an average gestational age of 6 weeks.
- 62% who considered abortion did not delay accessing care because of the pandemic.
- 44% reported that pandemic impacted pregnancy plans or intention for family size; 61% of this group wanting to delay pregnancy.
- 69% were "very" or "extremely" worried about not being able to afford a baby and/or childcare regardless of the pandemic (Fig 1.).
- 50% were "moderately" to "extremely" distressed about the employment and financial impact of the pandemic.

DISCUSSION

- The pandemic impacted reproductive experiences and decisions, with many having an abortion and wanting to delay pregnancy until after the pandemic.
- Despite concerns about pandemic-based restrictions, accessing abortion was not delayed.
- Financial insecurity was primary pregnancy-related concern.
- Limitation: small sample size with lack of racial/ethnic diversity.
- More qualitative research is necessary to understand the direct and indirect ways sustained socio-economic upheaval related to the pandemic impact pregnancy decision making.