Tracing sex imbalances through surveys

Géraldine Dutheil¹, Irina Badurashvili², Karine Kuyumjian³, France Meslé⁴ and Jacques Vallin⁴

¹ INED Institute National d’Études Démographiques, Paris
² GCPR Georgian Centre for Population Research, Tbilisi
³ NSS National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan

Simultaneous sharp increase in the three countries in the early 1990s

Meslé, Vallin and Badurashvili, 2007

- Official statistics which may be questionable
- Evidences from Armenian DHS-2001 and Georgian RHS-1999

Official statistics continue to give high SRB for more recent years

- New surveys
  - Armenia: DHS-2005
  - Azerbaijan: DHS-2006
  - Georgia: RHS-2005

Objective:

- Looking at most recent trends
- Confirming the persistence of the phenomenon
- Finding evidences of sex selective abortion

Sex at birth (SRB) in the Caucasus

Increase in SRB in the early 1990s

Trends in sex ratio at birth since 1960 in the Caucasus, according to national statistics

Specificity of the Caucasus

Trends in sex ratio at birth since 1980 in different countries

Other former republics of USSR

South-East European countries

Albania

Moldova

Romania

Ukraine

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Specificity of the Caucasus

Current SRB in different countries

Period: 2006-2008

Specificity of the Caucasus

Current SRB at regional level

Period: 2006-2008

SRB through different sources

Armenia

**Census: sex ratio at age 0.**

**DHS/RHS: 5-year mobile average

SRB through different sources

Azerbaijan

**Census: sex ratio at age 0.**

**DHS/RHS: 5-year mobile average

**SRB through different sources**

**Georgia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SRB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Civil registration*

1979 census

1989 census*

1999 census*

2002 census*

1999 DHS

2000 DHS

2005 DHS

*Sex ratio at age 0.
**DHS/RHS: 5-year mobile average

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**SRB by birth order**

**Sex ratio at birth, by birth order**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>SRB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Official statistics**

- Armenia
- Georgia

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**Sex-selective abortion?**

**Reported reasons for aborting:**

- Question was asked in the Azerbaijani and Georgian surveys
- With a specific item: "preference for the sex of the child" only in the Azerbaijani one:
- only 3% of respondents reported having aborted because of the sex of the child

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**Sex-selective abortion?**

**Distribution of the reasons for abortion * by parity**

Azerbaijan

AzDHS2006

- Did not want a child
- Socioeconomic reasons
- health matter
- Other
- missing

* Abortions occurred in the 5 years before the survey.
Discussion

- The sex ratio at birth has apparently stopped rising
  - but it remains abnormally high, a phenomenon very specific to the Caucasus.
- There is extensive recourse to abortion for limiting the total number of children in these countries
  - but for a share of these abortions, especially after the two first children, the purpose of termination is to select the sex of the next child.

Discussion

- Why the Caucasian countries stand apart from the neighboring countries?
  - A combination of different features
    - Son preference
    - Fertility squeeze
    - Easy access to abortion
  - Can be found in other regions
    - Especially in the North Caucasus
  - There must be another element
    - Easy access to the ultrasound test:
      - Or, at an early stage of the pregnancy
      - Or, the beginning of the pregnancy is not so well reported
References
