

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 926
TO BE ANSWERED ON 08.12.2023

IMPROVEMENT IN INDIA'S GENDER RATIO

926. SHRI PRADEEP KUMAR SINGH:
SHRI L.S. TEJASVI SURYA:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) the factors that have contributed to the improvement in India's sex ratio, as reflected in the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data; and
- (b) the broader implications of this improved sex ratio for India's demographic dynamics, socio-economic development and gender equality?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a): The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data for the period from 2019-2021, reflects that the Sex Ratio of the total population of India has improved from 991 in 2015-16 (NFHS-4) to 1020 in 2019-21. Further the sex ratio in rural areas (at 1,037 females per 1,000 males) is healthier than that of urban areas (at 985 females per 1,000 males). This is the highest sex ratio in India in the past century, as well as the highest ever in independent India. Several initiatives taken by the Government may have contributed to the improvement in sex ratio, including focused approach for a positive attitudinal change of societal towards the girl child. That has aided a shift in patriarchal mind-set from one that perceived the girl child as a burden, towards a perception of girls as valuable members of the family and the society.

The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PC&PNDT Act) is the overarching legal framework governing the misuse of technology for detection and disclosure of sex of the foetus, lest it leads to female foeticide. Government of India's flagship scheme Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), launched in 2015, leverages mass communication campaign, using multiple forms of traditional and non-traditional media, including social media, and multi-sectoral interventions to bring about attitudinal change towards the girl child, by preventing and reporting female foeticide, celebrating the girl child and encouraging and facilitating her education and future. The schemes such as Sukanya Samridhi Yojana have incentivized financial investments into the girls' future. The schemes like Samagra Shiksha, provision of separate toilet for girls in Schools, various scholarship schemes, provision of affordable and quality sanitary napkins under Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana, schemes for Women Scientists etc. have also contributed towards behavioural changes resulting in increased enrolment of girls in educational institutions.

(b): The improving trends in sex ratio contribute to better gender balance in the society – in public, household and institutional spaces, increased investment in girls' education and skill development, improved voice and choice of girls and their increased participation in socio-political space and economic activities. It is also an indicator of improved educational status of girls and positive change in societal mindset, which in turn contribute to the reduction of some forms of violence and harassment against women and girls such as the practice of dowry, child marriage etc. It reflects a dip in sex-selection and female foeticide and is an indirect indicator of increasing awareness in women and girls' of their rights and entitlements. A healthy sex ratio also has the potential to reduce social practices such as bride price, trafficking, which take place in conditions of extremely skewed sex ratio and high levels of poverty.
