

# Fertility tourism in Greece: a cross-sectional study of international patients’ perspectives

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## Introduction

Cross border reproductive care (CBRC) constitutes a significant proportion of medical tourism with Greece being one of the many destinations. The aim of this study is to unravel the motivations and experiences of CBRC patients who chose Greece to receive their fertility treatment, and to determine Greece’s potential in the fertility tourism market.

## Methods

Inclusion criteria was CBRC patients (n=568) who had undergone ART treatment in a single IVF unit in Greece in the past 3 years. An anonymous online survey was sent via email, between January and March 2024, and included data on demographics, type of fertility treatment and quality of care. Chi-square test was used for the comparisons and Wilcoxon test was used to analyze the 5-point scale responses, using the SPSS Statistics software.

## Results

Ultimately, 166 patients participated in the study (response rate: 29.2%). Participants had a mean age of 43.3 years, were mainly women (73.5%) and mostly originated from Balkan countries (56.6%). The primary reason for selecting Greece was dissatisfaction with previous treatment in home country (27.1%), followed by the high success rates in Greece (22.9%). However, there were statistically significant deviations between countries of origin, with nearly 40% of Italians being motivated by legal restrictions in Italy and approximately 20% of patients from Europe and overseas by lower cost (Figure 1A). Greece was recommended to most participants by a doctor/clinic (45.8%) or a friend (33.1%), with significant deviations per region. Namely, Balkan patients demonstrated a reverse trend (clinic: 34%, friend: 45.7%), European patients cited more internet sources (25.6%) and the vast majority of Italians (97.4%) followed their doctors’ advice (Figure 1B). The treatment in Greece was significantly more satisfactory compared to their home country, with at least a 1-point advantage in a 1-5 Likert scale; noting in particular the quality of services, process transparency, cost, waiting time, ART legislation and recommendation as an ART destination (Table 1). These trends remained unaffected even when stratified by participant region of origin, socioeconomic and educational levels.

