

# No country for girls, only 914 per 1,000 boys

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Among the many ways that India confounds the world, this is a particularly ignominious one. While growth and development usually lead to more progressive attitudes towards women, rising India is increasingly choosing the barbaric practice of female infanticide and foeticide.

Studies show a sharp drop in the sex ratio after the introduction of ultrasound machines, used for determining the sex of fetuses, resulting in selective abortion of female fetuses. Estimates for the total number of "missing girls" since 1980 range between 10 million to 44 million, depending on assumptions.

The results of the 1991 Census came as the first major shock, with the child sex ratio crashing from 962 girls per 1000 boys to 945 in just 10 years. The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act came into effect in 1996 and it outlawed the disclosure of the sex of the fetus. The act has not been able to arrest the continuous decline of India's child sex ratio. In 2001, it fell further to 927 girls per 1000 boys, and in 2011, it crashed to



914. In just thirty years, there are now 48 fewer girls per 1000 boys. Violations of the PNDT Act are rampant, and campaigners accuse the government of not being proactive in clamping down on clinics offering sex determination tests.

And here comes in the truly shameful part — it is not the poorest and least literate areas and communities that are killing off their infant girls; in fact the reverse is true. The 2011 numbers show that the states with the worst child sex ratio (CSR) are not the most backward: the prosperous agrarian states of Haryana and Punjab bear that ignominy

with the neighbouring industrial hubs of Delhi and Chandigarh just slightly better.

Nor is high literacy a good indicator: Uttar Pradesh and Bihar do far better than Maharashtra and Gujarat. Within states, rural areas tend to have a better CSR than urban areas. At a caste and community level, tribal societies have much better CSRs. These trends lead to the inescapable conclusion that with growth and development comes greater access to pre-natal sex determination, and hence, worse sex ratios.

In addition to intentional killing through foeticide and infanticide, death due to disease, is unnaturally common among Indian girls.

**SHAME**  
**SEX RATIO**