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Where are the missing girls? Gender discrimination in 19th-century Spain

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**Where are the missing girls? Gender discrimination in 19th-century Spain**

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**Abstract:** This article shows that average (male-to-female) infant and child sex ratios were abnormally high in late 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spain, thus pointing to some sort of unexplained excess female mortality early in life. This pattern, which is also shared by other countries in Southern Europe, disappeared at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rather than female infanticide or other type of extreme violence against girls, these results might be explained by gender discrimination in terms of an unequal allocation of food, care and/or workload within the household. In high-mortality environments, this type of discrimination easily resulted in higher female mortality rates.

**Keywords:** Missing girls, gender discrimination, mortality, health.

**JEL classification:** I14, I15, J13, J16, N33

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