

# Declining Child Sex Ratio Trends in West Bengal



## Sociology

**KEYWORDS :** Child Sex Ratio (CSR), Rural – Urban basis CSR, female foeticide, sex selective abortion, son preference

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### ABSTRACT

*In India, the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) is defined as the number of females per thousand males in the age group 0–6 years in a human population. The child sex ratio between the age group of 0–6 years has come down to 914 in the 2011 census from 927 in the 2001 census. The declining child sex ratio trend is being recorded since 1991. This declining trend can now be observed in regions where, historically, the ratios had been sound. Developed states have recorded even steeper falls. The present paper examines the situation of child sex ratio in West Bengal based on census data.*

### Introduction

The increasing deficit of women in India’s population has been documented ever since the first decennial enumeration of people was conducted in the British-occupied parts of India in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Over the span of more than 100 years, the deficit of women has progressively increased as evident from the sex ratio of the population (Visaria, 1972; Visaria, 2002). Amartya Sen estimated that there were nearly 100 million women missing in the world around 2000 and nearly a third of them were missing in India (Sen, 2001).

In India, the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) is defined as the number of females per thousand males in the age group 0–6 years in a human population. The child sex ratio between the age group of 0–6 years has come down to 914 in the 2011 census from 927 in the 2001 census. The declining child sex ratio trend is being recorded since 1991. This declining trend can now be observed in regions where, historically, the ratios had been sound. Developed states have recorded even steeper falls. Literacy and economic development have resulted in sharper change.

### Trends of Child Sex Ratio: India & West Bengal

The child sex ratio is a sensitive indicator that displays the status of girl children. Trends in child sex ratio will reveal the intensity of changes in it, over a period of time. Table-1 shows the trends of child sex ratio in India.

Year	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
CSR	983	976 (-7)	964 (-12)	962 (-2)	945 (-17)	927 (-18)	914 (-13)
OSR	946	941 (-5)	930 (-11)	934 (+4)	927 (-7)	933 (+6)	940 (+7)

**Table – 1: Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and Over-all Sex Ratio (OSR) in India**

Source – Census of India, 1961, 1981, 2001 & 2011 (Provisional)

The child sex ratio has been declining faster than overall sex ratio. The decline in the child sex ratio in 2001 Census is a major cause of worry among the planners, demographers and researchers. Lower sex ratio among children is indicative of more females than males among child population which may lead to demographic imbalance over time if the trend continues in future.

**Table – 2: Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and Overall Sex Ratio (OSR) in West Bengal**

Year	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
CSR	-	1008	1010 (+2)	981 (-29)	967 (-14)	960 (-7)	950 (-13)
OSR	865	878 (+13)	891 (+13)	911 (+20)	917 (+6)	934 (+17)	947 (+13)

**Source – Census of India, 1961, 1981, 2001 & 2011 (Provisional)**

Table-2 shows the trends of child sex ratio in West Bengal. In West Bengal CSR always decrease and OSR always increase after 1971. The child sex ratio in West Bengal has been historically negative or in other words, unfavorable to females since 1981. In the post independence period, the trend of child sex ratio slipped down for four consecutive decades after 1971. During 1971-2011 a steep fall of 60 points was seen in the child sex ratio in West Bengal.

### Trends of Child Sex Ratio: Rural & Urban

The child sex ratio basis on residence also differs in West Bengal. In 2001 rural child sex ratio is greater than urban ratio except Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihar and Purba Medinipur. On the other side in 2011, rural child sex ratio is greater than urban ratio except Dakshin Dinajpur, Maldah, Murshidabad, Bankura, Haora, Paschim Medinipur and Purba Medinipur.

