



## DECLINING SEX RATIO IN INDIA : TRENDS AND CORRECTIVE MEASURES

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In most Indian households; a male child is given preferential treatment over a female child. India represents one of the most adverse Child Sex Ratio (CSR) figures amongst the Southeast Asian Countries, reflecting a highly undesirable reversal of the norms of nature. Girls face discrimination before birth, at birth and throughout their lives at the hands of their families. The specific objectives of the paper are to examine the Sex Ratio in India and in its different states, implications of low sex-ratio and some suggestive measures to improve it.*

### **Introduction**

It has been 63 years since India got its independence, still many Indians are trapped in the old traditional beliefs. The traditional preference for sons is deeply rooted in the structure of the society. The mindset of people who believe in male dominance has not changed till today. India is a developing country. There has been tremendous growth and development in the field of Science and Technology. On the other side social values are still of the medieval age.

The government of India has introduced a plethora of legislations and programmes/schemes to address the gender inequalities prevailing in our society. However, despite successive years of planning, the policies have failed to translate into better outcomes for

women and girls. This is reflected in several indicators such as sex ratio, maternal mortality rate and dropout rates of girls among others.

Indian Census has the tradition of bringing out disaggregated information by sex on various aspects of population. Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per thousand males. It is an important and useful indicator to assess relative excess or deficit of men or women in a given population at that point of time. It is commonly understood that males and females in the population balance each other in number. Little do they know sexes are imbalanced in different population across the worlds. According to United Nations estimates, the world had 986 females against 1000 males in 2000. Except Indonesia and Japan, all other Asian countries have low sex ratios. However, most of the developed European countries have high sex ratio. Interestingly the sheer weight of the population of the four Asian countries, particularly China (944) and India (933) with low sex ratio contributes to the preponderance of males over females in world. The killing of women exists in various forms in societies the world over. Most of these societies have a cultural tradition of strong preference for sons.

In most Indian households; a male child is given preferential treatment over a female child. India represents one of the most adverse Child Sex Ratio (CSR) figures amongst the Southeast Asian Countries, reflecting a highly undesirable reversal of the norms of nature. Parents often neglect the female child's emotional, physical and mental needs, bringing her up to believe that her life is to serve others, especially the male members of the family and taking care of the household chores. Girls face discrimination before birth, at birth and throughout their lives at the hands of their families. They are denied adequate medical and healthcare facilities, nutrition, education, and are often subject to physical and sexual abuse. Female foeticides are an extreme manifestation of violence against women. Eliminating girl children, whether before or after birth, is a part of pattern of violence that is linked to development paradigms that devalue women's status.

The specific objectives of the paper are to examine the Sex Ratio in India and in its different states, implications of low sex-ratio and some suggestive measures to improve it. For this purpose secondary level data is used in this paper.

**Table-1 : Sex ratio of total population and child population in the age group 0-6 and 7+ years : 2001-2011**

State/UT Code	India/State/Union Territory	Total population		Child Population in the age group 0-6		Population aged 7 and above	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
		India	933	940	927	914	934
1	Jammu & Kashmir	892	883	941	859	884	887
2	Himachal Pradesh	968	974	896	906	980	983
3	Punjab	876	893	798	846	888	899
4	Chandigarh	777	818	845	867	767	812
5	Uttarakhand	962	963	908	886	973	975
6	Haryana	861	877	819	830	869	885
7	NCT of Delhi	821	866	868	866	813	866
8	Rajasthan	921	926	909	883	923	935
9	Uttar Pradesh	898	909	916	899	894	910
10	Bihar	919	916	942	933	914	912
11	Sikkim	875	889	963	944	861	883
12	Arunachal Pradesh	893	920	964	960	878	913
13	Nagaland	900	931	964	944	890	929
14	Manipur	974	987	957	934	977	995
15	Mizoram	935	975	964	971	930	976
16	Tripura	948	961	966	953	945	962
17	Meghalaya	972	986	973	970	971	989
18	Assam	935	954	965	957	929	953
19	West Bengal	934	947	960	950	929	946
20	Jharkhand	941	947	965	943	935	948
21	Orissa	972	978	953	934	976	985
22	Chhattisgarh	989	991	975	964	992	995
23	Madhya Pradesh	919	930	932	912	916	933
24	Gujarat	920	918	883	886	927	923
25	Daman & Diu	710	618	926	909	682	589
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	812	775	979	924	779	752
27	Maharashtra	922	925	913	883	924	931
28	Andhra Pradesh	978	992	961	943	981	997
29	Karnataka	965	968	946	943	968	971
30	Goa	961	968	938	920	964	973
31	Lakshadweep	978	946	959	908	946	973
32	Kerala	1058	1084	960	959	1072	1099
33	Tamil Nadu	987	995	942	946	993	1000
34	Puducherry	1001	1038	967	965	1006	1047
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	846	878	957	966	831	868

