

Covid blamed for biggest drop in French births in 45 years

February 25 2021

The number of babies born in France in January fell by 13 percent, the biggest drop in 45 years which statisticians on Thursday linked to the coronavirus pandemic.

The 53 900 [babies](#) born in January 2021, down from 62,180 in January 2020, were conceived at the start of the first nationwide lockdown imposed by France in March 2020 to halt the spread of Covid-19.

National statistics agency INSEE said that the "context of a health crisis and huge uncertainty may have discouraged couples from procreating or prompted them to postpone their parenting project for several months".

"Considerations relating to the possible transmission of the virus from the mother to the newborn could also have played a role," INSEE added.

In 2020, the number of births in France fell to its lowest level since World War II, with 735,000 children being born.

Insee noted that some of the decline was obviously unrelated to the pandemic, given that most of the children born in 2020 were conceived before Covid-19 began to spread around the world in early 2020.

"But the fact that the decline in January 2021 is the strongest since the end of the baby boom, and that it followed an already marked decline in December 2020 leaves little doubt about the important role played by the context of the pandemic," it said.

The coming months will show whether the decline in births recorded in December and January was an "isolated phenomenon at the start of the [pandemic](#)" or "the start of a more of sustained trend", the agency said.

In 2020, the [birth rate](#) in France fell to 1.84 children per woman, compared with 1.86 in 2019.

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Citation: Covid blamed for biggest drop in French births in 45 years (2021, February 25)
retrieved 11 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-02-covid-blamed-biggest-french-births.html>

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