

The Contribution of Medically Assisted Reproduction to Fertility in Italy

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Medically Assisted Reproduction (MAR) is exerting a growing impact on childbirth in wealthy nations, especially on fertility at advanced reproductive ages. No study has yet analyzed the impact of MAR on total fertility in Italy, the country with the latest age at first birth in Europe. The present study addresses this oversight by analyzing the contribution of MAR to total and age-specific fertility rates by parity. To this end, we offer an estimate of the impact of MAR treatments on fertility in Italy by linking two different administrative data sources: the Birth Assistance Certificate dataset administered by the Ministry of Health and the register of live births administered by ISTAT, the National Statistical Office. This paper is timely as the significance of MAR on Italian fertility is expected to grow as a new law comes into effect: with the introduction of the Essential Levels of Care for MAR set to begin on January 1, 2024, the Italian Human Reproduction Society anticipates a notable rise in the number of couples seeking MAR treatments. It is projected that the proportion of children born via MAR will surpass 5% of all births in the general population in Italy, a substantial increase from the 3.7% observed in 2022.