

Sex Ratio: Notes for UPSC

Sex ratio (also known as Gender Ratio) is the ratio of males to females in a population. That is, it is the proportion of males in a population. As per Fisher's principle, this ratio is 1:1 for most sexually reproducing species. The sex ratio at birth for the world is 107:100.

This article will give brief details about sex ration in general along with focusing on its condition in India. The information from this article will be useful for candidates attempting the IAS Exam.

Types of Sex Ratio

With most species, the sex ratio varies as per the age of the population

It is generally divided into four subdivisions:

- Primary sex ratio — ratio at fertilization
- Secondary sex ratio — ratio at birth
- Tertiary sex ratio — ratio in sexually mature organisms
- Quaternary sex ratio — ratio in post-reproductive organisms

These definitions can be somewhat subjective since they lack clear boundaries.

Sex Ratio in India

The sex ratio is 943 in India as per the 2011 census. That is, there are 943 females for every 1000 males. A skewed sex ratio which is not in favour of women is a dangerous sign because it indicates a higher female foetal mortality rate. This is a particular problem in certain states where there is active sex selection by parents and girls are killed even before they are born. Haryana has the lowest sex ratio in India among states at 879 girls for 1000 boys. Decreasing sex ratios pose dangers for the future female population in the country.

Factors for the declining Sex Ratio in India

There are many factors which have led to the decline of the sex ratio in India. Some of them are as follows

1. Sex selection abortion
2. Neglect at birth or childhood
3. Cultural preference for the male child.
4. Failure in the implementation of the law.

The law in question is the Prenatal Conception and Prenatal Determination Act (PC-PNDT), 1994, which prohibits and punishes healthcare officials from telling the gender of the child to the parents in question. It is that leads to some electing to go for abortions if the foetus is female

This is backed by studies that show that Pre Natal Sex Determination is the main reason for the abysmal gender ratio in India. Poor training and exploitation of loopholes is the reason why the PC-PNDT is a toothless tiger.

The gross misuse of law and technology notwithstanding, society has prejudices of its own when it comes to the female child.

It is believed by a section of the population that the male child will add to the wealth, extend the bloodline and take care of parents in old age. Hence a preference for the male child has always been the norm. The economic reason can be attributed to the prevalence of the dowry custom. Its practice is what's dreaded by most parents of a girl child who, under societal pressure, are burdened financially and at times resorting to drastic measures, if not outright resentment against their daughters.

Ultimately, the surplus of males in a society leads to lack of marriage-ability, and consequent marginalization in society, may lead to antisocial behavior and violence, threatening societal stability and security.

Steps taken to address the Declining Gender Ratio in India.

To address the declining sex ratio in some of the states in India, the government had launched initiatives such as the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao in 2015. The scheme raised awareness regarding the importance of the girl child and the necessity in empowering them through education.

- In addition the Ministry of Women and Child Development along with the Ministry of Education made the following suggestions as well
- Making education affordable and accessible while improving economic conditions
- Gender sensitization campaign, making women safety cells ensuring the safety of women on public transports etc
- Reaching out to young people could reduce the effect of population momentum and accelerate progress towards reaching a more normal sex-ratio at birth.

Conclusion

In spite of the policies and initiatives launched for the improvement of the girl child, the underlying problems still exist. Socio-economic forms of discrimination and the evil practices of female infanticide and foeticide still persist. It is thus imperative to focus on improving the existing policies, laws and programmes, to ensure girl child's survival, and to reduce gender gap in access to healthcare.

