

"Income and Sex Selection:  
A Cautionary Tale of Land Reform and Sex Ratios in China with Hongbin Li and Shuang Zhang.

Abstract:

This paper examines the effect of income growth induced by 1978-84 land reform on the sex ratio imbalance in China. Using variation in reform timing by county together with the absence of sex selection among first-born child, we compare the sex of the second child between families with a first girl and those with a first boy before and after the reform. Results show that following a first daughter, the second child is 5.5 percent more likely to be a boy after land reform. Better educated parents are substantially more likely to respond with sex selection. After assessing various potential channels, our evidence is most consistent with an effect of increased household income, i.e. having a son is a normal good.