

# Infertility a common problem for Otago-Southland women

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Infertility is common amongst women aged 25–50 years in the south of New Zealand and significant health resources go towards helping them become mothers, new University of Otago research suggests.

A paper appearing in this week's edition of the *New Zealand Medical Journal* reports the results of a 2011 survey of more than 1000 Otago and Southland [women](#) about their fertility experiences, expectations and knowledge.

The results show that amongst those who had ever tried to become or been pregnant, a quarter (25.3%) had experienced infertility, meaning they had tried for at least 12 months or needed medical help to conceive.

Otago PhD student Antoinette Righarts, who co-ordinated and analysed the [survey](#), says nearly three quarters of women who experienced infertility sought medical help, and almost a third of infertile women had received some form of specialist treatment.

"While most women resolved their first experience of infertility with a live birth, a quarter had not. Unresolved infertility was more likely for women who first experienced the problem when aged 35 or older and for those more socially deprived," Ms Righarts says.

The study also found among the women aged 40 years or more, 14 per cent had not had children. Of this group, half wished they had, although not all of them had tried to have a child.

Ms Righarts says while infertility was commonly resolved, a substantial proportion of women remained childless despite wanting children.

"This was more common for women who first experienced infertility after age 35 and highlights the negative consequences of delaying having a family," she says.

"These findings are important as many women in their forties reported not having experienced infertility but wishing they had had a child. This suggests that the social context in which fertility issues arise may be becoming just as important as the biological context."

Professor Wayne Gillett, a fertility specialist and paper co-author, says these data support findings from the long-running Dunedin Multidisciplinary Study released earlier this year, confirming that infertility is a bigger problem than previously estimated.

"Such high proportions of women experiencing infertility and seeking help to resolve their fertility issues will continue to put substantial pressure on under-funded [infertility](#) services," Professor Gillett says.

**More information:** Infertility and outcomes for infertile women in Otago and Southland. [www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-t...0-november-2015/6724](http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-t...0-november-2015/6724)

Provided by University of Otago

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