Potential impact of COVID-19 on fertility in selected Eastern and South-Eastern Asian territories

Stuart Gietel-Basten
Professor of Social Science and Public Policy
Director, Center for Aging Science

NB All territories are referred to by UN-ISO3 standard. No political statement is meant.
Structures and systems

❖ Higher income: low fertility ’baked in’? (LFT; cohort; momentum; policy; culture)
❖ Middle- & low-income: No evidence of stall (even in TLS!)
❖ Where will they end? Biggest theoretical, practical question!

❖ What might be the role of COVID-19? Especially relatively light exposure (with some very important exceptions)
S.Korea’s fertility rate falls to lowest in the world amidst COVID-19 concerns

The Republic Of Korea

Hong Kong’s shortage of births goes from bad to worse as Covid-19 health risks deter women from having babies

- It’s hard to think about starting a family now, but experts say women must mind their body clock
- Having a baby remains a personal choice, but ‘vaccinated women don’t need to wait to conceive’
There’s no denying that [CHN; TWN; HKG & KOR] have done an impressive job of keeping Covid-19 death tolls low. But they, and others, are likely to have declining fertility rates, which will cost their economies dearly down the road.
Covid-19: The Philippines and its lockdown baby boom

By Howard Johnson & Virma Simonette & Flora Drury
BBC News
23 December 2020

Pandemic-fuelled baby boom has many Indonesians worried

The Jakarta Post

Indonesia’s New Coronavirus Concern: A Post-Pandemic Baby Boom

With restrictions in place, millions stopped visiting clinics for contraceptives, says the government, which promotes family planning as part of its fight against child malnutrition.
COVID-19 and fertility (Aassve et al 2020)

Possible post-pandemic fertility trajectories according to regional income level
The social measures aimed at reducing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infection may be expected to have different effects on fertility, depending on societies’ development and stage of the demographic transition, and ultimately, on population density and age distribution. ART, assisted reproductive technology.
A downward trend...
NOT births; REGISTRATIONS
30 days to register or small fine

Therefore, NOT conceptions!

Historically avoid December... Youngest in school
Need to understand effect

Birth registration and "conception" month, ROK

The Human Fertility Database
Short-Term Fertility Fluctuations

HKUST
Decline appears to slow

25.3k in Jan 2021
South Korea: New enhancements to parental and family leaves

Provisions extend paternity leave and flexibility of time off for child and family care, which could impact workforce planning for multinationals.

25.3k in Jan 2021
Waves of COVID-19 Cases in HKG

Number of daily confirmed cases by transmission type and waves and seven-day averages, Hong Kong (n = 11,006, January 23 2020 to February 28 2021).

Source: Hong Kong Center for Health Protection, Department of Health; seven-day averages are authors' calculation.
Downward trend

Less seasonality than KOR

Source: HKCSD 2020
HKG, 2019-202x?

Social movement *into* COVID-19

Birth rate decreased due to social unrest

Secretary for Labour and Welfare Lau Chi-king said the birth rate for the first 11 months last year fell 17 percent year-on-year, to 40,360.
November to February: Relative calm
Registered births & 'conceptions', indexed to June

Index

0.00 0.20 0.40 0.60 0.80 1.00 1.20 1.40 1.60 1.80

1-4 2-5 3-6 4-7 5-8 6-9 7-10 8-11 9-12 10-1 11-2 12-3

Birth-Conception

2016 2017 2018 2019 2020
Security lockdown in city as Hong Kong government and police headquarters are barricaded with water barriers to ‘prepare for the worst’ with protesters

- Police also tell organiser Civil Human Rights Front to shorten its proposed march route, ending the event in Wan Chai rather than in Central
- Organisers expect 50,000 people to join the march but police sources say the force anticipates a higher turnout

Back to registered births

42 days to register

Actual birth dates in microdata; coming out June 2021...

Only one data point :-)

Registered births & 'conceptions', indexed to June
Hong Kong tourist figures collapse, with arrivals down almost 100 per cent in April

Extended maternity leave explained
December 4, 2020
THA: Downward trend!

