

Fertility Futures Pulse Report 2025: Key Findings

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Overview

Across the world, fertility rates are dropping. But while this trend is widespread, the UK's decline is both steeper and swifter than that of its global peers, making it not just part of a global shift, but a demographic outlier with urgent national consequences.

Globally, the fertility rate has fallen from around **3 children per woman in 1990** to approximately **2.25 in 2023**, according to UN data. Two-thirds of the world now live in countries below the replacement level of **2.1**, with the UK figure being **1.41**. This marks a pivot from decades of population growth to the looming prospect of long-term decline. Some projections suggest the global population may peak closer to 2055, not 2084 as previously expected.

This is not simply a story of personal choice. Fertility decline is being driven by delayed parenthood, structural socioeconomic pressures, and widespread misconceptions about the biological limits of reproduction.

56%

56% of UK women are **childless at age 30**, compared to **42%** a generation ago¹.



Women turning **18** now are on track to have just **one child by age 35**, compared to **nearly two** for their mothers' generation².

30s

Age-related infertility is **rising sharply**, yet most are unaware how **dramatically fertility declines after their early 30s**.

1 in 7

One in seven couples in the UK now experience **infertility**, roughly 3.5 million people.³

Despite the medical implications, the larger issue is informational. Fertility remains the blind spot of Britain's wellness revolution.

While menopause and periods have become mainstream topics, fertility is still cloaked in silence, rarely discussed outside of crisis moments and often framed either as taboo or as a success story against the odds.

Despite **1 in 7 couples experiencing fertility challenges**³, the UK lags behind comparable nations in awareness, education, and open dialogue.

In this paper we will:

- Demonstrate the current frequency of discussions around fertility and infertility
- Gain an understanding of the UK public's main sources of information and their attitudes towards its accuracy
- Reflect on societal attitudes towards fertility and reproductive health within the media

Research

The paper will report on the key findings from the Fertility Futures Project's 2025 survey and qualitative panel interviews that investigated the current levels of public awareness and openness surrounding topics of fertility and infertility. The research highlighted the size, scale and nature of the issues as well as the public's perception of where gaps in knowledge and understanding may lie and why that may be.

A nationwide survey of respondents was conducted between February and March 2025 covering a range of questions to understand how comfortable and frequently respondents were discussing fertility and infertility topics, where their main source of information comes from and their knowledge of specific fertility tests. We collected 5,000 total completes, with 3,000 respondents representative of the UK Population and an additional boost sample of 2,000 respondents aged 18-44 was included to gain deeper insights among a younger demographic.

Our findings from the survey were then widened through small focus group sessions with men and women aged from 18-50 with different relationships to fertility.

Relationship to Fertility	Age	Gender	No. required per session (No. attended)
Not actively trying	18-24	Women	4
Not actively trying	18-24	Men	4
Actively trying	20-32	Women	3
Actively trying	20-32	Men	3
Actively trying	33+	Women	3
Not actively trying	33+	Men	3 (2)
Considered/ tried but didn't pursue IVF	40-50	Women	3
IVF	Up to 50	Women	3

Relationships to Fertility Descriptions:

Not actively trying

Currently not actively trying for or planning to try for children in the near future, but imagine they are likely to want children in the future.

Actively trying

Currently actively trying for a baby or have a clear intention to start during 2025. Not to have been trying for more than c12 months.

Considered and/or tried but didn't pursue IVF

Considered having children, but when it didn't happen naturally decided not to pursue IVF or other routes to parenthood.

Undergoing or have undergone IVF

Potentially planning further cycles.



Fertility: The Wellness Blindspot

To understand the frequency of conversations currently being had, we asked our surveyed respondents how often they talk about several different topics which included mental health and wellbeing, menopause and fertility and reproductive health. **67%**⁴ of respondents reported “hardly ever” or “never” talking about fertility and reproductive health (F&RH). This response was significantly higher than the average “hardly ever” or “never” response bar menopause (**65%**)

“There’s still a **taboo around fertility;** we speak about everything else but not fertility. If someone can’t have a baby, we’re **not going to talk about it.**”

— Female, 40s, tried unsuccessfully

Despite only **13%** of those surveyed reporting that they only talk “all the time” or “often” about F&RH, this increased to **20-30%** in the younger age groups (16-44).

