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How can economic schemes curtail the increasing sex ratio at birth in China?

Debarun Bhattacharjya
Anant Sudarshan
Shripad Tuljapurkar
Ross Shachter
Marcus Feldman

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Abstract

Fertility decline, driven by the one-child policy, and son preference have contributed to an alarming difference in the number of live male and female births in China. We present a quantitative model where people choose to sex-select because they perceive that married sons are more valuable than married daughters. Due to the predominant patrilineal kinship system in China, daughters-in-law provide valuable emotional and financial support, enhancing the perceived present value of married sons. We argue that inter-generational transfer data will help ascertain the extent to which economic schemes (such as pension plans for families with no sons) can curtail the increasing sex ratio at birth.

Author's affiliation

[Debarun Bhattacharjya](#)
Stanford University, United States of America
[Anant Sudarshan](#)
Stanford University, United States of America
[Shripad Tuljapurkar](#)
Stanford University, United States of America
[Ross Shachter](#)
Stanford University, United States of America
[Marcus Feldman](#)
Stanford University, United States of America

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