

# You are more likely to become pregnant if your colleagues are

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Pregnancies are contagious between colleagues in the workplace and between siblings in the family, reveals new research by the University of Cologne.

The study, conducted by Zafer Büyükkeçeci, Thomas Leopold, Henriette Engelhardt, and Ruben van Gaalen, found that if a colleague becomes a mother, the chances of further pregnancies in the workplace increases – and the same effect can be found between siblings.

The researchers analysed data from the Dutch systems of Social Statistical Datasets (SSD), which contains information about family members and workplaces of the whole Dutch population.

The study reveals that if a child is born to a sibling or a colleague, this can trigger a chain reaction because a person who has the desire to have a child can in turn influence their siblings, and then influence their own colleagues.

This suggests that mechanisms such as social learning can lead to a contagious spread of fertility through social networks.

“We suspect that this kind of effect happens in the workplace primarily due to social learning; colleagues may influence each other’s fertility decisions because they can learn from them about the consequences of becoming a parent, and how parenthood influences work and family life,” says Professor Leopold.

The research also revealed that people who are of reproductive age, and who rarely experience births among their siblings and colleagues, are less likely to have children.

Furthermore, a simulation showed that without the contagion effects, the numbers of pregnancies would drop by 5.8% without colleague effects and by 1.5% without sibling effects.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13524-019-00841-yJournal?>

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