

Sex of baby shouldn't be chosen, study finds

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Most Australians do not approve of IVF or abortion for sex-selection purposes, and most do not think a hypothetical blue or pink pill to select the sex of a child should be legal, a new study has found.

The study, led by Dr. Rebecca Kippen from the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne, analysed responses from more than 2,500 people participating in the Australian Survey of [Social Attitudes](#), combined with a series of in-depth parental interviews.

The survey found that 69 per cent of respondents disapproved the use of [IVF](#) for sex selection, with the disapproval rate increasing to 80 per cent for sex-selective abortions. The legalisation of hypothetical blue and pink pills for sex selection was supported by only 11 per cent of respondents. Dr. Kippen said similar responses resulted from the in-depth interviews carried out with parents.

“Opposition to these technologies was grounded in three major concerns: the potential for distorted sex ratios; that sex selection can be an expression of gender bias; and a concern about ‘designer infants’ being created, when parents should be happy with a healthy baby,” she said.

The findings, published online in *Fertility and Sterility* this month, and co-authored by Dr. Ann Evans and Dr Edith Gray from the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute at the Australian National University, contrast with previous behavioral and attitudinal research that shows Australian [parents](#) want a balanced family, that is, a family with at least one son and one daughter.

The study is particularly timely given that the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is due to review the ban on sex selection in 2011, and has called for community discussion of issues surrounding sex selection.

The ban began in 2004, with the introduction of the NHMRC's Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Assisted Reproductive Technology in Clinical Practice and Research. These guidelines—which have the force of law—state that “sex selection (by whatever means) must not be undertaken except to reduce the risk of transmission of a serious genetic condition”.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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