

R075 : Did periods of 'lock down' demonstrate higher incidences of reported intimate partner violence, mental disorder, or drug and alcohol use during pregnancy? – QUB

There has been increasing concern about increased levels of domestic abuse during the COVID pandemic lock downs. Worryingly, the Guardian newspaper reported that domestic abuse killings 'more than doubled' amid Covid-19 lock down. However, research from different countries does not seem to reach a consensus on the levels of increase or even if there was an increase at all. This project seeks to compare self-reported domestic abuse levels during COVID, specifically during lockdown, with the levels of domestic abuse reported before the pandemic.

There has also been concerns at how the COVID-19 pandemic, and the associated lock downs, has impacted mental health and perinatal mental health in particular. Studies have suggested increases in the prevalence of depression in Belgium and China in pregnant women but there are no comparable figures for a Northern Ireland context.

This project aims to compare the rates of self-reported intimate partner violence, mental disorder, or drug and alcohol use during pregnancy in Northern Ireland women during the COVID pandemic (but non-lock down), those periods of strict 'lock down' and previous time periods before the COVID pandemic. This will allow us to see the effect of the pandemic and associated restrictions on the domestic abuse and mental health of pregnant women throughout Northern Ireland.

This will also allow to us to investigate a secondary aim of comparing self-report figures from this data set to other publically available figures (for examples, Police Service of NI publish monthly figures).

Project Aims:

The project aims to use the NIMATS data set to compare self-reported levels of intimate partner violence, mental disorder, or drug and alcohol use across 6 months (January to June) for three years (2018, 2019, 2020).

This will allow us to estimate the effect of the pandemic in general and also specific periods of lock down on perinatal mental health and domestic abuse in Northern Ireland compared to previous years.

A secondary aim is to compare self-report figures from this data set to other publically available data.