

Sex-Selective Abortion

The practice of selectively aborting girls is happening not just abroad but also in the U.S.

When we hear of the practice of sex-selective abortion happening in other parts of the world, we deem it a disgrace. The high level of “discrimination” involved in sex-selective abortion in China and India is “distressing,” according to Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen. His research into the missing women in the demographic record worldwide, largely resulting from the sex-selective abortion made possible by the introduction of ultrasound in the 1980s, duly shocked the West.¹ (The figure of missing women Sen estimated at 100 million is now thought to be in excess of 160 million.)²

We instinctively find it abhorrent—the antithesis of what it means to be civilized—that some countries, such as China and India, would allow a cultural preference for boys to be expressed through the intentional elimination of unborn baby girls. Yet all the while sex-selective abortion remains legal in America, too. It is routinely accepted as part of what it means to have and to defend a robust “pro-choice” position. In some countries, this war on women is a travesty and “gendercide,” while in America, protecting parents’ right to abort their daughters because they are not male is considered a necessity.

Evidence suggests some first-generation Chinese and Indian communities in America continue to practice “son preference.” In 2014, U.S. natality data began to distinguish between native-born and foreign-born mothers. This change has enabled demographers to detect unnaturally elevated sex-ratios-at-birth (SRBs) among various groups, and particularly when parents from those sub-populations already have one or more children. The overall SRB hovers at 105 in the U.S.—that is, 105 baby boys born for every 100 baby girls. However, for for-

eign-born Indian mothers, the SRB for third and “higher-parity” births between 2014 and 2018 was 115.3, and for foreign-born Chinese mothers 122.8.³ Experts believe this is due to sex-selective abortion and, in the case of in vitro fertilization, the use of preimplantation genetic diagnosis to select against girls.

In countless other significant areas of the law, the U.S. protects females from discrimination based on sex. To allow lethal sex discrimination in the womb is completely at odds with our foundational principles of equal treatment for men and women and antithetical to the entire structure of our laws. Further, it perpetuates the dangerous idea that women’s lives are worth less than men’s.

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For further reading:

Mara Hvistendahl, *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

Nicholas Eberstadt and Evan Abramsky, “Has ‘the Global War Against Baby Girls’ Come to America?,” Institute for Family Studies, January 27, 2020. <https://ifstudies.org/blog/has-the-global-war-against-baby-girls-come-to-america>.

Endnotes:

- 1 Amartya Sen, “The lost girls: Girls are still aborted in states with more educated women,” *The Independent*, January 14, 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/the-lost-girls-girls-are-still-aborted-in-states-with-more-educated-women-by-amartya-sen-9059544.html>.
- 2 Cf. Mara Hvistendahl, *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).
- 3 Nicholas Eberstadt and Evan Abramsky, “Has ‘the Global War Against Baby Girls’ Come to America?,” Institute for Family Studies, January 27, 2020. <https://ifstudies.org/blog/has-the-global-war-against-baby-girls-come-to-america>.