



# Are Infertility Rates Rising?

---

The infertility rate in the Middle East is higher than in other parts of the world, according to a study conducted by market research firm Colliers. The UAE is one of the countries who are most afflicted by these rising rates of infertility, with experts blaming lifestyle choices for the phenomenon.

But while the decision to have children later in life, alongside poor physical health, might explain why Emiratis are visiting IVF treatment centres in greater numbers than ever before, it's not the only factor. The country's status as a global leader in medicine means that a multitude of medical tourists also flock to the UAE to obtain treatment that simply isn't available in their home nation.

## Infertility on the rise

The Colliers report found that around 15% of those living in the Middle East suffer from infertility, with a near 50/50 split between men and women. By contrast, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that the global infertility rate sits at just 10%, with women more commonly affected than men.

Indeed, the UAE spends its fair share on IVF and other fertility treatments. Over \$200 million is spent in the sector each year, which is not far behind the \$300 million expended in Saudi Arabia and the \$500 million in Egypt. That doesn't tell the whole story, however, since the UAE has a population three times smaller than the former and over ten times smaller than the latter. As such, Emiratis spend considerably more on fertility therapies than their regional counterparts.

## A range of factors

One of the principal causes behind the outsized infertility rates is the fact that many people are waiting until later in their lives to try and start a family. More and more young professionals spend their 20s and early 30s concentrating on their career, only considering settling down when they reach their late 30s – by which time the egg and sperm quality of their bodies may have deteriorated.

Another crucial contributing factor is the largely sedentary lifestyle in the UAE. Searing temperatures mean that many people rarely venture outside to exercise – even for just a walk – while the convenience of fast food and the propensity to smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol further compromises their health. This, in turn, has a knock-on effect on their reproductive systems.



## Medical tourism

It isn't just those living in the country who visit its IVF clinics, however. Indeed, as many as a third of the 1,000 patients at one prominent facility in Dubai are foreigners who have come to take advantage of the country's advanced medicine and technological prowess. These medical tourists can skew the figures and make it appear as though the infertility rate among Emiratis is higher than it actually is.

The UAE has long been renowned as a world leader in the field of healthcare and its pioneering use of [mass spectrometry in clinical applications](#) such as fertility, among its many other impressive academic credentials, mark it out as a family planning treatment hotspot. The legalisation of “family balancing” – which allows prospective parents to choose the gender of their baby prior to impregnation – is another reason why many people choose to undergo IVF in the UAE instead of their home country.