

40 YEARS

since the first IVF birth...

...the global fertility industry is now worth billions.
Do profits put the health of women and children at risk?

IVF has opened a path to genetically related children for people who are infertile, LGBTQ, and/or single. At the same time, failure rates remain high, the technology poses significant safety risks, and the industry profiting from it is virtually unregulated.

IVF Facts

- > ~7 million babies worldwide
- > ~\$15 billion global market
- > 460+ US clinics
- > 20,000+ US women have frozen their eggs

High Failure Rates

- > ~20 million failed cycles:
Less than 30% of IVF cycles result in a live birth
- > Clinics self-report failure rates and may under-report or misrepresent them
- > Little or no support for those who experience IVF-related losses

Safety risks: unknown or dismissed

- > No longitudinal studies have been conducted on the health effects of egg retrieval on "donors," and few on women undergoing egg retrieval for their own IVF treatment. Without this information, meaningful informed consent is not possible.
- > A common short-term problem, Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS), is often described as rare. But a growing body of research and anecdotal evidence suggests that the 1% incidence for severe OHSS reported by the American Society for Reproductive Medicine is a significant underestimate.
- > Despite efforts to reduce multiple embryo transfers, clinics still use this practice in more than half of IVF cycles in the US, increasing the likelihood of multiple births and associated adverse effects for pregnant women and for children.

The assisted reproduction industry: misleading marketing and minimal accountability

- > The US industry is "self-regulated" through professional bodies, with minimal federal or state oversight of clinics or third-party brokers. There are numerous reports of misleading advertising, as well as abuses and misconduct, by IVF providers and third-party intermediaries. In contrast, every country in the European Union (except Ireland) has national legislation.
- > Compensation to egg providers can go as high as the market will allow, sometimes up to \$100,000, creating an environment of commodification and potential exploitation of young women.



Donor anonymity and the rights of children

- > The majority of adult donor-conceived offspring think they should have the right to know the identity of their donors.
- > A number of countries prohibit anonymous donation to affirm the rights of children. Yet in the US, anonymity is the norm.

Surrogacy

- > Surrogacy is a global industry. Eggs, sperm, embryos, intended parents and surrogates cross multiple borders.
- > Intended parents often hire surrogates in poorer countries, exacerbating power imbalances in surrogacy arrangements.
- > Surrogates often have no independent legal counsel or medical care.
- > An increasing number of countries ban commercial surrogacy to prevent exploitation of poor women.
- > Intended parents and children are sometimes caught in a shifting and contradictory web of citizenship laws.

IVF is inaccessible to most people

- > IVF and accompanying treatments are expensive. Most US states don't require insurance companies to cover them, and many people cannot afford to pay out of pocket. No state Medicaid programs cover IVF.
- > Some state laws, insurance companies, and fertility clinic policies allow only married heterosexual couples to access IVF, excluding lesbian, gay, and trans couples, and single people.

Genetic screening and disability injustice

- > Genetic screening and selection technologies often used with IVF aim to prevent the births of children with a genetic disease or disability. This takes place in a culture filled with misinformation, negative attitudes, and discriminatory policies and practices toward people with disabilities, giving intended parents limited or inaccurate information with which to make decisions.

Egg freezing

- > More US women are freezing their eggs to delay childbearing: about 6200 in 2015, up from 475 in 2009. Success rates are hard to predict since the number who have attempted IVF pregnancies from frozen eggs is small. But egg freezing is marketed as if it's almost a sure way to have children later.
- > In a recent UC San Francisco study, a significant number of women who froze their eggs greatly overestimated the likelihood of having a child using them. Half said they experienced regret about their decision.

What's on the horizon...?

- > The first IVF birth made possible technological and social realities we could not have imagined at the time. Now we face the prospect of controlling the genes of future generations through gene editing technologies like CRISPR, despite unknown health risks to children who would be genetically engineered or to women who would carry them as fetuses.
- > We have not given enough thought to reproductive gene editing's social, ethical, and policy consequences. It's time for broad public discussions of this urgent social justice issue.

More Information

Center for Genetics and Society
ReproTech Truths
Surrogacy360
Black Women for Wellness

Our Bodies Ourselves
We Are Egg Donors
Donor Sibling Registry