

# Is science to blame for India's falling adoption numbers?

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The entertainment industry is abuzz with news of filmmaker Karan Johar becoming a father of twins via surrogacy. He joins a celeb club that includes Aamir Khan and Kiran Desai; Farah Khan and Shirish Kunder; and single dad Tusshar Kapoor. Advances in reproductive technology as well as relaxed rules on commercial surrogacy (at least till the draft bill is passed) has meant that many more couples and singletons are becoming parents through surrogacy or assisted reproductive technology (ART), which includes in-vitro fertilisation (IVF). According to research by a healthcare private equity firm Quadria Capital, the total demand for IVF cycles



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**AVINASH KUMAR**  
Central Adoption Resource Authority |  
Steering Committee

in India was 1 lakh in 2015 and is expected to touch 2.6 lakh by 2020. Surrogacy too has become a multi-million dollar business.

In contrast, the rate of adoption in India has been gradually declining since 2010. According to the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), the designated agency which co-ordinates adoptions in India, in-

country adoptions have dropped from 5,693 in 2010 to 3,011 in 2015-16.

Are legal adoption numbers going down because of technology that allows couples to have a biological child even if age and fertility are not on their side? The answer is partly yes, admits Avinash Kumar, member, CARA steering committee, as well as an adoptive parent. “New

technologies like IVF and surrogacy offer a quick-fix to childless couples and also a chance to have a biological child. So instead of considering adoption as the first option, it becomes the last,” says Kumar, who also runs Families of Joy Foundation, an NGO that works to create awareness around adoption. He adds that about 40% of couples who come forward for adoption have experienced failed IVF.

To compare timelines, IVF, though more expensive (Rs 1.5 to 2 lakh, per cycle), is faster. An IVF cycle can be carried out each month. Most couples opt for three cycles at the most. The success rate of each cycle is around 40%. This means at least some couples will conceive within three months. Surrogacy is even more expensive

(Rs 5 lakh to Rs 12 lakh) but those who can afford it prefer it because it promises a biological child. It also has a high success rate of around 80%.

In comparison, adoption takes way longer. Even the ideal timeline is a year. After registering for adoption, the process of home study takes one month. Next, referral of child takes 9 to 14 months. However, delays are common and adoption can even take two to three years.

There is also a lot of paperwork, including submission of various documents at government offices, involved. Dr Shobha Gupta, an IVF specialist based in Delhi, says that many couples who come to her are disheartened by the adoption procedure.

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