

Fact Sheet on Sex Selection Abortion: A Worldwide and U.S. Problem

- Sex selection abortions are playing a role in skewing the male-female sex ratio at birth (SRB) in dozens of countries around the world. The problem is worst in China and India where provincial and even national birth ratios evince the widespread practice of elimination of baby girls by sex selective methods including abortion, preimplantation sex selection in IVF, and even infanticide.
- Here is a sample of nations (and year studied) showing national-level skewing (a natural SBR rate is in the range of 103 to 106 newborn boys per 100 newborn girls). (Eberstadt, various tables, "The Global War Against Baby Girls," *The New Atlantis*, Number 33, Fall 2011, pp. 3-18)

Country	Year	Sex ratio at birth (boys/100 girls)
China (nationally)	2005	118.9
China (Anhui Province)	2005	131
China (Shaanxi Province)	2005	134

China (third births. nationally)	2005	160
Taiwan	2005	110
Hong Kong	2005	110
India	2004-06	112
Albania	2004	113
El Salvador	2007	110
Philippines	2007	109

- Naturally impossible sex ratios at birth have also occurred in the United States, as documented in study data from 2000 and after.
- These ratios, however, are occurring in subpopulations and are not prevalent enough to drive the national U.S. data outside the range (103 to 106) that would naturally occur. Skewed sex ratios (108), favoring boys over girls, have appeared in U.S. subpopulations mirroring the international data (Chinese-Americans, Korean-Americans, Indian-Americans and Filipino-Americans).
- Though relatively few in number, these studies have been carried out by prominent scholars at secular institutions (Columbia, University of Texas, and Berkeley), using standard data collection and/or interview methods, and have appeared in leading publications.

- These findings are further strengthened by their statistical significance, consistency in direction and overall harmony with international trends for the same populations.
- Douglas Almond and Lena Edlund of Columbia University identified these trends, including a male bias of 50% among third-order births, in U.S. populations of Chinese, Korean, and Asian-American heritage. “We interpret the found deviation in favor of sons to be evidence of sex selection, most likely at the prenatal stage,” they write. (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2008), at <http://www.pnas.org/content/105/15/5681.full>.)
- [University of Texas](#) economist Jason Abrevaya “found that on the basis of census and birth records through 2004, the incidence of boys among immigrant Chinese parents in New York was higher than the national average for Chinese families. Boys typically account for about 515 of every 1,000 births. But he found that among Chinese New Yorkers having a third child, the number of boys was about 558.” (*New York Times*, June 15, 2009).
- Puri et al. in a study of 65 Indian immigrant women in the U.S. on both the East and West Coasts, between 2004 and 2009: “We found that 40% of the women interviewed had terminated prior pregnancies with female fetuses and that 89% of women carrying female fetuses in their current pregnancy pursued an abortion.” *Social Science and Medicine* (February 15, 2011).
- The use of ultrasound and abortion as the primary means of sex selection are commonplaces in international analysis of the issue, as the cost of these interventions has been steadily reduced and has played a dominant role in popularizing sex selection of baby boys.
- Again, these numbers are not large enough to skew the national data Guttmacher relies upon (Barot, Guttmacher Policy Review, Spring 2012, Vol. 15, No. 2). But they are real in the relevant subpopulations and Guttmacher, though deploying numerous qualifiers, acknowledges there is “some evidence” of the sex-selection phenomenon.
- Guttmacher’s review ultimately opposes sex-selection bans on policy grounds and not on the existence or prevalence of the problem at either a subpopulation or national level. There is no SBR ratio at which Guttmacher would support a ban based on the premises of its spring 2012 review. Such bans have been enacted in nations like China that continue to evince a skewed SBR and in South Korea, which has deployed both legal and cultural means to reverse the practice.