

# Scenario of Child Sex Ratio in the World

Anupam Patel<sup>1\*</sup> Dr. Kanchan Shrivastava<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Computer Science, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehore, M.P.

<sup>2</sup> Research Guide, Department of Economics, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehore, M.P.

**Abstract –** *There is a paradoxical situation in the developing, Sub Saharan and Asian countries where we are seeing the drastic rise in excess male mortality in developed countries, and excess female mortality, which are emerging with similarly dramatic improvement in our societies' overall health. It is almost clear that women biologically have certain benefits that allow them to live longer lives. Therefore, women prefer to survive longer than men with fair treatment and diet. In nearly all countries, women have longer life expectancy, while the benefits in terms of disparity in the life expectancy of men and women vary from country to region. There are disparities in mortality between the sexes at the very beginning of life which are free of externality and affect this disparity. The gender genetic disparity is related to a higher susceptibility to biological ageing for women. In addition, feminine hormones and women's reproductive function have a strong correlation to increased life expectancy.*

**Key Words –** Child, Sex Ratio, Females, Societies

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In our country, the child sex ratio is defined as the number of females per thousand males in the age group 0–6 years in a human population. Thus it is equal to  $1000 \times$  the reciprocal of the sex ratio (ratio of males to females in a population) in the same age group, i.e. under age seven. An imbalance in this age group will extend to older age groups in future years. Currently, the ratio of males to females is generally significantly greater than 1, i.e. there are more boys than girls.

According to the decennial Indian census, the sex ratio in the 0-6 age group in India went from 104.0 males per 100 females in 1981 to 105.8 in 1991, to 107.8 in 2001, to 108.8 in 2011.[2] The ratio is significantly higher in certain states such as Punjab and Haryana (118 and 120 respectively per 2011 census). The child sex ratio has been more prominent for males in India for quite a while, since the 1980s with thirty fewer females to males

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (1989) catalysed the debate by predicting that about 100 million missing women worldwide were missing, pointing to the degree of the woman's survival deficit due to disproportionate management of intrinsically-household items.

The question of the missing women in India raised questions after the first decade-old recitation of

Indians in the late 19th century was performed by the British and the irregular sex ratio reported in the 1871 census was noted. For more than 100 years, the female shortfall has grown steadily. There is concern that in the most affluent areas in India, such as Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Rajasthan the lowest sex ratios are found. Inadequate programming impacts and detrimental societal responses of women have disadvantaged girls in India (XI Five Year Programme, Planning Commission). It is therefore regarded officially as a matter of significant national concern. A lot of focus is now being paid to defining different aspects of female deficits in India.

## 2. POPULATION GROWTH IN INDIA

The 2011 Census demographic estimates show that population growth in India is declining. Since the post-reform era, India has also been in a paradigm of high GDP growth. But does that mean that the tendency for girls and women is also diminishing in India during growth and fertility? There are many promising aspects to India's growth profile, including:

- Adding to literacy rates from 65% to 73%
- The fertility rate has declined from 3.1 to 2.4 births.

- Decrease in poverty from 38% to 22%

The phenomenal transition in the paradigm is followed by a steady drop in children's sex ratio between 1961 and 2011. Thus, growth in general has devalued Indian women.

A hundred years old Indian demographic history shows that the overall sex ratio remains overwhelmingly unfavourable to women. There are many reasons that women are negatively affected.

- (i) **Customs and traditions prevalent for centuries**--The history of Indian culture shows that women were respected in ancient times. Yet women have lost their status over the course of time because of many malicious traditions such as sati, purdah, child marriage, compulsory widowhood and dowry. While sati tradition has been abolished, marriage between children and purdah still occurs in many parts of the world, instances of dowry in places where it has never been a custom.
- (ii) **Patriarchal society**--Because of the patriarchal system of society, a male child is seen as the breeder who plays a central role in maintaining protection for the aged, bearing the identity of his family and administering the last rites. The girl under this situation is raised to believe that her life is to support others, in particular male family members and to care for household tasks.
- (iii) **Low literacy among women**-- From the mediaeval period, women were excluded from the educational sector and only household education was required. This perception remains even today in many rural areas of the country. Training is only considered necessary for men. Although the situation has improved in urban areas and women are pursuing higher education, most Indians who live in rural regions still live in feudal times. Rural people don't respect children, so they won't invest in them because it's just a waste of their money.
- (iv) **Ignorance of their rights**--Most women are not aware of their basic human rights. It is this state of ignorance which leads to the perpetuation of evil customary practices affecting their well-being and that of their children.
- (v) **Poor health leading to excess female mortality**--While women benefit from a number of biological health and survival advantages, they face many gender-based disadvantages in developed countries which put their health at risk. Many of the health issues of adult women arise in infancy.