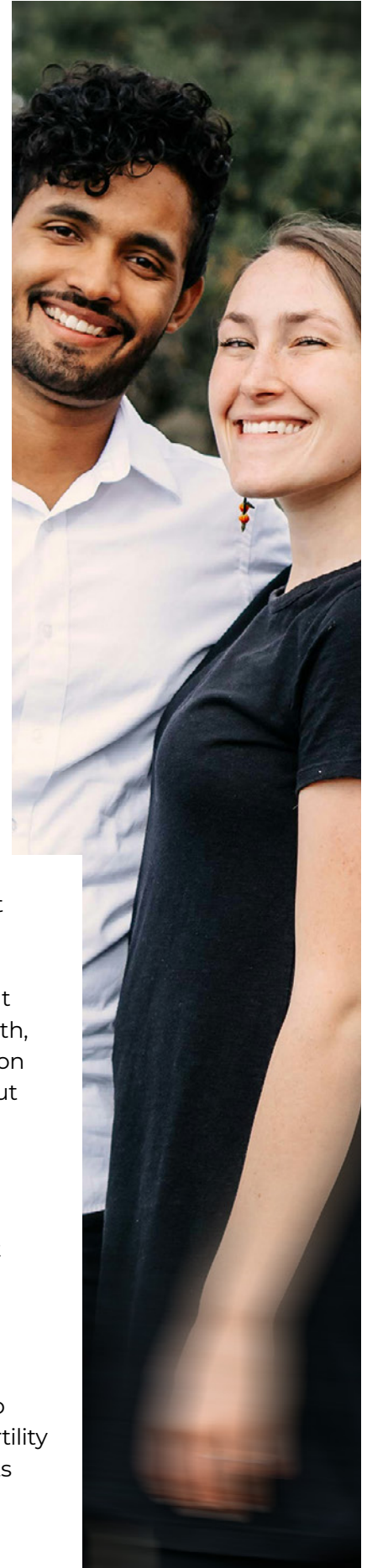
Women were significantly more likely to report occasionally discussing than men (**24% vs 17%**).

When asked how comfortable they were discussing the same range of topics with others, over a quarter of respondents (**26%**) reported feeling quite to very uncomfortable discussing fertility and reproductive health. This level of discomfort was second only to conversations about sex and sexual health (**35%**), placing fertility firmly within the realm of socially taboo topics.

This discomfort is not without consequence. Two-thirds of respondents (**67%**) said they hardly ever or never talk about fertility and reproductive health, more than twice the proportion who avoid conversations about other sensitive topics such as mental health.

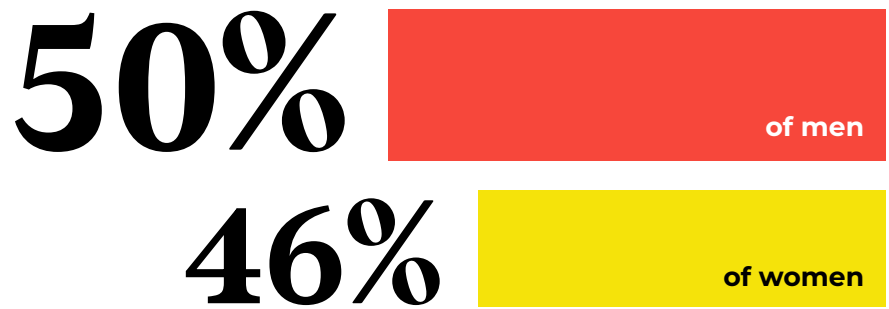
The more higher comfort topics were nutrition and diet (**78%** very/quite comfortable) and sleep health (**77%**).

Despite menopause and menstrual health moving into mainstream conversations, fertility remains off-limits. Participants described it as intimate, emotionally charged, and burdened by cultural taboos.



Fertility: Not Just a Woman's Issue

Despite fertility and reproductive health being an inherently shared/universal experience, it is frequently framed as a women's issue. This perception is reinforced by behavioural patterns: **71%** of our male respondents reported that they "hardly ever" or "never" discuss fertility or reproductive health, a statistically significantly higher proportion than female respondents (**63%**). Similarly, when asked whether they had actively sought advice or engaged in conversations about these topics, half of male respondents said they had not, compared to **46%** of women⁴ (statistically significant).



- Had not actively sought advice or engaged in conversations about these topics

When men do engage, they are markedly less likely than women to turn to close personal networks. Only **14%** of men reported speaking to friends (vs. **22%** of women), and just **15%**

turned to family (vs. **20%** of women). This reluctance may reflect a persistent stigma, a sense of shame or inadequacy tied to the idea of not being "man enough" to conceive.

"Maybe it's primal instinct or something, but it's just not something you want to openly talk about with people, you know, problems with fertility. There's still something embedded in the male psych that if you can't have children, you're not a real man."

- Male, 38, actively trying

"When I think fertility, the first thing that comes to mind is problems. People don't talk about fertility unless there's an issue."

- Male, 38, actively trying

Paradoxically, while fertility is often positioned as a "women's problem," women are **20%** more likely than men to not feel confident in knowing how and where to access fertility

testing. This highlights a critical gap in both gendered expectations and access to information, underscoring the silence and inaction on this issue.

"I literally had no idea about testing... you don't until you are in the middle of all of this."

- Female, 38, actively trying



Knowledge Gaps and Misinformation

From our responses it was apparent that the education isn't starting at school with **36%** of our survey respondents confirming that they had "a bit" of fertility education at school which was largely answered by those between 16-44. Whereas those aged 65 were answering "none at all" (**56%** of the age bracket).

Where our respondents turn to for advice regarding fertility and reproductive health was, as expected, driven by clinically trusted sources with **27%** answering GPs/Doctors however, the internet is also a key driver with around **14%** responding with 'The Internet' (excluding the NHS website).

