

# SEX RATIO AT BIRTH

Sex ratio at birth: the percentage of the total number of boys and 100 girls. In general, this rate is 105 (swing from 103 to 107).

## **The importance of people's awareness of sex ratio at birth**

Sex ratio at birth plays a significant role in sex ratio of population and then affects social, cultural, economic and moral issues of a nation. In human beings, sex ratio is commonly assumed to be 95-105 boys to 100 girls. Due to the generally higher life expectancy of females, sex ratio tends to even out in adult population, and result in an excess of females among the elderly as female tends to outlive male. Under the circumstances of no war or epidemics the human sex ratio remains balanced to ensure the population reproduction and reduce the effect of unbalanced sex ratio in married age, in labor source and in the implementation of healthcare and education policies. Sex ratio at birth in Vietnam is on the upward trend in recent years, so the government leaders, researchers and society should pay due attention to.

### **I. Current situation**

In recent years, especially from 1999 census of population and housing, government leaders and researchers have taken care of the unusual sex ratio, boys at birth over the other. In 1979, sex ratio at birth is 105 boys, 106 boys in 1989, 107 in 1999, 110 in 2000 and 112 in 2007.

In 2006, 19 of 64 provinces has sex ratio over 110 while in 2007 that number of provinces increase to 31, which includes 8 provinces having this high ratio (over 110) in two years 2006-2007. They are Điện Biên, Bắc Giang, Hải Dương, Hưng Yên, Thái Bình, Bắc Ninh, Đắk Lắk and Ninh Thuận. Among those 8 provinces, 6 provinces are in the North and 4 provinces are in Red river delta.

**Chart1. 31 provinces with the rate of birth sex over 110, year 2007**

	Location	111,0			
1	Hưng Yên	128,8	17	Quảng Nam	112,6
2	Bắc Ninh	124,4	18	Điện Biên	112,5
3	Thanh Hoá	122,2	19	Phú Yên	112,2
4	Hải Dương	120,3	20	Lâm Đồng	112,2
5	Kiên Giang	118,3	21	Đắc Lắc	111,9
6	Bắc Giang	118,2	22	Lào Cai	111,8
7	Quảng Ninh	117,0	23	Cà Mau	111,8
8	Hà Tây	116,6	24	Nghệ An	111,3
9	Tây Ninh	116,4	25	Đà Nẵng	111,3
10	Tuyên Quang	114	26	Ninh Thuận	110,8
11	Phú Thọ	113,4	27	Trà Vinh	110,8
12	Quảng Trị	113,2	28	Khánh Hoà	110,7
13	Bình Định	113,2	29	Thái Nguyên	110,6
14	Kon Tum	112,9	30	Quảng Ngãi	110,1
15	Hà Nội	112,8	31	Sóc Trăng	110,1
16	Thái Bình	112,7			

Source: Survey on Population change and Family planning 1/4/2007 and the data by Health care sector. 2008

**Chart 2. 19 provinces with the rate of birth sex over 110, year 2006**

No			No		
	<b>Location</b>	<b>108,7</b>		<b>Location</b>	<b>108,7</b>
1	Hải Dương	120,5	11	Lạng Sơn	113,5
	Bắc Ninh	119,6	12	Bình Dương	112,3
3	Yên Bái	117,2	13	Hải Phòng	111,7
4	Sơn La	117,0	14	Thái Bình	111,4
5	Ninh Thuận	116,4	15	Thái Nguyên	111,3
6	Bắc Giang	115,6	16	TP Hồ Chí Minh	111,0
7	Điện Biên	115,3	17	Đồng Nai	110,9
8	Đắk Lắk	115,1	18	Nam Định	110,7
9	Hưng Yên	114,8	19	Hoà Bình	110,5
10	Hà Nam	113,5			

Source: Survey on Population change and Family planning 1/4/2007 and the data by Health care sector. 2008

**Chart 3. 5 provinces with the rate of birth sex increase 10% in 2006 -2007**

No		2006	2007	Increase(+)/ Decrease(-)
	<b>Location</b>	<b>108,7</b>	<b>111,0</b>	<b>2,3</b>
1	Kiên Giang	103,7	118,3	14,6
2	Hưng Yên	114,8	128,8	14,0
3	Thanh Hoá	109,2	122,2	13,0
4	Tuyên Quang	102,1	114,0	11,9
5	Kon Tum	102,4	112,9	10,5

Source: Survey on Population change and Family planning 1/4/2007 and the data by Health care sector. 2008

