

The Short-Term Reproductive Consequences of Genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda

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ABSTRACT: How did genocide affect short-term fertility rates in Bosnia and Rwanda? During and immediately after genocide, both countries experienced a rapid reduction in the birth rate due to factors such as spousal separation, increased miscarriages, and delayed births. Yet this reduction in the birth rate should have been tempered by two countervailing factors. First, the social collapse associated with genocide drastically reduced the availability and/or safety of accessing reproductive health services. Second, mass rape was widely used as a weapon of war during both genocides. Drawing from a multi-method, multi-site study involving data analysis from nationally-representative household surveys and 117 qualitative interviews with women in both countries, I assess the relative importance of several factors on fertility trends during and immediately after genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda. Despite widely divergent pre-war reproductive contexts, there were important similarities in the effects of genocide on short-term birth rates in both countries.

Please contact author directly (sarahs@demog.berkeley.edu) for a copy of the full paper.