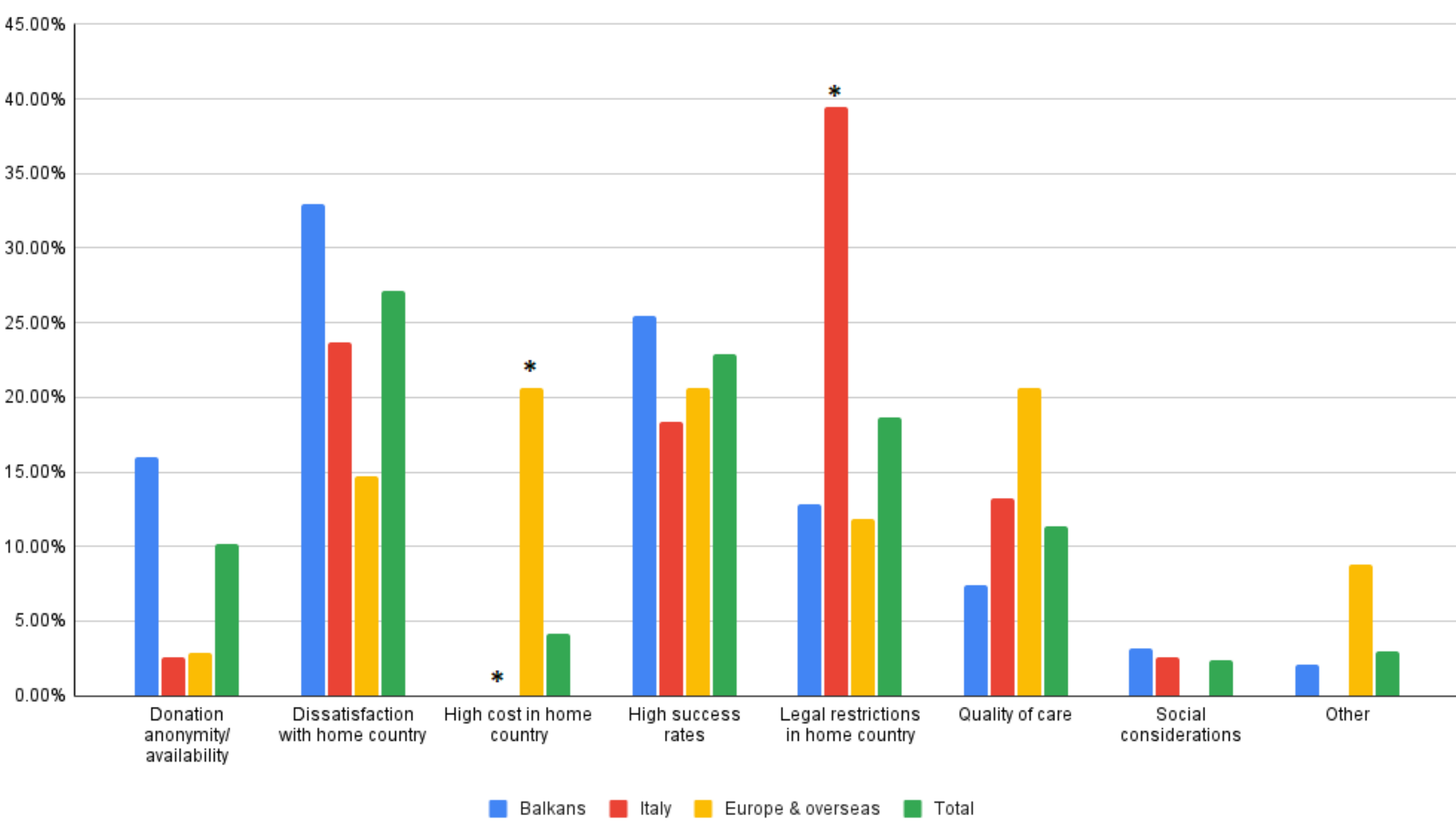
## Discussion - Conclusion

Although there are different reasons and sources of information that drive CBRC patients to select Greece as fertility destination, they unanimously express a positive experience. An increase in fertility tourism in Greece could be associated with economic, legal, medical, scientific and social development. Based on this study, Greece provides high quality services and favorable legislature and may therefore flourish in the future.

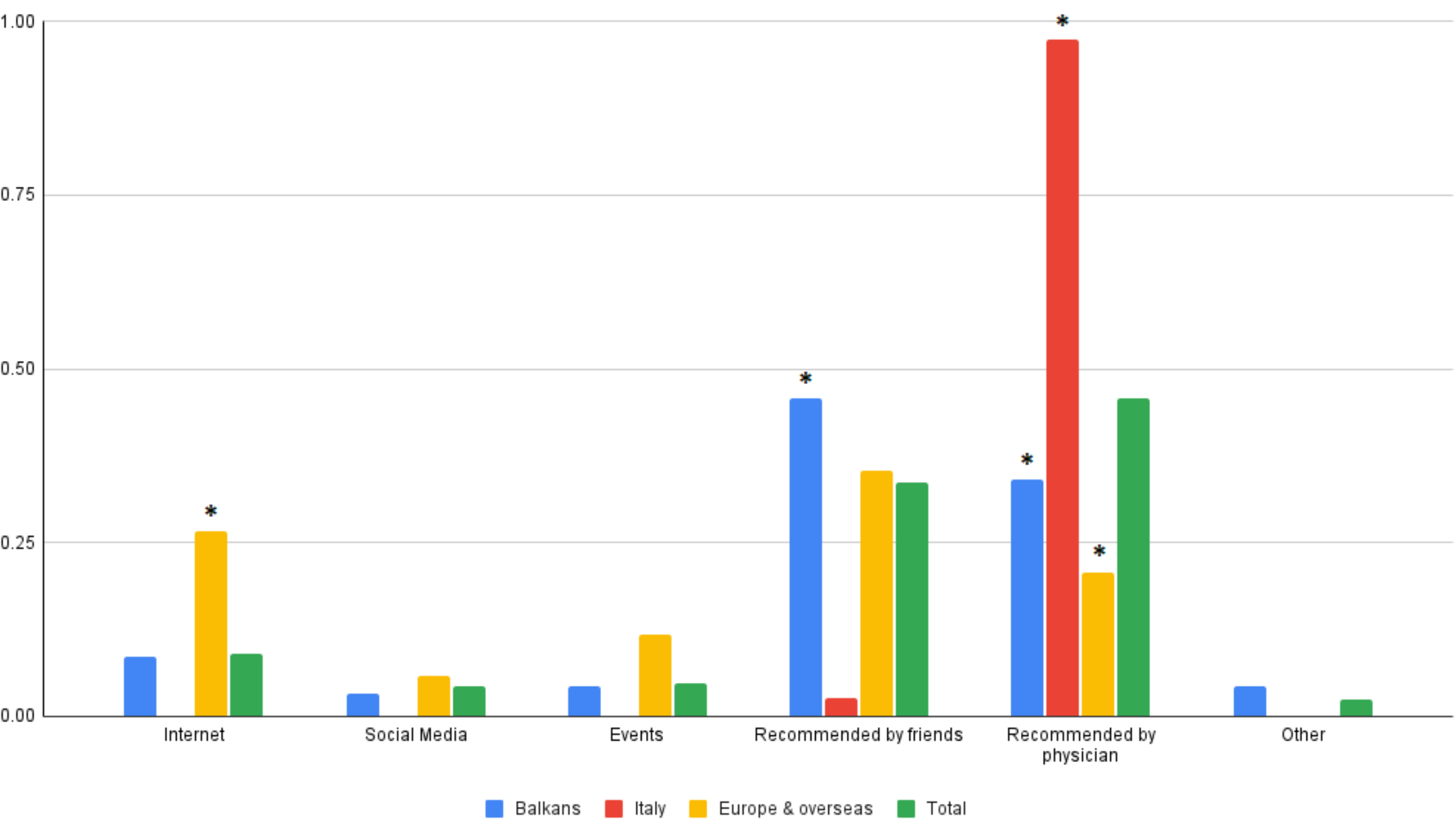
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A. Primary reason for seeking CBRC in Greece, per participant region of origin



