

EVALUATING CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY

BACKGROUND INFO

In China, wars and poor medical care kept the population growth very slow until the mid-1900s. But between 1953 and 1970, their population increased by around 250 million people (Kane & Choi, 1999). This made it hard for the government to meet the needs of their people, and led to the first efforts to limit family sizes in China.

In 1960s, China's government started advertising the benefits of waiting past teen years to marry, waiting longer



between births, and having fewer children.

This was called the "later, longer, fewer" campaign. This campaign helped slowed their population growth; but the population was still growing fast enough that China's leaders were very worried (Fitzpatrick, 2009). The people of China were 25% of the entire world's population, and growing (Hesketh, 2005).

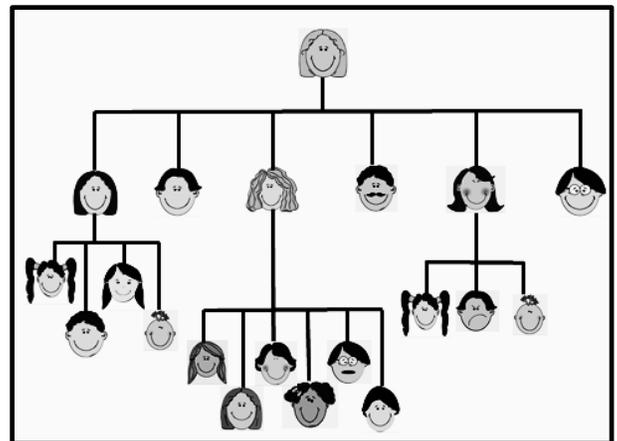


"计划生育好处 Family Planning Has Many Advantages"

Both posters: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/news/china_posters_family_planning.html

ORIGINS OF LAW

In 1979, the Chinese government decided that the country would never climb out of poverty until they limited population growth. To do this, they started the "one-child policy." The idea was that each couple would have only one child to get population growth under control. Leaders said that as China's families learned the benefits of smaller families, the government would no longer require only one child (Hesketh, 2005). But over three decades later, the policy is still used.



This example of a high birth rate shows how 13 people can come from one woman in just 2 generations.

ENFORCEMENT

Parents who have only one child can get extra money each month from the government. When they retire, they get extra money every month. They also qualify for better government jobs, better medical care, and extra land. Their child gets extra points on the middle school entrance exam, helping them get into the better schools (Watts, 2011).

Couples who **break** the law by having a second child can be fined thousands of dollars. Government employees can be fired (Watts, 2011). There have been many reports of forced abortions and of forced sterilizations of women (Fitzpatrick, 2009). These reports have led to international criticism of China.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE POLICY

The name "one-child policy" sounds like each couple can have only one child. In some cases, that is correct. But in reality, only about 40% of China's parents are required to follow this law (Chan, 2010).



Minority Uighur children

<http://www.uncorneredmarket.com/2008/09/china-so-many-little-emperors/>

Right from the start, there were exceptions made for some families. For example, if a family's first child is born with a serious disability, they automatically qualify to have a second child (Nehru, 2012). If both parents work in dangerous jobs (such as mining), they can have a second child. Ethnic minorities (everyone except the Han Chinese – the largest group in China) do not have to follow the policy (Kane & Choi, 1999). More recently, parents are allowed to have two children if both parents are single children themselves (Mong, 2012).

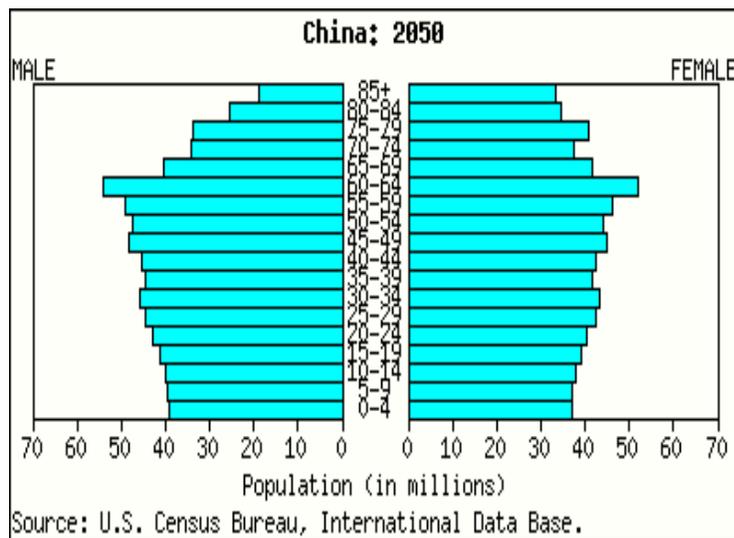
In rural areas, couples are allowed to have a second child if they wait five years after the first is born. However, in some areas this is only true if the first child is a girl. And to complicate things further, how strictly the policy is enforced depends a lot on how the rural government leaders decide to enforce it (Watts, 2011).

