

Do Age Restrictions on IVF Increase Fertility? Evidence from the Introduction of Age Limits in Japan*

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January 22, 2026

Abstract

This study examines how age restrictions on IVF affect treatment utilization and fertility. While age limits clearly reduce IVF use among women above the cutoff age, they may induce younger women to seek treatment earlier, potentially increasing overall fertility given that IVF success rates decline sharply with maternal age. We exploit a policy change in Japan that introduced an age limit of 43 years for government subsidies covering IVF treatment. Using national registry data from 2011 to 2021 and an age-bin-level difference-in-differences design, we find that the age limit significantly increased IVF utilization among women under 43, while overall treatment rates remained relatively stable as women aged 43 and older continued treatment through out-of-pocket payments. Consequently, the age restriction led to a moderate increase in births resulting from IVF, driven primarily by increased treatment among younger women with higher success rates.

Keywords: IVF, age limit, bin-level difference-in-differences design, fertility
JEL classification : D72, H51, I18

*We thank Kento Nagahara and Shuhei Kondo for their valuable comments and suggestions. We also appreciate insights from seminar participants at Hitotsubashi University. We gratefully acknowledge financial support from JSPS Kakenhi (Grant Number: 23H00830). All remaining errors are our own.

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