Although GPs and medical professionals scored highly, when discussed with our panels it felt that questions could sometimes be mishandled and various topics not fully discussed, for example, the wider impact of contraception on cycles.

"When I had my implant changed, I was 28, they were like are you sure you want another, don't you want a family. I was outraged, absolutely outraged. We'll give you a week think about it. I put a complaint in. Like why do I have to justify to you?"

- Female, 35, planning to start IVF

Our younger panel contributors are upskilling and gaining understanding first hand via cycle and fertility tracking apps, equipping them with the initial information before going to their GP.



"The Clue app has taught me more than I ever got taught at school."

- Female, 24, not trying

"It's literally been since using the app, that I've realised how few days a month you can get pregnant. Because obviously we're led to believe you'll get pregnant the first time you have sex."

- Female, 31, actively trying

Media Narratives: Incomplete and Gendered

To gauge a better understanding as to where their information is being sourced from, we asked the respondents where they have heard, seen and read conversations around fertility and reproductive health. Younger audiences (16-34) were more likely to encounter conversations on social media and online platforms whereas respondents aged 55 and above were more likely to see this on TV news programmes. However, **16%** of all respondents said they haven't noticed or been aware of fertility and reproductive health discussions in the Media.

When questioned about their confidence in and around the accuracy of messages around fertility and infertility in the media, **43%**⁴ were uneasy about the accuracy of this information and answered "somewhat" or "not at all". Which raises the question, with the sheer volume of information available in real time, is it always the right information that is targeting the individual?

"It's a bit of a minefield. when you're younger, there's not enough information. And then the minute you start looking for

"It's almost like it's a women's job... like it's solely their responsibility, so like you'll see in the media, on TV whatever, like they're not getting pregnant, and the women thinks – 'oh my god, it's my fault, are they going to leave me' – but then it turns out it's the man who's infertile what a shock!"

— Female, 18-24, not trying, discussing media representations

information, there's far too much information. But it all contradicts each other, and it's all very confusing and you don't know where to start."

— Female, 34, currently trying with IVF

The narrative within the media isn't always clear and transparent with a big focus on the success stories.

"You see the headline, people are having babies later, but it



doesn't say that it was probably a struggle. "

— Female, 34, tried unsuccessfully

Our participants also highlighted the gender biases you know to exist within media portrayals with more articles and voices being female focussed as opposed to the male viewpoint.

Conclusion & Our Aim

The clearest takeaway from twelve months of listening is simple: the UK does not talk about fertility until it is too late.

However, the encouraging signal is that audiences, especially younger generations, are open, even hungry, for a new kind of conversation. They want fertility reframed not as pressure or crisis, but as part of the broader movement for body literacy, hormonal health and wellness.

To change outcomes, we must make conversations about fertility normal, proactive, and accessible, shifting it from the margins of crisis into the mainstream of public health and personal wellbeing. This is the challenge Fertility Futures exists to meet.

Our mission is to improve public understanding of fertility, infertility, and reproductive health. We want to increase fertility literacy for all, reduce the stigma of talking about these subjects and empower and equip individuals – particularly young adults and adults – with the right resources to make informed decisions about their reproductive futures, regardless of what stage they may be at.

Further detail on our findings to date can be found in the Fertility Futures 2025 Pulse Report on:

www.fertilityfuturesproject.com



Glossary

Core fertility terms

- **Fertility** — the ability to conceive and have children
- **Infertility** — not getting pregnant after 12 months of regular, unprotected sex (6 months if 35+)
- **Primary infertility** — never having conceived
- **Secondary infertility** — difficulty conceiving after previously having a child
- **Age-related infertility** — reduced chance of pregnancy as egg/sperm quality and quantity decline with age
- **Fertility window** — the days in each menstrual cycle when pregnancy is most likely (around ovulation)
- **Reproductive ageing** — biological changes with age that reduce fertility (e.g., fewer, older eggs)
- **Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART)** — medical treatments that help people conceive (e.g., IVF)
- **IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation)** — eggs and sperm are combined in a lab; an embryo is then placed in the womb
- **Fertility testing** — checks of reproductive health (e.g., semen analysis; hormone tests like AMH; ultrasound of ovaries)
- **Ovarian reserve** — estimate of remaining eggs, often inferred from AMH levels and antral follicle count
- **Male infertility** — fertility problems due to sperm quantity, movement, or shape, or other male factors

Menstrual & contraception terms

- **Menstrual cycle** — monthly cycle preparing the body for pregnancy; typically 21–35 days
- **Ovulation** — release of an egg about 12–16 days before the next period
- **Hormonal contraception / “the Pill”** — medications that prevent ovulation or fertilisation
- **Endometriosis** — tissue similar to the womb’s lining grows elsewhere, often causing pain and sometimes infertility
- **Cycle tracking / period-tracking apps** — tools to record cycles and predict fertile days

Demography & population terms

- **Fertility rate** — average number of children a woman is expected to have over her lifetime
- **Replacement level (≈2.1)** — fertility rate needed to keep a population size stable without immigration
- **Population peak** — the estimated year global population reaches its highest point before declining

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