Some families use money to get around the one-child policy. As China becomes more modern, families become wealthier. Rich families in Beijing or Shanghai sometimes have two and three children and simply pay the government fines. They do not care if the government helps their children with medical care or school tuition, because the family has enough money to pay for these things (Watts, 2011).

BENEFITS

In the province of Henan, China, women in the 1970s were having an average of 5.8 children (Watts, 2011). This made it very difficult to provide enough schools, teachers, hospitals, doctors, and jobs for the growing population. China claims that the entire country would have had around 300,000,000 more births since 1979 without the one-child policy (Hesketh, 2005). As a result of the lowered birth rate, China has less poverty. More and more families own cars and have the money to buy the things for their child. The government is better able to provide schools and medical care for the people of China.

Another benefit is less strain on the environment. Simply providing enough pure water for their people is a big challenge for China (Watts, 2011). Lower population growth means less pollution to land and air as well as less demand for natural resources like water.



PROBLEMS

However, having a lower birth rate is also changing the average age in China. The working age population is growing smaller but the elderly population is still growing larger. It will be hard for Chinese workers to pay enough taxes to take care of the retired Chinese people in the future.

There is also concern that there will not be enough workers to keep improving China's economy

over the next decades. China has made great steps to becoming a developed nation, but may not be able to continue that progress without enough workers.

Another challenge for China is the boy-girl imbalance that is growing. As of 2012, there were 118 boys born for every 100 girls born in China (Mong, 2012). There are simply more baby boys than baby girls in China. This seems to be a result of aborting females and of not reporting female births. Ultrasounds to find out the sex of the baby became illegal in China in 1994 to stop abortion of females (Fitzpatrick, 2009), but illegal ultrasounds and abortions continue. In unreported births of little girls, the child is usually hidden with family members or given to another family to raise (Johnson, Banghan, & Liyao, 1998). In 1992, Chinese adoption law made it possible for families outside of China to adopt Chinese children (Klaskin, 1998).

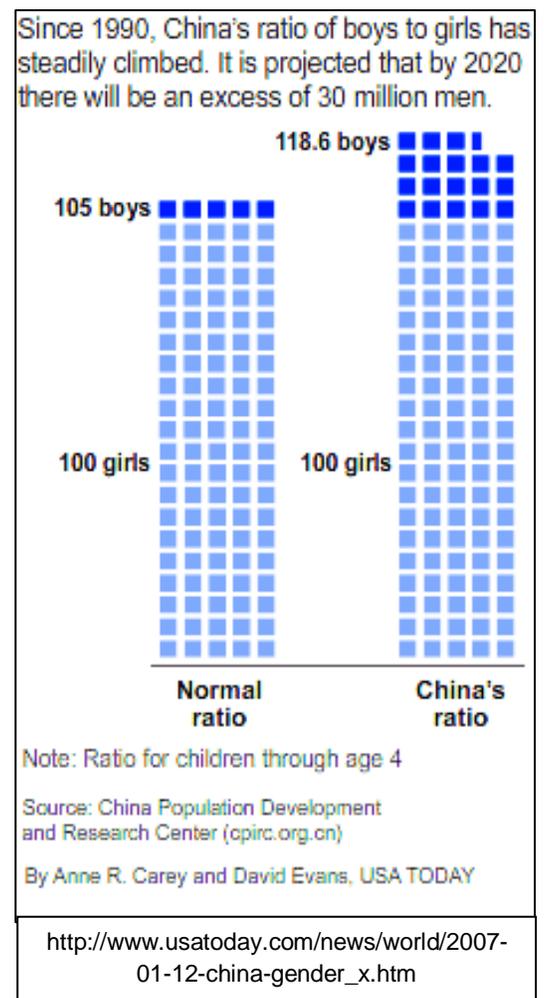
This all brings up the question: Why would so many Chinese families prefer boys? Most cultures in history have stressed the importance of having a son. They want sons

