

## Political Briefing: House of Lords amendment to Crime and Policing Bill (424) that would stop sex-selective abortion becoming legal in England and Wales

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### The House of Lords amendment

- ❖ Stop Gendercide is asking peers to *vote in support of [Amendment 424](#) to the [Crime and Policing Bill](#)* to stop sex-selective abortion from being legalised.
- ❖ Clause 208 was added to the Bill in the House of Commons. If the clause becomes law, *it would legalise sex-selective abortion in England and Wales for women administering their own abortions.*
- ❖ Baroness Monckton has tabled Amendment 424 to remove this clause, which is expected to be put to a vote on Wednesday, 18 March.

### Background

- ❖ Tonia Antoniazzi MP belatedly added an amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill in the House of Commons at Report Stage that would legalise *sex-selective abortion* in England and Wales for women administering their own abortions at home.
- ❖ The clause that was added to the Bill (Clause 208) would disapply existing criminal law relating to the permitted grounds for accessing or procuring abortion care for women acting in relation to their own pregnancies, meaning it would no longer be an offence for a woman to have an abortion for any reason, throughout all nine months of pregnancy, including for the purposes of sex-selection.
- ❖ *The Telegraph* reported on a legal opinion by Stephen Rose KC, a leading criminal barrister, commissioned by Sir Edward Leigh, the Father of the House, ahead of the amendment being voted on in the Commons, which *confirmed that the amendment would make it legal for a woman to perform her own abortion on sex-selective grounds.*

- ❖ The same paper [reported](#) that over 1,000 medics wrote to MPs ahead of the amendment being voted on in the Commons, *warning that sex-based abortion would become legal* if the clause became law (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2025/06/16/mps-are-opening-door-to-sex-based-abortion-doctors-warn/>).
- ❖ Media outlets have [also reported](#) that newly revealed data from the Government has confirmed for the first time in official statistics that *at least 400 sex-selective abortions have taken place* in the United Kingdom in recent years.
- ❖ If Clause 208 becomes law and sex-selective abortion is legalised, there will likely be *a further increase in the number of sex-selective abortions in England and Wales* - and an increase in women being pressured to have an abortion because they are expecting a girl, leading to significant social problems as seen elsewhere.

### What is sex-selective abortion?

- ❖ Sex-selective abortion is the practice of terminating a pregnancy based on the predicted sex of the foetus.
- ❖ Sex-selective abortions usually involve *the termination of baby girls*, often under pressure from others, and are more prevalent in certain communities.

### What is the current law in the UK concerning sex-selective abortion?

- ❖ In the UK, abortions are currently permitted up to 24 weeks under certain [grounds](#), relating to the physical and mental health of the mother.
- ❖ The Government is clear that abortion on sex-selective grounds is *illegal*. Its '[Guidance in Relation to Requirements of the Abortion Act 1967](#)' states "Abortion on the grounds of gender alone is illegal" (paragraph 25).
- ❖ This assessment was confirmed in answer to a [Written Parliamentary Question](#) in 2020, in which a minister in the Department of Health and

Social Care maintained that *“Sex selection is not one of the lawful grounds for termination of pregnancy”*.

- ❖ The current law helps *protect women from being coerced into abortions for sex-selective purposes* in contexts where the woman’s partner or wider family may prefer, or cultural norms may value, a male baby over a female baby.

### How would Clause 208 change the law?

- ❖ **Clause 208** would disapply existing criminal law relating to the accessing or procurement of abortion care for women acting in relation to their own pregnancy, meaning it would no longer be an offence for a woman to have an abortion for any reason, including for the purposes of sex-selection.
  - The [explanatory note](#) to New Clause 1 (as it was called when it was an amendment in the Commons) confirmed that it would apply at *any gestation*, meaning a woman could perform her own abortion on sex-selective grounds throughout all nine months of pregnancy.
- ❖ This would *put vulnerable women in certain minority communities, where evidence suggests there is sometimes a preference for baby boys over baby girls, at grave risk*, since they would no longer be able to appeal to a legal deterrent against aborting a baby girl away from a clinical setting if they come under pressure to do so.
- ❖ Many parents do not find out the sex of their baby until a mid-pregnancy scan, often referred to as the 20-week scan, meaning women in such communities may be *under greater pressure to have high-risk, self-induced late abortions at home* without medical supervision.

### Is sex-selective abortion a problem in the UK?

- ❖ There is evidence that women in the UK are coming under pressure to have sex-selective abortions - and official data has now confirmed that sex-selective abortions are already happening in the UK. This situation

would likely become worse if Clause 208 became law and sex-selective abortion became legal in England and Wales.

- Media outlets [have reported](#) that newly revealed data from the Government has suggested for the first time in official statistics that at least 400 sex-selective abortions have taken place in the United Kingdom.
- A [BBC investigation](#) found non-invasive prenatal tests (NIPT) being *widely used to determine a baby's sex early in pregnancy*, leading to significant pressure imposed on some women to undergo sex-selective abortions. This evidence led the [Labour Party to urge a ban on NIPT being used to determine the sex of fetuses](#).
- A **Nuffield Council on Bioethics** [report](#) found several websites were privately offering tests to determine the sex of a foetus, and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics warned that the *increasing prevalence of private NIPT testing* may be encouraging sex-selection. The Council went on to [recommend](#) that the Government stop private providers offering NIPT for foetal sex determination.
- A **Telegraph** [investigation](#) found that doctors at UK clinics were agreeing to terminate foetuses purely because they were either male or female.
- A [report](#) published by the **Department of Health** concerning sex-selective abortion outlined personal testimonies from women coerced into a sex-selective abortion by a third party.

### What are the effects of sex-selective abortions in other countries?

- ❖ Evidence from Canada indicates that gender-selective abortion has been a serious problem in Canada after abortion was decriminalised there.
  - An article published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* has highlighted that “easy access to abortion and advances in prenatal sex determination have combined to make Canada a haven for parents who would terminate female fetuses in favour of having sons”.

- ❖ Sex-selective abortion has been associated with serious social and demographic consequences.
  - Globally, estimates [indicate](#) that more than *160 million women and girls are missing*, largely as a result of sex-selective abortion and postnatal infanticide.

### What does the public think about sex-selective abortion?

- ❖ A [poll](#) conducted by ComRes found that *91% of women* and *89% of the general public* agree that gender-selective abortion should be explicitly banned by the law.
- ❖ On 4 November 2014, MPs voted by [181 votes to 1](#) in favour of a Ten Minute Rule Motion that called for a ban on sex-selective abortion to be made explicit in law.

### How can peers protect women?

- ❖ As well as passing Amendment 424, which would remove Clause 208 from the Crime and Policing Bill, Amendment 425, in the name of Baroness Stroud would protect women under pressure to have an abortion for sex-selective purposes, by restoring face-to-face appointments with a healthcare professional before an at-home abortion takes place.
  - Confidential, face-to-face appointments enable coercion to be detected more easily and prevent women from being coerced into requesting abortion pills over a telephone call.

***If you require further information on the areas covered by this political briefing please email [hello@stopgendercide.org](mailto:hello@stopgendercide.org) or visit [www.stopgendercide.org](http://www.stopgendercide.org)***

