

(Change of Presentation)

## **Evidence of decreasing prenatal sex-selection practice in a context of liberal abortion rights.**

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### **Abstract:**

Son preference and prenatal sex-selection against females (PSS) among British Asian communities, raised considerable media attention, leading to parliamentary debates on abortion laws in Britain in 2015. PSS among India-born mothers in the 1990s was indirectly evidenced in past UK study by analysing sex-ratio at birth. However, we lack reliable quantitative evidence to document the practice in Britain since 2005 and regulations remained unchanged, offering a unique opportunity to test the need (or not) for abortion regulation to curtail PSS practice. Using annual sex ratio at birth counts from 1969 to 2018 and applying novel indicators, I found that sex-selection prevalence among India born mothers is reduced in recent years, from its peak at about 4% in the 1990-2005 period. This decline is independent of specific legislation on sex-selective abortion and suggests a weakening of son preference. A reduction in prenatal sex-selection prevalence in Britain, shows that curbing the practice does not request stricter (sex-selection) abortion law. The findings support policy approaches addressing root-causes of gender preference to reduce PSS, while preserving current abortion rights.