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At 844, sex ratio at birth worst in Uttarakhand; best in Kerala with 974

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DEHRADUN: Uttarakhand's sex ratio (number of females per 1,000 males) at birth was found to be the worst in the country at 844, and Kerala's the best, at 974, according to the Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2020.

The report, released by the Registrar General of India (RGI) on September 22, stated that the country's overall sex ratio at birth had gone up by three points to 907 in 2018-20 from 904 in (the partly overlapping period of) 2017-19. It was 907 in rural areas and 910 in urban areas.

The ratio is possibly indicative of the number of pre-natal sex determinations and female foeticide cases. Uttarakhand's sex ratio, meanwhile, dwindled four points as it had stood at 848 in the last RGI report published for the 2017-2019 period.

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The 2020 report stated, "In rural areas, the highest and the lowest sex ratio at birth were in the states of Kerala (973) and Uttarakhand (853), respectively. The sex ratio at birth in urban areas varied from 975 in Kerala to 821 in Uttarakhand." The sex ratio at birth in the hill state had stood at 850 in 2014-16, 841 in 2015-17, 840 in 2016-18, 848 in 2017-2019, and 844 in 2018-2020. Some of these periods are overlapping.

The sex ratio in rural Uttarakhand slid nine points to 853 from 862 in 2017-19. This was still a better performance than urban Uttarakhand, which recorded a sex ratio as low as 832 in 2013-15, one of the lowest in the country. It dwindled to 816 in 2014-16 and has partially recovered to 821 in 2018-20. Efforts to contact state government officials for their response to the report did not yield results.

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According to the report, Delhi had a sex ratio of 860, followed by Haryana (870), Maharashtra (876), Gujarat (877), and

Telangana (892). Out of these, Haryana, which is infamous for female foeticide cases, recorded a rural sex ratio of 868 and an urban sex ratio of 874.

The founder of Doon-based NGO, 'Samadhan', Renu D Singh, analysing the reasons behind the skewed sex ratio at birth in Uttarakhand, said, "Five generations have passed but 70% of women still do not have any access to family wealth, higher education, and health resources. Women are still being passively conditioned within their own families to accept themselves as 'second-class citizens'. The power to make decisions, speak out without fear, and grow as a responsible productive global citizen has taken a backseat."

Incidentally, in June 2021, when Niti Aayog data for that year was released and showed Uttarakhand's sex ratio to be at 840, the state government had blamed "different calculation parameters" and claimed that the actual figure was 949. A week later, data from the Civil Registration System (CRC) showed that the sex ratio of the state was "a commendable '960', on par with Kerala."