These include inadequate diet, which leads to poor health and thus excess female mortality.

### ► **Historical Perspective of Gender Bias in Feudal Societies**

The ultimate historical "trigger" for gender equity lies in agricultural ecology. Anthropological data indicates that the most primitive civilisations of hunter-gatherers were relatively similarly sexual. In this time, the cost of food selection or hunting was divided evenly between men and women and thus both sexes enjoyed equal status. Males in hunting and gathering Paleolithic period did not dominate or take advantage of the work of women. Before, after and after hunting, women were both relying on each other's skills.

Early Neolithic period saw the roots of evolving agriculture in which man became a consumer of food when he was a hunter and collector. For primitive men there was plenty of land (high land man ratio) and there was no private estate. The overwhelming form of agricultural production was self-sustaining and had no marketable surplus. The food was only produced for family use and some minor surpluses, if any, were bartered (exchange of products for goods). Simple hand-held instruments such as hedge and digging sticks were used in this form of agriculture, and because the women could easily handle agricultural tasks using these instruments, they often took part with men in farming practises (Boserup, 1970).

### ► **Historical Background in Vedic And Pre-Independence Times**

The historical background of Indian society reveals that in vedic times, females were given great honour and a status of equality. In the Vedic period women were more empowered not only socially but also politically and economically. Education was equally open for girls and boys. They had liberty in choosing their husbands. They He possessed certain land rights and engaged similarly in separate social and religious rituals. Women began to deteriorate as invaders conquered separate areas of India. It was in the Mughal empire that women began being discriminated against to an extent that called on people to follow the killing of women in various parts of India. During the era sati pratha, purdah, children's marriage and enforced widowhood were also common.

In pre-independence, the archival documents demonstrate how high-class families of the upper castes performed female infanticide to preserve their socio-economic standing by preventing large family dowries. The 1921 census report, which is based on the criticality of the issue, broke castes into two groups, the following women infanticide

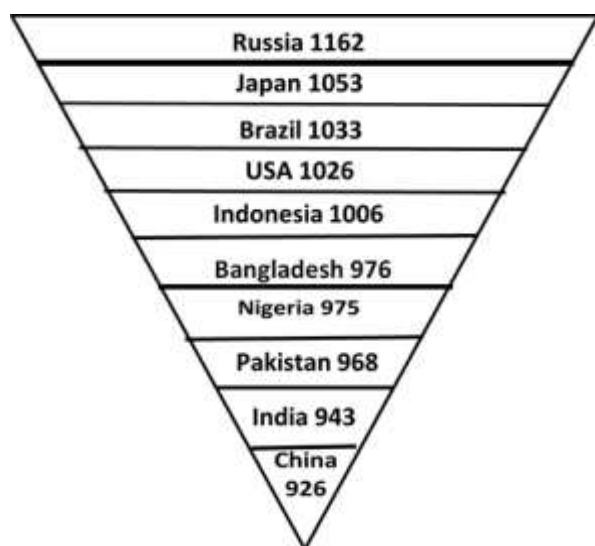
and those who did not. The Punjab, United Provinces and Rajputana upper castes were found to have even fewer females than other nations.

The caste-specific information contained in the British records on women's infanticide and the latest statistics on sex for regions clearly demonstrate the level of violence in those societies. In an 1857 publication, the first reference to female infanticide among jats in Punjab was identified. The census statistics for the colonial era indicate that jats have committed female infanticide in Punjab for over 150 years. The earliest reference to low sex figures for lewapatidars and kanbis in central Gujarat dates back to 1847. In these castes the long tradition of female infanticide indicates how deeply entrenched was the practice (Vishwanath, 2004). The government of India abolished the census after independence on the grounds of caste.

### 3. GENDER INEQUALITY

#### ► Global Comparison

In many countries of the world, inequality between men and women is profoundly entrenched. The sex relationship is an important and useful metric to quantify women's relative deficit at a given population at a certain point in time, described as the number of women per thousand males. The sex ratio for the ten most populated countries in the world during 2011 is stated in Figure 1 below. India's place in the global contrast is extremely disappointing.