Thailand's total fertility rate drops to alarmingly low level

Registered births, Thailand

Registered births (000s)

Registered births by month, Thailand

15 days :-D

2 data points... :-/
Official Statistics Registration System

Future Forward Party dissolved late Feb 2020
Future Forward Party dissolved late Feb 2020

BABY BONUS! 1 Jan 2020
฿3k per month in pregnancy
฿10k for birth costs
2020-21?

Thai Prime Minister reassures public after most severe COVID-19 wave
HCMC sees fertility rate increase in 2020

By Thu Anh  March 27, 2021 | 00:00 am GMT+7

A newborn baby at Tu Du Hospital in HCMC, January 2020. Photo by VnExpress/Le Cnam.
The magnitude of the potential impact is substantial. If the community quarantine continues until the end of 2020, we can expect that at the national level, the CPR will be reduced by 7.4% and modern CPR by 7.7%. Moreover, every month of community quarantine translates to an expected average increase of

- 218,000 women with unmet need for FP
- 79,000 unintended pregnancies
- 60 maternal deaths
- 17,000 cases of induced abortions, and
- 12,000 women to experience intimate partner violence.

And if the community quarantine will extend beyond 2020, the impact will become greater.
Number of live births by month: PHL, 2018-2020
PUBLIC ADVISORY

In compliance with President Rodrigo Roa Duterte’s Proclamation No. 929 and 922 (s. 2020) and Republic Act No. 11332, following the sharp increase in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases throughout the country, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) adopts the following on the imposition of the Enhanced Community Quarantine and the Stringent Social Distancing Measures over the entire Luzon, and selected areas in Visayas and Mindanao.

1. Closure of Metro Manila and all Civil Registration System (CRS) outlets in Luzon to transacting public requesting for the copy issuance of civil registry documents (Birth, Marriage, Death certificates, CENOMAR, & Advisory on Marriage) until 14 April 2020;

2. Visayas and Mindanao CRS outlets will continue to open to the general public, adopting a skeletal workforce to support operations, as well as implementing strict social distancing measures;

3. Online application of civil registry documents via the internet http://www.psserbillis.com.ph will be temporarily closed effective 17 March 2020 until further notice, and;

4. SM BREQS for Luzon will be temporary unavailable until further notice.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

CLAIRE DENNIS S. MAPA, Ph.D.
Undersecretary
National Statistician and Civil Registrar General

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Reference No. 21CRS00-04-1800

02 May 2021

PUBLIC ADVISORY

In compliance with the declaration placing the National Capital Region, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal under Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) until 14 May 2021, the general public is hereby informed that the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) shall implement the following:

1. Civil Registration System (CRS) outlets located in areas placed under MECQ such as those in Metro Manila, Cavite, and Laguna shall be OPEN ONLY TO THOSE WHO HAVE PRIOR APPOINTMENTS. To be accommodated in these outlets, proof of prior appointment from the PSA-Query Verification Unit (QVU) email must be presented. Only requests for an appointment due to urgent matters or emergency cases identified in Attachment 1 shall be considered. A valid proof of emergency must be submitted through:
   a. the following emails:
      crs.qvu1@psa.gov.ph
      crs.qvu2@psa.gov.ph
      crs.qvu3@psa.gov.ph
   b. telephone numbers (02) 8461-0500 loc. 702 and 703.
Levels of relationships

**Primary** - mortality (Regional experience *quite* low)

**Secondary** - economic fallout, ‘life disruption’ (WFH, schooling), uncertainty, health systems etc

*Other things going on! Policies! Social movements! LT trends! Tempo effect!*
Shouldn’t jump to conclusions

Just because of what we expect; simple correlation on few data points
Wait for more, clearer data; longer time series; surveys
Overlapping, ongoing factors shaping family building
At the behest of specific, affected registration systems

Look at Marriage [but e.g. THA 50% under-reg!]; and Migration too
Qualitative assessment of changing holistic circumstances
Avoid reductionist narrative

As someone who is working from home, I feel lucky because [if I were pregnant], I won't need to ask for sick days if I were to feel nauseous or have morning sickness (Eustachia Retno)

Expectant mother Wenni Ayuningtyas said social distancing rules are "ideal" during pregnancy. "I'm not having to deal with many people or take public transportation for my usual commute"

Acknowledgements

Wiraporn Pothisiri
Rachel Ganly

The Human Fertility Database

Short-Term Fertility Fluctuations