

Referee Report. Demography: Manuscript # 2018-184. Birth Spacing in the Presence of Son Preference and Sex-Selective Abortions: India's Experience over Four Decades

I think that the author has done a good job in addressing the comments made by the three reviewers. However, on reading the draft, I felt a few things were not clear.

1. It is not clear why the author restricts the analysis to Hindu women. Given that data across four rounds of the NFHS data is being pooled, I think there is enough data to examine this question for the non-Hindu (and in particular Muslim) women. Given that patterns of son preference varies across religious groups, I think it is worth examining the question for non-Hindus. At the very least include a discussion of why the non-Hindus have not been included.
2. There is actually no data on sex selection and in a sense the data is backed out using evidence on birth spacing, institutional information on the availability of technology that enables sex selection (ultra sound techniques) and government regulations. To do this the author subdivides the time into four segments: 1972–1984, 1985–1994, 1995–2004 and 2005–2016. I understand the logic of the first two breaks 1984 and 1994, but what is the logic of the third break in 2004? This needs to be made clearer.
3. While I like results being presented in figures, what I don't like is that no standard errors or confidence intervals are presented. Therefore, it is difficult to figure out whether the differences between categories (composition of existing children) are statistically significant or not.
4. In the context of the paper, I don't see the point of the discussion relating to labour supply.
5. Overall, I felt that the paper is still quite densely written and it is not easy to follow what is going on. Considerable time needs to be spent re-writing the paper and making it easier to read.