

Preserving Possibilities: The Rising Demand for Egg Freezing in a Shifting Social Landscape

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ABSTRACT

Egg freezing, or oocyte cryopreservation, has evolved from a medical necessity to a visionary reproductive strategy. Increasingly adopted by women for non-medical reasons, this practice reflects broader shifts in societal norms, gender roles, and reproductive autonomy. This article explores the sociocultural, psychological, and ethical dimensions of elective egg freezing, examining contributing factors such as social conformity, bodily autonomy, and fertility-related anxiety. It concludes by evaluating the benefits and implications of this growing trend.

Keywords: *Egg freezing, Oocyte Cryopreservation, Autonomy, Conformity, Anxiety, Counseling*

Egg freezing, or oocyte cryopreservation, is a cutting-edge fertility preservation technique that gives individuals the option to delay childbearing while safeguarding their reproductive potential. It's particularly relevant in today's world, where personal, professional, and medical circumstances often influence the timing of parenthood. Originally developed to preserve fertility in women undergoing gonadotoxic treatments like chemotherapy or radiation, egg freezing has expanded into elective use for social reasons (Hamdy, 2025; Freeze Health, 2023). The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) removed the "experimental" label from egg freezing in 2012, catalysing its mainstream adoption (ASRM, 2013) including in India—as a proactive, non-medical choice (Eva Fertility Clinic, 2025; India IVF, 2025).

In India, where societal expectations around marriage and motherhood remain deeply entrenched, egg freezing is emerging as a tool for women to assert reproductive agency while navigating traditional norms (The Hindu, 2023). This shift reflects a broader redefinition of reproductive planning in the 21st century.

60% increase in social (elective) egg freezing globally over the past decade, reflecting growing acceptance and awareness. In the United States, egg freezing procedures have grown by 20% annually over the last five years. Approximately 1 in 4 women undergoing IVF now opt to freeze their eggs for non-medical reasons. The average age of women choosing egg freezing globally is around 34 years, with most between 30–35. In Europe, this procedure

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have increased by 20% in the last decade. A 2024 EPIA study found that 35% of women from the IT sector in India are opting for egg freezing, primarily for reproductive flexibility and career planning.

Desai, Guharoy, & Mangoli (2025) provide a comprehensive review of social egg freezing in India, highlighting its growing acceptance among urban, career-oriented women. The authors discuss the shift from medical to elective use, noting that success rates are closely tied to the age at which eggs are frozen—ideally before 35. They emphasise that while vitrification techniques have improved survival and fertilization rates, the actual return rate of women using their frozen eggs remains low. The article also underscores the importance of psychological counseling and informed consent, given the emotional and financial investments involved.

Legal Service India (n.d.) explores the legal and ethical dimensions of elective egg freezing in the Indian context. The review points out that while the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021 provides a framework for ART procedures, it lacks clarity on issues like egg ownership, posthumous use, and long-term storage rights. The article raises concerns about commercialisation and unequal access, arguing that without stronger regulation and public awareness, egg freezing may remain a privilege of the urban elite rather than a universally accessible option.

(Katsani et al., 2024) offer a global review of the rising prevalence of social egg freezing, examining its driving factors, effectiveness, and ethical considerations. Their analysis corroborates findings from other international studies that cite the lack of a suitable partner—not career delay—as the primary motivator. The authors also explore the limitations of access due to high financial costs and disparities in healthcare infrastructure. Furthermore, the review emphasises the importance of age and egg quality in determining success rates, noting that outcomes decrease significantly after age 35. The authors advocate for clearer ethical and legal regulations to support equitable access worldwide, highlighting the need to transition from egg freezing as an elite trend to a mainstream reproductive option.

The Hindu (2023) offers a journalistic yet insightful look into the lived experiences of Indian women who have chosen to freeze their eggs. Through interviews with patients and fertility specialists, the article reveals that motivations often include delayed marriage, career focus, and the desire for reproductive autonomy. Fertility experts cited in the piece report a steady rise in elective egg freezing inquiries, particularly among women aged 30–38. However, the article also notes that many women undergo the procedure discreetly due to lingering social stigma, and that emotional relief is not always guaranteed despite the technological promise.