Source: World Population Prospects, UNDESA, 2011

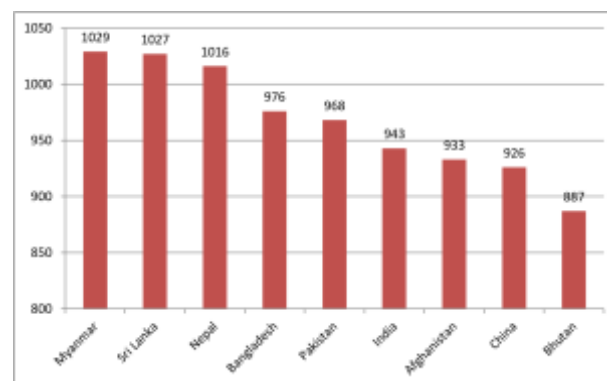
**Figure – 1: Sex ratio of 10 most populous countries**

Russia, Japan, Brazil, the USA and Indonesia are five countries in which women are higher than men and demonstrate a healthy relationship. China and India, on the other hand, have posted the most unfavorable population sex ratios among ten of the world's most populated countries, with India

markedly better than China (943 vs. 926 females per 1000 males). But a decade ago India had a lower sex ratio than China (933 vs. 944 females per 1000 males) and the lowest position of the ten most populous nations in the world.

#### ► Inter and Intra Regional Comparison

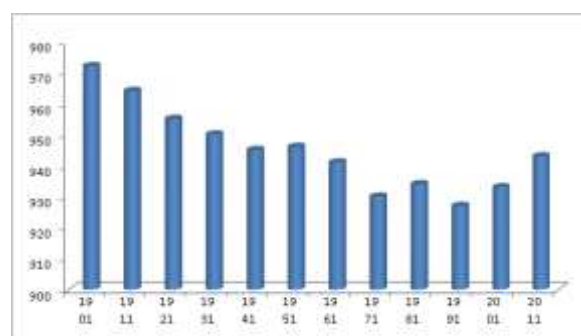
The relative position of India among its neighbors in South Asia is also no good. Figure 2 below reports these figures.



Source: World Population Prospects, UNDESA, 2011

**Figure 2: Sex Ratio of India and its Neighbours, 2011**

India ranks fourth in the immediate vicinity and Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Nepal have had a better sex ratio. Nevertheless, the first decade of the 21st century marked the start of a positive shift in the role of women in India for the long term. Figure 3 below shows India's sex ratio across different decade censuses. During the pre-Independence era, the sex ratio steadily decreased until 1941, then significantly improved in 1951. The trend showed a complex and erratic pattern in the post-independence era. Since 1901, Census 1991 recorded the lowest sex ratio (927), which in 2001 increased by six points and in 2011 by ten more. The sex ratio in the 2011 census is nearly equal to 1961.



Source: Census, Govt. of India (various years)

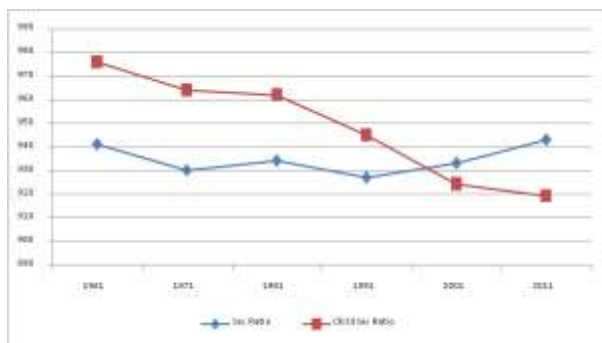
**Figure 3: Sex Ratio in India (1901 to 2011)**

While a noticeable improvement in the population sex ratio has been observed in 2011 compared to the last two decades, the increase could be attributed to better enumeration of women due to various factors such as gender sensitive approach in training and publicity measures.

### ► Child Sex Ratio-Global and Regional Scenario

Discrimination against girls exists in both pre-born and post-born phases by sex-selective termination of women's fetuses, which changes the sex ratio of birth and the girls' relative deprivation resulting in excess infant mortality. Biologically speaking, the percentage of boys born globally is much greater than the number of children. On average, 105 boys are born for each 100 females. Yet genetics tends to favour girls after birth. Owing to the marginally higher natural mortality rates of male children over the first 12 months of life the difference continues to disappear when the population reaches the age of one year.

Although the country indicated encouraging trends in the population sex ratio, the same was not true in the case of the child sex ratio. With a gender sensitive approach, there was no improvement seen in the child sex ratio trend. There has been a consistent decline in juvenile sex ratio since 1961 (Figure 4) regardless of the quality of census enumeration.



