

Sex-selective abortion

Abortion Rights believes that all women have the right to make their own reproductive choices. Prochoice means women are best placed to make their own pregnancy decisions, for only they know their personal situation.

Prochoice also means recognising that women's rights take primacy in matter of reproduction. According fetuses rights on the basis of sex inherently means removing rights from pregnant women.

Abortion Rights' position is in line with current law as stipulated in the Abortion Act 1967. The Act states that two doctors must approve, 'in good faith', that continuing a pregnancy would pose a threat to the pregnant woman's health. At no point does the Act refer specifically to sex-selection in capacity.

It is therefore entirely reasonable that if a woman feels at risk in her family or community for gestating a female (or male) foetus, two doctors can approve her abortion 'in good faith'.

Importantly, leading UK abortion service provider British Pregnancy Advisory Service (Bpas) states they do not experience women seeking abortion based on the sex of the foetus.¹ The current sex ratio in the UK continues to be well within normal population demographics is further evidences of the absence of sex selection abortion.²

Claims of sex selection abortions are extremely insulting to women and to particular ethnic communities. Arguments in favour of criminalising sex-selection are imbued with prejudice towards ethnic minority communities.

We believe that a woman feeling pressure to bear a child of a particular sex is a terrible position for her to be in. Similarly, gender inequality that largely disadvantages girls is abhorrent.

However, criminalising "types" of abortion is not the answer—this is punishing women for gender inequality in society. Instead, efforts should be directed towards gender equality education so that societies do not pressure women to bear a foetus of a given sex. The push to criminalise sex-selective abortions is not feminist or pro-

¹ bpas, *Comment on "Lost Girls" report in today's Independent*, January 2014

<https://www.bpas.org/bpasknowledge.php?year=2014&npage=0&page=81&news=621>

² UK Department of Health, *Birth Ratios in the United Kingdom A report on gender ratios at birth in the UK*, May 2013

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200527/Gender_birth_ratio_in_the_UK.pdf

woman, as some advocates have claimed, but a tactic by the anti-choice movement to allocate rights to fetuses at the expense of women.

The solution to societal gender inequality is not further removing women's rights. There is nothing pro-woman about undermining women's right to abortion.