

Gender Ratio Woes in India

Why in news?

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Economic Survey 2017-18 has pointed out Meta preference and fertility stopping rule for skewed sex-ratio of the last child (SRLC).

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What is the status of gender ratio in India?

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- The sex-ratio of the last child (SRLC) born in Indian families is excessively slanted.

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- At national level, it is around 9.5 per cent worse than it should be, compared to other countries at similar levels of development.

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- In Gujarat, Punjab and Rajasthan, the SRLC is 2,100 boys for every 1,000 girls, In Haryana, it is even worse at 2,300 boys: 1,000 girls.

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- The male child preference is highest in Punjab and Haryana and lowest in Meghalaya.

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- While India has shown improvement in several parameters related to women's empowerment, the preference for a son has not diminished.

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What are the reasons for this condition?

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- An average Indian family prefers to have two children, there are instances where families have more than five children if the last child is not a male.

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- Indian families carry on having kids until there is a boy and then, they stop having kids.

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- The Survey calls this as “meta preference” and a “fertility stopping rule” by making an inference that there are 21 million unwanted girls of age group 0-25 were born because their parents wanted a boy.
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- More than 2 million women go missing across age groups every year either due to sex-selective abortion, disease, neglect, or inadequate nutrition, according to the National Family and Health Survey (NFHS).
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- Reasons behind preferring a male child are found to be compulsion of a woman to move to her husband's house post marriage, inheritance of property, rituals performed by sons, and dowry, among others.
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- More women are educated, employed and earning than a decade ago they still do not have control over their earnings and childbirth.
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What are the suggestions from the government in this regard?

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- The government had introduced schemes Beti Bachao -Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, enhanced maternity leave and mandatory Crèches in workplaces for supporting female children and child births.
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- Economic Survey recommended that the nation must confront the societal preference for male offspring.
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- It has also called for a stronger commitment on the gender front similar to the government’s push for Ease of Doing Business.
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- Equal participation by women in the labour force could push up the gross domestic product by 27 per cent.
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- It’s axiomatic that women’s empowerment, education and agency in terms of deployment of their income, travel, etc. can lead to a big leap forward
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Source: Business standard, the Hindu

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