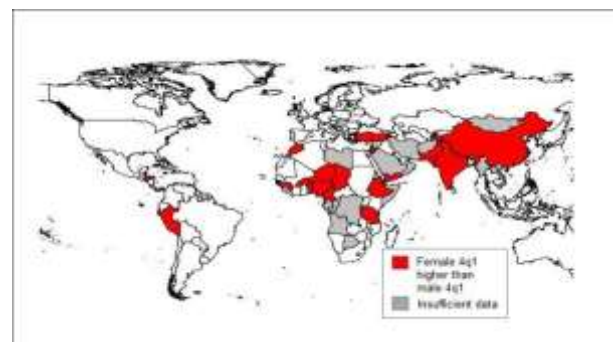
Source: Census, Govt. of India (various years)

**Figure 4: Overall Sex Ratio Vs Child Sex Ratio in India**

Despite the Indian Census' concentrated attempt to expand coverage and misreporting of age, the child sex ratio has decreased dramatically and moves the issue from total sex to child sex.

In 1998, the United Nations Demographic Division established many countries in several areas of the world, in particular Southern Asia, East Asia, Western Asia and North Africa, in which infant mortality was greater for girls than for boys as a result of girls' relative carelessness. They illustrate the multiple ways through which the biological benefit of women babies in different regions is reversed beyond one year of age.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA, 2011) found that China and India are the only two countries in the world where women's child mortality was higher than men's in the 2000s. Compared to both, while India has a better sexual mortality rate than China, it is by far the world's worst when it comes to the sexual mortality ratio between the child and the female child. This ratio has steadily decreased in India as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Egypt and Iraq strengthened since the 1970s.. The biological advantage for girls in early childhood is so strong that the high mortality among girls should be seen as **"a powerful warning"** that differential treatment or denial of resources is putting girls at a disadvantage. Figure 5 below shows the countries where excess female child mortality was found in the world in 2000s.



Source: UN-DESA, 2011

**Figure 5 Countries showing excess female child mortality (ages 1-4) in 2000s**

All of India has gender-based bias in infant mortality, making it the deathliest place in the world for a young girl ever to be born in this country. The UN-DESA study says that an Indian female has 75 percent more risk of die than her male equivalent, making this the world's worst gender disparity in infant mortality. Though in India both infant mortality and child mortality are decreasing, the rate of decline is less dramatic than in other countries around the world.

In recent years, the birth sex ratio has arisen as a measure illustrating the degree of male-selective abortion procedure that has led to a high number of sexually selective abortions. The appearance of female infanticide and the spike in sexual abortions are two serious aspects of girls' excess child mortality in different parts of the world (Agnihotri, 2000). They are considered to be the main cause of the country's gender inequality. The disturbing pattern is noted as "DEMARU – the Girl Removing Male Aspiring Rage for Ultrasound" (Bose, 2001). The one that produces life is painfully refused the right to be born. This pattern is studied in depth in the following section.

#### 4. SEX RATIO AT BIRTH

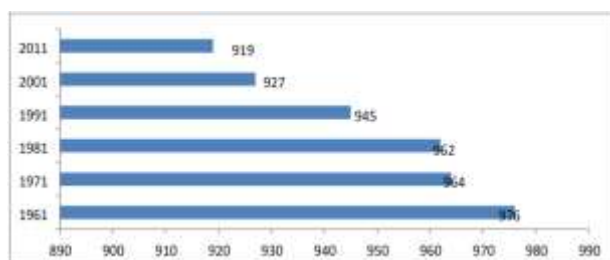
The major determinant of the child sex ratio is the sex at birth ratio (SRB), defined as the number of girls born for every 1000 boys born. Early biased sex selection activity prior to birth artificially skews SRB. About 105 girls of SRB3 (less than 952 girls per 1000 boys), are viewed as a sign of girls' discontent by either prenatal sex or by under-reporting of births to women. Both are different types of prejudicial treatment towards girls which deny their physical or social life.

The sex ratio at birth for the country for the period 2010-12 (3-years average) has been estimated at 908 as provided by the Sample Registration System (SRS), 2011.<sup>3</sup> 105 SRB is as per international definition which describes that there are 105 boys per 100 girls born.

#### 5. CHILD SEX RATIO

##### 5.1 TRENDS IN INDIA

The current child sex ratio in the country reports the lowest figure of 919 girls per 1000 boys since 1961. Figure 8 below presents the trends in the child sex ratio across various decennial censuses of India.

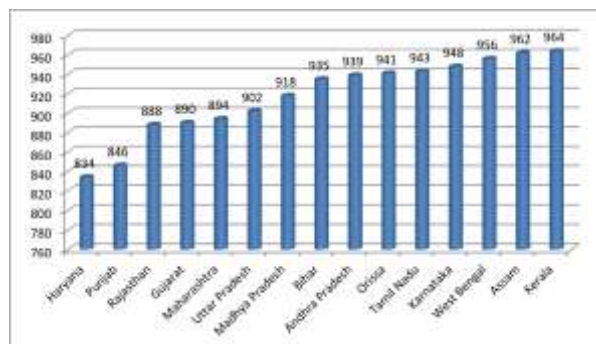


Source: Census, Govt. of India (various years)

**Figure 8: Trends in Child Sex Ratio in India**

However, these statistics hide the large difference in India across States.

