

# Pandemic tied to declining birth rates for U.S., much of Europe

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(HealthDay)—Birth rates tend to fall during pandemics, and history is

repeating itself with the COVID-19 scourge, researchers say.

Fewer babies have been born in much of Europe and the United States. Earlier in the pandemic, U.S. births declined 7%, a new study finds.

In Europe, [birth](#) declines varied. In Italy they dropped 9%, in Spain 8% and Portugal 7%, while in Denmark, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands [birth rates](#) did not go down.

"When compared to the large fall in southern Europe, the relative stability of [crude birth rates] in northern Europe points to the role of policies in support of families and employment in reducing any impact on births," the researchers noted.

"The bottom line is that there was a lot of variation across countries in the decline," said study co-author Seth Sanders, a professor of economics at Cornell University.

"We don't address why, but we think a lot of it has to do with the degree of economic disruption, coupled with the degree of social support in the absence of employment," Sanders said in a university news release.

For the study, the researchers used monthly live birth data for 22 high-income countries from January 2016 to March 2021. They then matched data on monthly live births with mid-year population estimates from the United Nations Population Division's World Population Prospects.

The report was published recently in the journal [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#).

**More information:** For more on COVID-19, see the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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