**Chart 4. 5 provinces with the high rate of birth sex decrease more than 5% in 2006 -2007**

No		2006	2007	Increase(+)/ Decrease(-)
	<b>Location</b>	<b>108,7</b>	<b>111,0</b>	<b>2,3</b>
1	Ninh Thuận	116,4	110,8	-5.6
2	Lạng Sơn	113,5	107,7	-5.8
3	Yên Bái	117,2	108,6	-8.6
4	Sơn La	117.0	105,9	-11.1
5	Đắc Nông	107,6	92,4	-15.2

Source: Survey on Population change and Family planning 1/4/2007 and the data by Health care sector. 2008

### **The reasons**

The first reason is a strong cultural preference for one sex, typically males, over the other, which is still deeply-rooted in society and social classes. Sons are preferred as an 'asset', since they can be the breadwinners, support and protect the family. Reported 2006 investigation of population changes, labor and family planning can clearly illustrate the preference for sons. Mothers of two girls are more likely to give birth to the third child.

The second reason is the popularity of books, documents and traditional medicines by word of mouth which can support the couples to give selective birth, normally sons. The survey in Bắc Ninh, Hà Tây and Bình Định provinces showed that a large number of couples bought and used documents and traditional medicines in the hope of having sons.

The application of ultrasound scan to find the gender of child in the womb from the 12<sup>th</sup> week is also account for the unusual sex ratio at birth. About 5 % expectant mothers know about the gender of child in the womb in 12-15 week period and 18% in 16-19 week period, 30% in 20-23 week period and 50% after 24 week period. In the times of the popularities of child abortion in combined with the preference for sons, sex-selective abortion become common.

### **The consequences of unusual sex ratio at birth**

- In some countries, female infants are the victim of being abandoned and infanticide. This case is called sex-selective infant murder crime.
- The imbalanced sex ratio at birth may lead to the redundancy of male but lack of female in married and childbearing ages. In Vietnam, sex ratio is still relatively balanced but that ratio is 111 in 2007 corresponding to that ratio in China in the 1990s. In China, the sex ratio imbalance has occurred in the 1980s and recently has increased to 120 and is estimated

to rise to 117 in 2050. The number of males in married age from 20-49 is 36.2 million in 2030, 46.1 million in 2040 and 56.7 million in 2050 more than the number of female. India with sex ratio at birth at 110.4 is also lack of male with the number of 34.2million in 2030, 47.4 million in 2040 and remarkably 73 million on 2050.

- The imbalanced sex ratio at birth put a strain on the social relationship such as the phenomena of preventing male from other villages to marrying the local female.
- The current situation may create conditions for women trafficking and international illegal marriage agencies. In recent years, the number of Vietnam women get married to foreigners have been increasing, especially men from China, Korea and Taiwan. Those three nations and regions have the sex imbalance in married age. In China, sex ratio is 106 and at the age of 15-64 is 106, in Korea 101 and 104, in Taiwan 102 and 102.<sup>1</sup> respectively.

#### **IV. Challenges in solving sex imbalance**

- Traditional preferences for sons still exist in a large number of families.
- The popularities of sex-selection childbearing document is not yet restricted by law.
- Both the state and private medical centers are still allowed to inform child gender. The government's decree No 114 of November 2006 and the resolution of Ministry of Public Health No 3698/BYT-SKSS of May 2006 lack necessary sanctions.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2018.html>  
 Family and Society Newspaper  
<http://giadinh.net.vn/html/site/e5592374c68cd970c02fef5257f3cbff.html?direct=455c6d31e7e5e49f8dea243641ca29f2&column=95&nID=4001&lang=Vn>. Employ 120 unmarried women for foreigners to “choose prospective brides”

## **V. Recommendation for government policies and intervention programs**

### **For long term policies**

- Support girls in public education and vocational training.
- ◆ Improve social security for the elderly to reduce their dependency on their son for caring
- ◆ Stipulate the responsibility of parent caring for children regardless of sons or daughters.
- ◆ Communicate gender equality and gender discrimination at schools. Improve the position of women in families.
- ◆ Build the image of a successful and happy woman

### **The intervention methods**

- ◆ Impose sanctions to implement the resolution of Ministry of Public Health in forbidding the healthcare centers or ultrasound services to determine and inform sex of the offsprings
- ◆ Use punitive sanctions to ban publishers and bookstores and media companies from providing and populating documents for sex-selective childbearing.
- ◆ Communicate the harmful effect of child abortion and do not consider child abortion as a means of family planning.