The Rise in Demand- Elective egg freezing has seen a global surge, with a 60% increase in procedures over the past decade (Cada, 2024). In the U.S., the number of cycles has grown by 20% annually, with most users aged 30–35 (MDPI, 2024). In India, urban fertility clinics report a steady rise in inquiries, driven by delayed marriage, career prioritisation, and increased awareness (The Hindu, 2024). India has witnessed a notable uptick in elective egg freezing, particularly in metropolitan areas like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru. Fertility clinics report a fivefold increase in inquiries over the past five years (Forbes India, 2024). Women in their late 20s and early 30s, often professionals in law, medicine, or tech, are the primary demographic. According to Forbes India, clinics like Max Multi Speciality Centre in Delhi now see 5–6 women per month opting for the procedure, compared to 1–2 annually just a few years ago.

However, uptake remains limited in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities due to stigma, lack of awareness, and logistical challenges (Apollo 24/7, n.d.). Platforms like Bharat MD are attempting to bridge this gap by connecting rural clients with urban fertility specialists.

Contributing Factors

- a) **Social Conformity and Expectations** Cultural narratives often idealise a specific timeline for motherhood, pressuring women to balance career, marriage, and childbearing within narrow windows (Petropanagos et al., 2015; Psychology Today, 2025). Women who delay marriage or prioritise careers often face judgment or pity (Legal Service India, n.d.; The Hindu, 2023). Egg freezing offers a way to conform to external timelines while preserving internal autonomy. As one woman told *The Hindu*, “It may be late, but at least this gives me hope to be a mother”. Egg freezing offers a way to conform externally while maintaining internal flexibility.
- b) **Autonomy Over the Body:** Egg freezing is increasingly framed as an act of empowerment. Feminist scholars argue that egg freezing can be both empowering and problematic—that while the technology offers autonomy, it must be viewed critically to avoid reinforcing the idea that motherhood is inevitable or essential. For Indian women navigating patriarchal structures, it represents a reclaiming of reproductive control.
- c) **Fear, Anxiety, and the Biological Clock:** Women often cite fear of infertility and anxiety about aging as motivators for freezing eggs (Medical Tourism Magazine, 2025; Paloma Care, 2025). Indian women reach menopause approximately five years earlier than their Western counterparts— at an average age of 46.2 years. This accelerates fertility-related anxiety. Many women cite fear, lack of a suitable partner, or past relationship trauma as reasons for freezing their eggs (Apollo 24/7, n.d.; India Today, 2024). While marketed as a source of peace of mind, studies show that emotional relief is not guaranteed and may be accompanied by lingering uncertainty (Eva Fertility Clinic, 2025).

Benefits of Egg Freezing

Egg freezing provides reproductive flexibility, allowing women to delay childbearing without sacrificing biological potential. (Ideal Fertility, 2025; Eva Fertility Clinic, 2025) It reduces pressure from the “biological clock,” supports single or LGBTQ+ individuals in family planning, and may enhance IVF success rates when eggs are retrieved at a younger age (MedExpert Clinic, 2025). Especially relevant in high-pressure fields like law, medicine, and entrepreneurship.

Challenges- Egg freezing in India faces challenges like high costs and limited access, with initial expenses up to ₹3 lakh and annual storage fees, making it unaffordable for many. Ethical concerns include false hope due to uncertain success rates, cultural stigma leading to secrecy, and legal grey areas under the ART Act regarding egg ownership and posthumous use.

CONCLUSION

More than a medical procedure—egg freezing is a sociocultural phenomenon. In India it is more than a medical innovation—it is a cultural shift. It reflects changing aspirations, delayed timelines, and a redefinition of womanhood. While it offers unprecedented control over reproductive timing, it also raises ethical, financial, and emotional questions. As access expands and societal norms evolve, egg freezing may become a cornerstone of modern fertility planning, symbolising both empowerment and complexity.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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