

[Abortion: a choice for a woman or society?](abortion-a-choice-for-a-woman-or-society.html "Abortion: a choice for a woman or society?")

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[Ann Furedi](speakers.html#ann-furedi "Ann Furedi"), [Peter D. Williams](speakers.html#peter-williams "Peter Williams") and [Christine Fidler](speakers.html#christine-fidler "Christine Fidler") introduced a discussion on qualifications to being pro-choice on abortion

 Campaigners for equal rights for women have always had to respond to arguments around women having autonomy over their own bodies. When it comes to controlling fertility, whether that be contraception or terminations, religious and moral arguments are open to modification, refinement and shifts in the relative balance of how much sway and influence they have. The availability of abortion offered to women through the 1967 Abortion Act is strictly proscribed and needs two doctors to approve the abortion request after the woman requesting the abortion has received counselling to help evaluate the request. A recent sting operation by the Daily Telegraph newspaper attempted to test the current operation of this process.

 The Daily Telegraph sent undercover reporters, accompanying two pregnant women to nine clinics in different parts of the country, and filmed two doctors agreeing to proceed with a termination after being told the pregnant woman wanted an abortion because of the sex of the unborn child.

Current legislation requires that a termination can only be granted if two doctors honestly believe a woman meets the legal test that continuing the pregnancy "would likely cause injury to the mental or physical health of the woman". A case was made for the doctors to be prosecuted, which Keir Starmer the Director of Public Prosecutions decided against, saying that although there was a realistic prospect of securing convictions, it would be against the public interest to take the doctors to trial.

 It is arguable that the convoluted system of certification before abortion services can be made available to women should be ended, and that abortion should be treated as a clinical matter by doctors, rather like contraception and be available at a woman's request. The case for abortion on demand is accepted by many where the pregnancy is a result of rape, incest, youth, and even poverty. Many though, who describe themselves as liberal, recoil at abortion services being made available if the request is made because of the gender of the unborn

foetus

misogyny

Abortion on the grounds of sex selection has reignited a debate about the criteria on which abortion services should be made available to women, resulting in some pro-choice campaigners to restrict choices by arguing that sex selection criteria, for example, is a reason to oppose abortion.

When politicians like Sarah Wollaston, the Conservative MP, say that selective abortion of baby girls harms women, do they really intend that this should be a reason to force pregnant women to see an unwanted pregnancy through to full-term?

Pro-life campaigners have used this issue, along with the One of Us campaign designed to establish the foetus as having its own legal status, to open up the debate into Abortion Rights, with the intention of restricting abortion choices for women.

Some background readings

[Abortions for sex selection: just the tip of the iceberg](http://www.cmfblog.org.uk/2012/02/24/abortions-for-sex-selection-are-just-the-tip-of-a-large-iceberg-of-illegal-activity/), Dr Peter Saunders, Christian Medical Fellowship Blog, 24 February 2012

[You can't be pro-choice only when you like the choice](http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/you_cant_be_pro_choice_only_when_you_like_the_choice/14032#.Ukdx7Gtwa70), by Ann Furedi, spiked online 16 September 2013

[You CAN abort a baby because of its sex](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2424111/You-CAN-abort-baby-sex-Outrage-comments-boss-Britains-biggest-terminations-clinic.html), by Chris Pleasance, Daily Mail 18 September 2013

[We Stood With Wendy Davis - Now Stand With Ann Furedi](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/lucy-uprichard/wendy-davis-ann-furedi_b_3988033.html?utm_hp_ref=fb&src=sp&comm_ref=false), by Lucy Uprichard, Huffington Post 25 September 2013

[Women Have Abortions Every Day: It's Just One Choice](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4SSHkgD73E&feature=share), by Irish Family Planning Association 27 September 2013

[Menstruating is normal. Sex is normal. Contraception is normal. Abortion is normal. It's time to get over it](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/menstruating-is-normal-sex-is-normal-contraception-is-normal-abortion-is-normal-it-s-time-to-get-over-it-1.1549402?page=1), by Anthea McTeirnan, Irish Times 4 October 2013

[Approval of independent Sector Places for the Termination of Pregnancy](http://consultations.dh.gov.uk/abortion-clinics/approval-of-independent-sector-places-for-the-term/consult_view), Department of Health 22 November 2013

[Woman has child taken from her wo](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/10486452/Woman-has-child-taken-from-her-wo)

[mb-by-social-services.html" target="_blank" title="Woman has child taken from her womb by social services">Woman has child taken from her womb by social services, by Colin Freeman, The Telegraph 30 November 2013</p> <p>The inhumanity of a forced Caesarian, by Barbara Hewson, spiked 6 December 2013</p> <p>Pregnant, and Forced to Stay on Life Support, by Manny Fernandez and Erik Eckholm, New York Times 7 January 2014</p> <p>The lost girls: Illegal abortion widely used by some UK ethnic groups, by Steve Connor, Independent 15 January 2014</p> <p>Gendercide: the silence of the so-called 'feminists', by Cristina Odone, Telegraph 15 January 2014</p> <p>Q&A ♦ Sex ratios and abortion, bpas Reproductive Review 15 January 2014</p> <p>Women wanting abortions will not have to see doctor, by John Bingham and Laura Donnelly, Telegraph 15 January 2014</p> <p>The Indie♦s ♦Lost Girls♦ may not be what it appears, by Unity, Ministry of Truth 15 January 2014</p> <p>Newsnight piece on abortion, BBC iPlayer 16 January 2014</p> <p>The lost girls: Pressure mounts on Government to curb use of ultrasound scans to show gender of unborn babies, by Steve Connor, Independent 16 January 2014</p> <p>Campaigns against sex-selective abortion are misogyny disguised as feminism, by Frances Ryan, New Statesman 16 January 2014</p> <p>♦</p> <p>♦</p> <hr width="100%" size="2" /> <h3>Watch video of the speaker and audience discussion below. Thanks to Dan Clayton the documentary filmmaker from Leeds for this.</h3> <div> </div>](#)