

5 Things to Know About In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

Patrick Brown, Ethics and Public Policy Center

1

Myth: Expanding public funding for IVF will boost birth rates

Fact: Virtually no nation that has publicly subsidized IVF has seen a subsequent increase in birth rates

Countries like Japan, Hungary, and Australia have implemented public IVF funding, yet their overall fertility rates have continued to decline. This is partly because IVF gives some couples a false sense of security, leading them to delay trying to get pregnant, yet IVF success falls rapidly after age 35. The main exception is Israel, which complements IVF funding with a broadly pro-family culture and generous spending on child benefits.

2

Myth: Expanding public funding for IVF is uncontroversial

Fact: The U.S.' light-touch regulations around assisted reproduction raises questions about patient safety and bioethics concerns

The U.S. has some of the fewest restrictions around IVF in the world; the last major regulation was passed in 1992, and most nations require much higher standards of patient care from fertility clinics. Additionally, the U.S. permits practices, such as eugenic embryo screening and sex selection, which raise serious concerns and are impermissible in many other countries.

3

Myth: Expanding public funding for IVF is inexpensive

Fact: Depending on the way it's implemented, expanding public subsidy for IVF could lead to higher health care costs or raise federal expenditures

The average cost of an IVF cycle is around \$15,000, and many need more than one cycle to successfully become pregnant. If insurers are required to cover this cost without co-payments for all who want it, it will lead to a perceptible increase in health insurance premiums for workers and families. If the federal government were to assume those costs, the fiscal impact would be at least \$80 billion over a ten-year budget window.

4

Myth: Expanding public funding for IVF is the best way to help couples with infertility

Fact: Many couples have higher success with restorative reproductive health approaches, such as those championed by the MAHA movement

Many couples struggling with infertility achieve better outcomes through restorative reproductive medicine, such as NaProTechnology or hormonal therapies. This fits the Make America Healthy Again agenda, which emphasizes holistic solutions and long-term well-being over high-intervention treatments. And while the IRS does currently limit tax-deductibility of IVF expenses to married couples, many fertility clinics apply the concept of "social infertility" to provide IVF services to single parents or third-parties.

5

Myth: Expanding public funding for IVF is a political winner

Fact: While polls do show helping couples face fertility is broadly popular, most polls do not put that top-line support in context

Polls tend to show broad support for IVF in theory, but few have polled the question against a backdrop of ethical concerns or higher costs. Polling for public benefits often falls when voters are informed about the impact it will have on their cost of living. Additionally, despite the attempts to attack President Trump over the politics of reproduction into an albatross in 2024, very few polls suggest his discussion of IVF costs were a top issue for many voters.