



## 1. Sex ratio at birth: Kerala on top, Northeast states show decline

- What does the survey say about females in India?
- Why worry about this trend of low sex ratio?
- Why does rural India fare better child sex ratio?
- What has the government done to arrest this trend?

**GS paper 1 ( Issues related to society )**

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**In this video, you can find detailed answers for all  
the above questions.**

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## What is the context about?



The sex ratio at birth (SRB) in the country, defined as the number of female births per 1,000 male births, improved from 914 to 919 between the third and fourth National Family Health Surveys (NFHS), carried out in 2005-06 and 2015-16 respectively.



The highest improvement was in Punjab at 126 points, but its SRB remained among the lowest among the states at 860 in NFHS-4.



The sharpest decline was in Sikkim, where the SRB dropped 175 points to reach 809, the lowest among all states in 2015-16.



## What does the survey say about females in India?



The country's sex ratio at birth, which is the number of females born per 1,000 males, is showing a worrying decline, according to a Sample Registration System (SRS) survey.



The figure stood at 896 for 2015-17, down from 898 in 2014-16 and 900 in 2013-15. Of the top 22 states for which data is available, 14 had a sex ratio better than the all-India average, while eight, including Delhi, had an inferior number.



With a sex ratio of 833, Haryana continues to carry the ignominy of being the most unfair to the girl child among the surveyed states.



## Why worry about this trend of low sex ratio?



The low and falling child sex ratio in the country is a matter of policy concern, not only because it violates the human rights of unborn and infant girls but also because it deprives the country of the potential economic and social contribution of these ‘missing women’.



In addition, there may be longer-run adverse impacts from a marriage market squeeze caused by an excess supply of male relative to female youth. Already, states like Haryana and Punjab, where the sex ratio has been extremely distorted for several decades, have been experiencing bride trafficking.



## Why does rural India fare better child sex ratio?



A large section of Indian society prefers a male child, the affluent more so. People in urban areas are better positioned to exploit the system as they have access to more and better medical facilities. So, they often resort to neonatal tests, although these are banned in India. This allows them to abort a girl child.



Traditionally, societies in West Bengal and the North-East are matriarchal. It may be noted that the SRS data captures only births registered in the records as against the Census that captures all the residents of the country.

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## What has the government done to arrest this trend?



After abortion was legalised in India in 1971, and technologies to diagnose the sex of the fetus became widely available, the practice of sex-selective abortions became widespread. As the prices for sex-selection diagnostic tests fell during the 1980s and 1990s, the practice became even more rampant.



The Indian government finally responded to this problem by passing the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostics Techniques (PNDT) (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act in 1994.



The Act prohibited the use of diagnostic methods to diagnose the sex of an unborn child. However, there is a general perception that the Act has not been effective, as the child sex ratio has continued to fall.