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FEMALE BABIES AND RISK-AVERSION: CAUSAL EVIDENCE
FROM HOSPITAL WARDS*Ganna Pogrebna[†] Andrew J Oswald[#] David Haig[‡]

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Abstract

Using ultrasound scan data from paediatric hospitals, and the exogenous ‘shock’ of learning the gender of an unborn baby, the paper documents the first causal evidence that offspring gender affects adult risk-aversion. On a standard Holt-Laury criterion, parents of daughters, whether unborn or recently born, become almost twice as risk-averse as parents of sons. The study demonstrates this in longitudinal and cross-sectional data, for fathers and mothers, for babies in the womb and new-born children, and in a West European nation and East European nation. These findings may eventually aid our understanding of risky health behaviors and gender inequalities.

JEL Classification: I10, J16, C93, C90, D81

Keywords: pregnancy, risk attitudes, daughters, child gender

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