

# Religion and Son Preference in India and Bangladesh: Comparing Hindus and Muslims on Son Preference and Sex Differentials in Child Health

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Date: 20 November 2015, Fri

Time: 12nn - 1.30pm

Venue: Ventus Evans Room

Light lunch will be provided

Chaired by Dr Dhiman Das,  
Research Fellow, ARI

All are welcome!

Register at

<http://goo.gl/forms/3o79CoLhAJ>

by 16 Nov 2015.

While the existence of son preference in south Asia is well-known, a gap in our understanding of the determinants of son preference is potential differences between religious groups. In this presentation, I examine whether Hindus and Muslims in India and Bangladesh differ in terms of son preference, using data from the Demographic and Health Surveys. I undertake three sets of analysis: I first study preferences for the ideal number and sex of children in India, as well as actual fertility behavior – in terms of parity-specific male births, conditional on the sex composition of previous children. Since son preference can extend beyond fertility preferences to discriminatory behaviors against daughters in terms of nutrition and healthcare, I extend the analysis to studying Hindu-Muslim differences in sex differentials in childhood stunting and immunization in India. Finally, I examine whether a group's majority/minority status influences son preferences, by studying fertility behavior and childhood stunting across survey clusters in India and Bangladesh. Overall, I find low daughter aversion among Muslims and significant son preference among Hindus. In terms of stunting, a female disadvantage exists only in Hindu households. The final set of results indicate that in Hindu-majority India, Hindus exhibit son preference in Hindu-majority clusters but not in Hindu-minority clusters. On the other hand, in Hindu-minority Bangladesh, Hindus exhibit son preference only in Hindu-minority areas, suggesting a complex interplay of a group's majority/minority status at the local and national levels.

## About the Speaker

Abhijit Visaria is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia cluster at the Asia Research Institute, jointly with the Centre for Family and Population Research. He received his Ph.D in Demography from the University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include son preference, socioeconomic differences in healthcare utilization, female labor force participation, and program evaluation research.