Population processes & data in crisis & conflict settings

Session convenors: Rosanna Le Voir and Orsola Torrisi (London School of Economics)

9.00am Tuesday 6 September

Estimating demographic profiles for Afghan refugees in Iran
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Accurate refugee statistics are vital for humanitarian, organisational, operational, logistical and advocacy purposes. However, in many cases, data on such populations is difficult to obtain and the populations themselves may be difficult to access for data collection purposes. The University of Southampton was commissioned by the Global Data Service of the United Nations Refugee Agency to investigate the feasibility of estimating refugee demographics for population of Afghan refugees in Iran. The Afghan refugee population in Iran is large and relatively well established, with large flows of refugees fleeing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, and subsequent movements resulting from the Taliban take-overs in the 1990s and in 2021. Estimation of the refugee population is complicated because there is also a considerable undocumented Afghan population in Iran. This paper employs a probabilistic projection method to produce population age-sex profiles for the years 2006-2020 that are consistent with the observed total refugee numbers in the 2006, 2015 and 2020. IPUMS 2006 census micro-data is used to inform assumptions on the age sex structure of the population as well as fertility assumptions and mortality differentials with respect to the native Iranian population.

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Giving birth while facing death: The impact of organized violence on maternal and child health in Latin America
Signe Svallfors; Stockholm University

Exposure to organized violence during pregnancy has been linked to many deleterious maternal and child health outcomes such as stillbirth, low birth weight, and neonatal mortality. But past research has not sufficiently teased out differences between changes in health-seeking behavior, obstetric risks, and access to health care that might mediate organized violence and pregnancy outcomes. This article analyzes how in utero exposure to local violence correlates with C-sections in Latin America. By distinguishing between planned and urgent C-sections, the study adds understanding what changes to maternal and child healthcare utilization are driven by choice and by need. The comparative approach used in this study explores context-specific variations and generalizations of experiences across Latin America, where political disputes and organized crime have created multiple stressors that may impair maternal and child health. The analysis is based on a combination of novel harmonized micro-level data from IPUMS Global Health, new spatiotemporal information about organized violence from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, and subnational homicide statistics from Citizen Security. Multilevel regressions are used to net out geographically varying omitted factors that may confound health conditions and exposure to violence. The results add to existing knowledge about the intergenerational links between maternal and child health in conflict and other crises, and the importance of context for shaping health outcomes. The results from the article can inform policymakers wishing to promote the Sustainable Development Goals 3: Healthy Lives and Well-being, 5: Gender Equality, and 16: Promote Peace and End Violence.

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The demographic drivers of grief and memory after genocide in Guatemala
Diego Alburez-Gutierrez; Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research

Mortality crises are relatively common demographic events, but we know little about how they affect populations beyond excess mortality. Using a kinship perspective to study mortality crises provides valuable insights into (1) how excess mortality affects the exposure to kin loss, and (2) how family bereavement may contribute to the reproduction of historical memory in the long term. Here, I explore these two processes using a unique genealogical database from a genocide-affected population. One-third of the population of study were killed, but two-thirds of the population were left bereaved (the top 10% most affected individuals lost 23% of their extended family relatives). Notably, the proportion of the population related to a victim did not change between 1983 and 2015. The persistence of family bereavement can be interpreted as a prolongation of grief or as a driver of historical memory.

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The casualties of war: An excess mortality estimate of lives lost in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
Ariel Karlinsky[1], Orsola Torrisi[2]; [1]Hebrew University,[2]London School of Economics

Who and how many have died in the 2020 Karabakh War? While respective Ministries of Defence in Armenia, Azerbaijan and in the de facto Republic of Artsakh have provided scattered evidence on military casualties, little is known about the real death toll caused by the 44-days escalation of violence in and around Nagorno Karabakh. This paper provides a first independent assessment of the human cost of the conflict. Using detailed age-sex vital registration data from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Artsakh, we difference the 2020 mortality values from the expected value based on trends in mortality between 2015-2019 to offer sensible estimate of excess mortality resulting from the war. Net of Covid-19, we estimate that the war, among men and women aged 15-49, led to nearly 2,500 excess deaths in Armenia, 3,700 in Azerbaijan and 340 in Artsakh. The increase in mortality was selective and particularly sizable for young males. Excess deaths mainly affected male adolescents (aged 15-19) in Armenia, whereas in Azerbaijan and Artsakh deaths were concentrated among men aged 20-25, suggesting that most excess mortality was among combatants. Beyond the human tragedy, the loss of many young men represents an important long-term cost for Armenia and Azerbaijan's future labour force and human capital accumulation.

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