According to Figure 9, Haryana (834), Punjab(846), Rajasthan (888), Gujarat (890) and Maharashtra (894) are countries with an alarmingly poor child sex ratio. Viz. Southern States. With Orissa, West Bengal and Assam, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala recorded a youth sex ratio above 940 girls per 1000 boys.



Source: Census 2011, Govt. of India

**Table 1: Distribution of States by Ranges of Child Sex Ratio in India: 1971 to 2011**

Categories of Child Sex Ratio	N o of States/UT's				
	2011	2001	1991*	1981**	1971***
Below 900	9	6	3	0	3
900 to 949	15	11	8	5	5
950 to 999	11	18	19	25	17
1000 & above	0	0	1	0	5

Notes – Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were part of their respective parent States prior to 2001.  
\* For Jammu & Kashmir, 1991 Census was not conducted  
\*\* Assam, Daman & Diu figures Not Available.  
\*\*\* MZ, Daman & Diu figures Not Available

The table indicates that the number of States dropped from five in 1971 to zero in 2011 in the latter group (1000 and higher). It is disappointing to notice that none of the countries currently have a child sex ratio higher than 1000. This indicates that social change and human development never work together to strengthen gender relations.

In rural-urban differentials in child sex there are broad regional differences. Rural areas have a higher child sex ratio of 923 girls per 1000 boys than their city counterparts, where there are only 905 females. While in rural India the adolescent sex ratio is 18 points higher than in urban India, in the period 2001-2011 the decline in rural areas is much greater in contrast to the decline in urban India.

##### 5.2 Sex Ratio across Religion

Table 1.2 shows that while the average sex ratio has increased in all religious groups, the child sex ratio for all, excluding Sikhs and Jains, has decreased. Hindus numbering some 80 percent of the total population recorded by 913 in 2011 is smaller than the national average of 919 girls for every 1 thousand boys and 12 points below the 2001 census. Muslims accounted for 14 percent of the population showed the youth sex ratio in 2011, 943 compared to 950 in the 2001 census. The lowest child sex ratios were recorded by Sikh and Jains in the minority communities of 828 girls and 889 girls respectively. While these two populations showed a substantial rise of 42 and 19 points in the

2011 census, their ratios are still well below the national average. Christians, on the other hand, had the highest child ratios in both censuses – 964 vs 958, but in 2011 census they declined by 6 percent. Interestingly, among people of other religions and practice, a balanced child sex-ratio of 974 girls per 1000 boys was noted.

**Table 1.2: Sex Ratio across various Religions in India**

Religion	2001		2011		Proportion in India's total population
	Overall Sex ratio	Child sex ratio	Overall Sex ratio	Child sex ratio	
Hindus	931	925	939	913	79.80
Muslims	936	950	951	943	14.23
Jains	940	870	954	889	0.37
Sikhs	893	786	903	828	1.72
Christians	1009	964	1023	958	2.30
Buddhists	953	942	965	933	0.70
Other religions	992	976	1008	974	

Source: Census, Govt. of India

Statewise disaggregation shows the same trend with Muslims child sex ratio always exceeding The Hindus. In almost all countries, Sikhs consistently recorded lowest sex ratios. While Punjab is home to Sikhs and its large population is present also in other countries such as Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra and Assam. The lowest child sex score in Haryana has been 795 girls per 1000 boys, compared to 830 in Punjab. Eleven out of 15 big countries announced that the Sikh child sex ratio was under 900.

## 6. CONCLUSION:

The mid-term review of India's 10th Plan shared dissatisfaction with low child sex ratios, increased occurrence of women's fatal disease and infanticide and increased violence against women. For a child, life is a continual battle for survival, growth and development from her conception up to her teen years. The primary cause of the adverse condition of girls in a household is the transfer of restricted funds and services to children, when the family elite has a much greater standing. This discrimination arises primarily because of society's views of a girl as a burden. Eleventh Five Year Plan formulated a policy to support certain States that strengthened their respective sex ratios at birth in order to avoid the decrease in child sex ratio. The plan period also set six monitoring goals, one of which was to raise the sex ratio of children to 935 before 2011-12, and 950 before the end of the twelfth five year plan, that is (2016-17). However, the 2011 Census results defeated the Eleventh Five Year Plan objectives.

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## Corresponding Author

### Anupam Patel\*

Research Scholar, Department of Computer Science, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehore, M.P.