



SCHOOL

EMPLOYMENT

ADULT MARRIAGE/
HEALTHY CHILDREN

SECURITY
OF PLACE

WORK-LIFE
BALANCE

LIFELONG
LEARNING

WEALTH/CHILD
INVESTMENT

SECURE
OLD-AGE

DEMOGRAPHIC
DIVIDEND



Photo: UNFPA/Hayk Melkonyan

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Gender-biased sex selection

“I was so happy I was going to have a child. Who cared at all if it was a boy or a girl?”

Ani’s mother

Ani, 10, is from Yerevan, Armenia.

Her father passed away several years ago. She and her little brother are being raised by her mother, Anahit, who runs a small café and crafts shop. Ani has lots of ideas for her professional future, from being an artist to becoming a programmer, but says she does not know yet which of the many options she will want to pursue when she is grown up.

QR CODE

CHILD
MARRIAGE

TEENAGE
PREGNANCY

REPEAT
PREGNANCIES

CHILD ILLNESS
& DEATH

MATERNAL
MORBIDITY

INFORMAL
WORK

INSECURITY &
DISPLACEMENT

INSECURE
OLD-AGE

MISSED
DEMOGRAPHIC
DIVIDEND



Only by fostering a culture that places equal value on men and women will we see parents fully embracing all their children, no matter their sex.

SEX RATIO AT BIRTH IN SELECTED COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES

Country/Territory	Sex ratio at birth	Year
Azerbaijan	114	2016
Vietnam	113.8	2012
China	113.5	2015
Armenia	112	2015
Albania	110.9	2008-12
Montenegro	110.2	2005-12
India	110.1	2010-12
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Northwest)	110.1	2005-13
Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)	109.6	2008-12
Georgia	109	2015
South Korea	105.3	2013

Sex ratio at birth = male births per 100 female births. Based on birth registration data (estimates in China, India and Vietnam).

Source: Adapted and updated from: Preventing Gender-Biased Sex Selection in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Issue Brief 4, 2015.

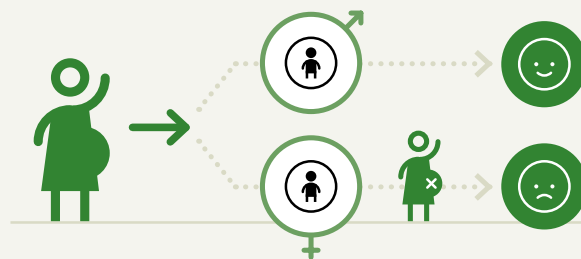
→ The situation

When Ani was born ten years ago, she – being a girl – was part of a minority. For every 100 girls born in Armenia at the time, there were 115 boys. Heavily skewed sex ratios like this are not uncommon in the region. They exist in the South Caucasus and in the Balkans where patriarchal societies place little value on girls and, as family sizes are shrinking, parents engineer the composition of their offspring to make sure at least one of their children is a boy. In fact, some countries in the region are among those with the world's highest sex-ratio-at-birth imbalances (see graph).



→ Leaving no-one behind

At the individual level, women in countries where sex selection is practised face intense pressure from family members and the wider community to give birth to a boy. They may face violence, especially psychological violence, if they fail to deliver a son. And they may be forced to undergo abortions – sometimes repeated ones – if they get pregnant with an unwanted girl.



→ Why is it important?

Sex ratio imbalances are not simply a demographic anomaly. They have tangible negative consequences. In Armenia alone, close to 100,000 girls will be “missing” by 2060 if current trends continue. This means many men will not find a partner; many may go abroad to establish a family. Neither scenario bodes well for countries already struggling with mass out-migration and population decline. Experts also expect a rise in crimes such as human trafficking, gender-based violence and forced marriage.



→ What needs to be done?

Decisive steps need to be taken to combat engrained gender inequalities and discrimination. This includes school education programmes, awareness-raising campaigns and empowering women at work and in public life. It also includes strengthening women's financial independence by reforming inheritance laws and pension and other social security schemes. Financial incentives for families with girls to counterweigh their perceived economic burden can also be effective. Only by fostering a culture that places equal value on men and women will we see parents fully embracing all their children, no matter their sex.

