

## **THE CHANGE OF THE SEX RATIO AT BIRTH AND SON PREFERENCE IN KOREA.**

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The sex ratio at birth in Korea is reported as getting higher because of son preference and abortion of female fetuses. This study is to show how the sex ratio at birth is changing over time in Korea and how different sex ratios are by birth order, districts and age of the mother. The sex ratio is calculated from the data on vital statistics published annually by National Statistical Office. The data of 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1994 are used for this study. The sex ratios at birth in 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1994 are 104, 109, 117, 115 respectively. The sex ratio at birth is increasing rapidly over time compared to 105, the sex ratio at birth on the purely biological basis. The sex ratio at birth for 1980 does not show much difference by birth order. However, the sex ratio for 1985 increases slowly by birth order. The later the birth order gets, the higher the sex ratio becomes. The sex ratios for 1990, 1994 increase rapidly by birth order, almost doubling for the third and later child compared to the first and second child. It means that Korean people began to use abortion of female fetuses to get sons from later births around 1985, and this spread widely later and came to be used after birth of the second child to make sure to get sons. The sex ratio at birth appears different also by administrative districts of Korea. The middle part of the country including Seoul, Incheon, Kangwon, and Kyonggi shows lower sex ratio than the average of the country. Chonbuk, Chonnam including Kwangju also show lower sex ratios. Kyongbuk, Kyongnam including Taegu, Pusan show the highest sex ratio at birth. Chungbuk, Chungnam including Taejon show higher sex ratios at birth than the average. Cheju is included in the areas showing higher sex ratio at birth, too. Besides, age of the mother is related to the sex ratio at birth. Older mothers tend to show higher sex ratios. In sum, birth order, districts and age of mother appear to have relationship with the sex ratio at birth. It seems that son preference is working here to explain differential sex ratios at birth.