



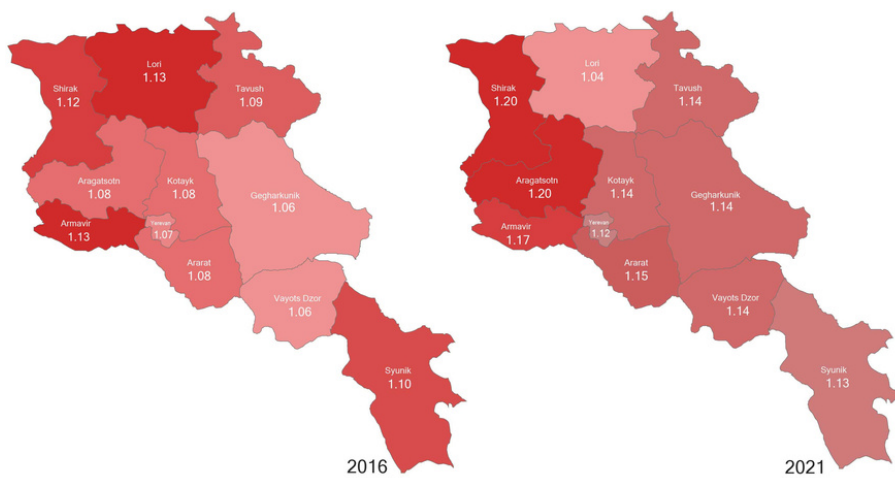
The role of regional and local authorities in the prevention of gender-biased sex selection (GBSS) in Armenia and in the localization of the National Action Plan

Policy brief

In the Republic of Armenia (RA), the deviation of the sex ratio at birth (SRB) began to gradually increase from the beginning of the 1990s. In 1995, 110 boys were born per 100 girls, in 1998 the figure exceeded 115, and in 2000 it reached 120 (the natural sex ratio at birth is 104-106 boys per 100 girls). Later, however, some progress was observed. According to the data of the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, the dynamics of the sex ratio at birth during the last ten years are as follows:

- Between 2012 and 2017, the ratio decreased from 115 boys/100 girls to 110 boys/100 girls;
- From 2018 to 2020, the indicator was stable: 111 boys per 100 girls;
- In 2021 the ratio dropped to 108.8 boys per 100 girls;
- According to the results of the first semester of 2022, 111 boys were born for every 100 girls, but the picture will be complete after summarizing the annual data.

Sex Ratio at Brith in Yerevan and Marzes of Armenia



*Data: Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia

In Armenia, in 2021 the biggest deviation in sex balance was in Armavir and Lori, followed by Shirak and Syunik. Lori is the only region where sex imbalance has increased compared to 2016, while in 2016 it had the smallest sex imbalance.

¹ 2016 data was accepted as a baseline, which is reflected in the research conducted in 2017.

To prevent gender-biased sex selection (GBSS), the National Action Plan (NAP) on GBSS prevention is implemented in Armenia since 2020. Nevertheless, regional and local authorities are not sufficiently involved in the implementation of actions, and to localize the NAP, it is necessary to introduce mechanisms aimed to expand their involvement.

Considering the above-mentioned, as well as the results of the survey conducted in June 2022 in Armenia to assess the prevalence and causes of sex-selective abortions, this document presents recommendations on expanding the role of regional and local authorities in the prevention of GBSS.

Findings from the Survey

The study shows that GBSS is particularly widespread in the regions, namely in rural areas. While the respondents in Yerevan are neutral in terms of giving preference to boys or girls, the picture is different in the regions. The percentage of respondents expressing a neutral attitude has decreased in 2022 compared to 2017. This indicator is the lowest in the Gegharkunik region: 60%, which is 15% lower than in 2017. Interestingly, in Lori, Syunik, Yerevan, Tavush, and Vayots Dzor women give preference to daughters.

Boys are most preferred in the Gegharkunik region. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the survey participants from this region stated that they give preference to boys in their families. Tavush is the only marz where the percentage of those who prefer girls in the family is higher, and this indicator has increased in 2022 compared to 2017. In other marzes, the preference of boys remained the same.

Gegharkunik is also the "leader" in terms of the percentage of pregnant women who did not undergo an ultrasound examination during the first pregnancy (24%). In general, the proportion of those who did not undergo ultrasound examination is higher in rural and other urban communities, than in Yerevan.

Recommendations

The above-mentioned data underlines the need for targeted work in regions to promote the involvement of regional authorities, local self-government bodies, local public and private organizations, and interested individuals in the prevention of gender-biased sex selection through the implementation of the National Action Plan. In that context, the following actions are recommended:

- To develop mechanisms to ensure the participatory monitoring and evaluation of the 2020-2023 National Action Plan for Prevention of Gender-biased Sex Selection to understand the SRB deviations and the factors affecting them, in order to make interventions more targeted and effective;
- To promote the involvement of regional and local authorities in the localization, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the national action plan;
- To develop the capacities of the representatives of regional and local authorities in developing gender-sensitive policies and prevention of gender-biased sex selection;
- To address the problem of eliminating the gap between the actual and desired numbers of children through regional and national media and various state programs, including the involvement of public celebrities.

The study on gender-biased sex selection includes a survey among 1,920 women who have ever been pregnant, and a qualitative analysis based on focus group discussions.

The survey was conducted in the frames of the “Addressing Gender Biased Sex Selection and related harmful practices in South Caucasus: support for regional, national and South-South interventions” project. The project is implemented by UNFPA Armenia in partnership with OxYGen Foundation. The project is funded by the European Union and UNFPA. The survey was conducted by Breavis.