Source : Census of India 2001, 2011

Table 1 shows recent trends in sex ratio of the total population, sex ratio in the age group 0-6 years and sex ratio of population aged 7 years and above for 2001 and 2011 for all the States and Union Territories of India. The relative growth in sex ratio during the last decade (2001-2011) has been fuelled by southern states. As against the national sex ratio pegged at 940,

southern neighbours - Kerala (1084), Tamil Nadu (995), and Andhra Pradesh (992) - stand out as growth stories among various states. In union territories (UTs), the top three are Puducherry (1038), Lakshadweep (946) and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (1038). The drag states in respect of the national average are Haryana (877), Jammu & Kashmir (883) and Sikkim (889), and UTs-Chandigarh (818), Daman & Diu (618), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (775). The biggest worry comes from Bihar and Gujarat, two states with loud claims of socio-economic development. Bihar has witnessed a steep fall over the decades. From a high of 1005 in 1961, Bihar's sex ratio has plummeted from 919 in 2001 to 916 in 2011. Similarly, Gujarat has witnessed a fall over the last decade beginning 2001 (920) and now standing at 918 in 2011. However, overall increasing trend in the sex ratio at the census 2011 has boosted the sex ratio in India.

India's Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years) has declined from 927 to 914 in 2011. As per Census 2011, the urban Child Sex Ratio is 902 as compared to 919 in rural areas. The sex ratio of population of age 7 years and above during 2001 and 2011 census has increased from 934 in 2001 to 944 in 2011 at the National level. Kerala (1099), Tamil Nadu (1000) and Andhra Pradesh (997) have recorded the highest sex ratio, while Punjab (899), Jammu & Kashmir (887) and Haryana (885) are at the bottom in the age group 7+ years.

### **Implications of Low Sex-Ratio:**

For a healthy society the male-female sex ratio should be same. The sex ratio in India has been historically unfavourable to females. The alarming rate of female foeticide is a cause of great concern; as the number of girls born is declining drastically in several sections of our society. Due to imbalance in sex ratio, the situation will expose females to more exploitation and violence. This imbalance will badly hamper the social structure and the development process for Indian society in future. Adverse sex ratio is an indication of continuing preference of son over to daughter. It adversely effects on women's health physically, mentally and emotionally. This state of affairs if not checked will have a disastrous impact on the future generations of our country. It could lead to further increase in sexual violence including prostitutions, rapes, trafficking and the reduced mobility of women.

## **Some Corrective Measures:**

India should promote incentives like introduction of gender-based quotas in colleges and work places. Families having only daughters could be eligible for a higher than the normal universal old age pension, and even starting earlier from the age of 55 years. These, hopefully, can lead to a more balanced child sex ratio by the time of the next 2021 Census. To discourage female infanticide, the Government could consider a mothering allowance to the mother for some years after the birth of a girl child.

The states should initiate to modify the two child norm to improve the imbalance in the child-sex ratio.

To correct the adverse sex ratio in India, there is a need to change the mindset and attitudes of people, especially young adults. The government should sensitize this issue and intervene to popularize widow remarriages and reduce the menace of dowry, which can be done through the use of activist media campaigns and with involvement of social and religious institutions. Most of the time, the cases of the female foeticide come in light due to dowry cases. The government should follow strict norms against dowry. A series of activities (media involvement and mass appeal from spiritual leaders) are to be organized to create awareness among the masses about the declining sex ratio and its negative impact on society.

Violence against women is one of the major reason behind a decline in sex ratio. It has an impact on all children's rights and requires the effective engagement of all levels of public administration and the involvement of all relevant ministries. The government should put more efforts for providing security to women. Even the grievance redressed should be instantaneous. This will enhance the confidence among women and can help to improve the disparities.

Educate girls/women to empower them their rights to check female foeticide. The availability of reliable and affordable old age pensions, social security programmes like laws to share the earning of married daughters for old age parents should start for the people so that it can reduce the excessive dependence on sons.

Policy makers need to take into consideration the complex interplay of economics, religion, traditions, customs and the inferior status of women among the highly diverse states in

India in order to address this grave issue. The population policy of India should focus on the need to have a right based and gender sensitive approach to population stabilization.

**Conclusion:** In Indian society women are supposed as a burden on society especially on their parents regarding patriarchal mindset of our society. In male-female ratio the number of female is decreasing day by day. From the above discussion it was found that in India there exist gender disparities over different states/UTs. Although the national sex-ratio has risen marginally in 2011, the dip in CSR is a matter of grave concern. Today, the boom in economy, innovative technologies and improved infrastructure has become nation's pride. The country has witnessed advancement in all fields but bias against women and especially a girl child is still prevailing. So the government should introduce those programmes that empower women, reduce dowry system, providing safety and security, reducing violence against women and providing them a guaranteed job can help to improve sex-ratio in India. Although the problem cannot be resolved instantly but if it is addressed immediately, then an effective change can be brought in future.

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