

Coronavirus hits Italian birth rate

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The coronavirus crisis has hit Italy's already historically-low birth rate, new projections from the national statistics agency reveal.

Italy had last year already recorded its lowest number of births for 150 years, at 420,000, but this could fall to 408,000 in 2020 and 393,000 in

2021, according to Istat.

The projections were presented by Istat chief, Gian Carlo Blangiardo, to lawmakers on Tuesday.

"The climate of fear and uncertainty as well as financial difficulties... caused by recent events will have a [negative effect](#) on the fertility of Italian couples," he said.

"The demographic recession that has hit Italy since 2015 is significant and translates into a real collapse that has no equivalent in Italian history, except if we go back to 1917-18, with World War I and the dramatic effects of the Spanish flu," Blangiardo said.

Women and [young people](#) have been particularly badly affected by the [crisis](#) caused by [coronavirus](#), which first hit Italy earlier this year, sparking an economically crippling national lockdown.

The hospitality industry in particular is still suffering as a result of a nationwide night curfew and early closing for bars and restaurants introduced to stem a new wave of infections, while even tighter restrictions are in place in the regions most at risk.

Employment among [women](#) fell by 1.9 percent between February and September this year, compared to 1.1 percent for men, as people were more likely to lose their jobs during lockdown and see a slower recovery, according to Istat.

It warned that the crisis was "amplifying existing inequalities in the [labour market](#)".

The pandemic destroyed 80 percent of jobs gained by women since the financial crisis of 2008.

Between 2008 and 2019, Italy recorded an extra 602,000 jobs held by women. But it only took three months between April and June this year to lose 470,000 of them.

In Italy, only half of women work, compared to 73 percent in Germany, 62 percent in France and 58 percent in Spain. Only Greece has a worst female employment level in Europe, at just 47 percent.

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