and daughters, but feel they **must** have a son. Only as countries become more modern has this begun to change. However, in agricultural countries, boys are especially important to work in the fields.

In addition, in China, girls traditionally join the families of their husbands after they marry. That means daughters are not around to help or support parents when the parents are old. When sons marry, the wife becomes part of the **husband's** family and they both support **his** aging parents.

Because of these concerns, poorer and rural families often feel they must have a son. This is the main reason China allows rural families to have a second child if the first is a girl (Kane & Choi, 1999).

The boy-girl imbalance has continued to increase, however. It is projected that by 2020 there will be 30,000,000 young men in China who will be unable to find wives (Bloomberg, 2012). The Chinese government is concerned about social problems that this can cause. There is concern that young men who cannot find wives are not acting as mature adults, but are instead becoming trouble-makers in society. There is concern that the crime rate is rising because of this. Some men are leaving China to find wives. It also appears that young women in rural areas are actually being kidnapped and taken away to other areas as wives (Hasketh, 2005).



Many in China are pushing for changes in the one-child policy. But it is unlikely that any major changes will happen at least until 2015 (Mong, 2012). In the meantime, China's aging population and their boy-girl imbalance continue to concern people, as does their still-growing population.

UPDATE: 2015

For China, three decades of one-child policy proves hard to undo

By [David McKenzie](#), CNN Mon March 30, 2015



A man holds his daughter and newborn son, October 2014.
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/m/chinahealth/2015-01/16/content_19336637.htm

In China, you can often tell what the Communist government is thinking by watching TV.

For years, the typical TV Chinese family looked something like this: Happy parents with their one perfect child. And the words: "One hope." "One joy." "One responsibility."

Lately, the perfect television family has changed in China.

In a recent commercial, a boy shares a toy with his younger sister, then they all gather together with aunts,

uncles, and cousins to watch the Lunar New Year celebration.

The message appears to be: Two is **better** than one.

Strict policy

The change is amazing.

Since the early 1980s, the Party has enforced a strict one-child policy on most Chinese.

In January 2014, the policy changed some. If either the husband or wife was an "only child," that couple can now have a second child. Couples like Yang Xue and Chang Zi'an, both professionals working in Beijing, are now allowed to have a second child to join their baby girl – 11-month-old Tao Zi, or Little Peach.

Chang was an only child but sometimes wished for a sibling while growing up.

Chang and his young family live in a suburb of Beijing. The area is modern, with high-rise apartments and huge shopping malls. They make good money, and they are the type of couple that the Chinese government expected to have a second child.

Too little, too late?

But, to the surprise of many, the new rules haven't caused a baby boom. Parents must apply for permission to have a second child, and the government was hoping for two million applications in 2014. But so far, fewer than one million couples have applied to have a second child.

So why don't more parents want a second child?

Time and energy

For many urban couples in modern China, having a second child is not an attractive idea. There are no preschools here for children under three. There are not laws about who can be a nanny, and there are many stories of nannies that neglect or abuse the children they care for. Those concerns mean a parents or grandparent will need to stay home with the child until it is old enough to go to school.



<http://images.china.cn/attachement/jpg/site1007/20120411/00016c8b5de010ef255b0b.jpg>

Yang and Chang both have good jobs, but rent in their Beijing suburb is very high. And they want to send their daughter to a private bilingual English and Chinese pre-school. That costs money.

But even if they were richer, they say they wouldn't want a second child.

"Money is only part of the problem," says Yang.

"Your energy and your time is also important. We both have to work. It is hard enough to raise her as a success. It will be miserable if we had to go through that again.

article adapted from CNN.com at <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/30/asia/china-one-child-policy-undo/>

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