**Table-3: District-wise sex ratio of Child population in the age group 0-6 by residence, West Bengal – 2001 & 2011**

District Code	State/ District	Child Sex Ratio (0-6Years) 2001			Child Sex Ratio (0-6Years) 2011 (Provisional)		
		Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
	West Bengal	960	963	948	950	952	943
01	Darjiling	962	968	942	943	956	917
02	Jalpaiguri	969	969	970	949	950	943
03	Koch Bihar	964	963	971	948	949	934
04	Uttar Dinajpur	965	967	936	946	946	943
05	Dakshin Dinajpur	966	966	961	948	948	951
06	Maldah	964	965	943	945	956	972
07	Murshidabad	972	972	966	963	962	966
08	Birbhum	964	965	950	952	955	933
09	Barddhaman	956	958	953	947	955	933
10	Nadia	972	972	967	955	958	945
11	North 24 Parganas	958	963	950	947	951	944
12	Hugli	951	957	936	946	948	944
13	Bankura	953	952	969	943	941	969
14	Puruliya	964	967	932	947	948	938
15	Haora	956	962	948	964	956	968
16	Kolkata	927	NA	927	930	NA	930
17	South 24 Parganas	964	965	955	953	954	948
18	Paschim Medinipur	959	959	958	952	951	958
19	Purba Medinipur	942	941	955	938	937	949

**Source – Census of India 2011 (Provisional)**

Table- 3 shows that in 2001 census, 8 districts have reported low child sex ratio than the state average. During the period in rural areas, 5 districts have reported low rural child sex ratio. While, in urban areas, 5 districts have reported lower urban child sex ratio than the state average. In the recent census of 2011, in 14 districts, the child sex ratios lower than the state average. The corresponding numbers of districts in rural and urban areas are 9 and 6 respectively. In 2001 census, the least child sex ratios were recorded in Kolkata (927), Purba Medinipur (942), Hugli (951), and Bankura (953). Rural child sex ratios were least in the districts of Purba Medinipur (941), Bankura (952) and Paschim Medinipur (959). Urban child sex ratios were least in the districts of Kolkata (927), Puruliya (932), Hugli (936) and Uttar Dinajpur (936). As per 2011 census, the least child sex ratios reported districts were Kolkata (930), Purba Medinipur (938), Bankura (943) and Darjilling (943). Rural child sex ratios were least in Purba Medinipur (937), Bankura (941) and Uttar Dinajpur (946). Urban child sex ratios were least in the districts of Kolkata (930), Birhum (933) and Barddhaman (933).

**Table-4: Child Sex Ratio of top five and bottom five districts by residence – 2011 in West Bengal (RURAL)**

Top Five				Bottom Five			
Code	Name	Child Sex Ratio	Rank	Code	Name	Child Sex Ratio	Rank
07	Murshidabad	962	1	19	Purba Medinipur	937	1
10	Nadia	958	2	13	Bankura	941	2
01	Darjilling	956	3	04	Uttar Dinajpur	946	3
06	Maldah	956	3	05	Dakshin Dinajpur	948	4
15	Haora	956	3	12	Hugli	948	4
				14	Puruliya	948	4

Source- Census of India, 2011

In rural West Bengal, top five districts (Table 4) that have reported rural child sex ratio are Murshidabad, Nadia, Darjilling, Maldah and Haora in between 962-956. While, Purba Medinipur, Bankura, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Hugli and Puruliya Districts (Table – 4) are at the bottom five positions with rural child sex ratio between 937 and 948.

**Table-5: Child Sex Ratio of top five and bottom five districts by residence – 2011 in West Bengal (URBAN)**

Top Five				Bottom Five			
Code	Name	Child Sex Ratio	Rank	Code	Name	Child Sex Ratio	Rank
06	Maldah	972	1	01	Darjilling	917	1
13	Bankura	969	2	16	Kolkata	930	2
15	Haora	968	3	08	Birbhum	933	3
07	Murshadabad	966	4	09	Barddhaman	933	3
18	Paschim Medinipur	958	5	03	Koch Bihar	934	4

Source- Census of India, 2011

In Urban West Bengal, top five districts (Table- 5) that have reported urban child sex ratio are Maldah, Bankura, Haora, Murshidabad and Paschim Medinipur in between 972-958. While, Darjilling, Kolkata, Birbhum, Barddhaman and Koch Bihar Districts (Table – 5) are at the bottom five positions with urban child sex ratio between 917 and 934.

### Conclusion

The child sex ratio in West Bengal has fallen to 950 in 2011 from 960 in 2001 census. Differentials in child sex ratio are across the state by districts, blocks and rural as well as urban areas. Main causes of declining child sex ratio are female foeticide, son preference and gender inequality which to suppress male dominant social structure. This sharp decline in child sex ratio is dangerous symbol of the girl child deficit. It has shown an alarming signs of gender inequality in child population. The deficit in girl child population, leads to serious demographic imbalance and difficult social consequences.

## REFERENCE

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