B. Primary source of information for CBRC in Greece, per participant region of origin



| Treatment Parameter                                                                   | Country | Mean | Median | SD   | Min. | Max | P-value |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------|--------|------|------|-----|---------|
| I am satisfied with the quality of the provided services                              | Greece  | 4.51 | 5      | 1.10 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 2.86 | 3      | 1.25 | 1    | 5   |         |
| I am satisfied with the quality of Clinic infrastructure and equipment                | Greece  | 4.62 | 5      | 1.02 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 3.35 | 4      | 1.30 | 1    | 5   |         |
| I am satisfied with the Clinic staff                                                  | Greece  | 4.61 | 5      | 1.07 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 3.22 | 3      | 1.31 | 1    | 5   |         |
| I am satisfied with Clinic transparency (explanation, consent forms, documentation)   | Greece  | 4.55 | 5      | 1.07 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 2.99 | 3      | 1.33 | 1    | 5   |         |
| The communication was not affected despite the language barrier                       | Greece  | 4.58 | 5      | 1.10 | 1    | 5   | 0.015*  |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 4.19 | 5      | 1.25 | 1    | 5   |         |
| I find the cost of the treatment reasonable                                           | Greece  | 4.23 | 5      | 1.20 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 3.19 | 3      | 1.41 | 1    | 5   |         |
| I find the waiting time reasonable                                                    | Greece  | 4.48 | 5      | 1.10 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 3.21 | 3      | 1.46 | 1    | 5   |         |
| I find the legislation regarding fertility treatment in this country patient-friendly | Greece  | 4.44 | 5      | 1.09 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 2.97 | 3      | 1.42 | 1    | 5   |         |
| I felt medically safe during my fertility treatment                                   | Greece  | 4.56 | 5      | 1.12 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 3.35 | 4      | 1.42 | 1    | 5   |         |
| I would recommend this country for fertility treatment to another                     | Greece  | 4.56 | 5      | 1.12 | 1    | 5   | <0.001* |
|                                                                                       | Home    | 2.50 | 2      | 1.26 | 1    | 5   |         |

**Figure 1 (up):** Bar charts demonstrating participant responses per region of origin regarding: (A) the primary reason for seeking CBRC in Greece and (B) the primary source of information regarding CBRC in Greece (\*: statistically significant difference in response trends).

**Table 1 (down):** Table listing the 1-5 Likert scale scores submitted by patients regarding different treatment parameters in Greece and in their home country. Higher scores denote stronger agreement (\*: statistically significant difference according to Welch’s test) .