

Human Population Control in China

China's population in 2002 was estimated at 1.28 billion people, which is five times higher than that of the U.S. and over 20% of the world's total. Its usable land area is significantly smaller. (1)

In China, a "one-child-per-couple" policy has been in effect since 1979, with the goal of limiting the nation's population to 1.2 billion by the year 2000. The policy includes rewards for having only one child including money, additional maternity leave, and increased land for farmers. The children of these couples are also given better treatment in education, housing, and employment. The policy allows couples to have a second child only under rare circumstances, and does not allow more than two children. (5)

After her first child is born, a woman is required to wear a birth control device, and removal of this device is considered a crime. Otherwise, one of the parents must be sterilized. Physicians receive a bonus whenever they perform a sterilization surgery. Couples are punished for refusing to terminate unapproved pregnancies, for giving birth when under the legal marriage age, and until recently they were punished for having a second child. The penalties include fines, loss of land grants, food, loans, farming supplies, benefits, jobs and position in the government. In some provinces the fines can be up to 50% of a couple's annual salary. (15)

In many provinces sterilization is required after the couple has had two children.

The one-child-per-couple policy was strictly enforced during the early 1980's. The measures peaked in 1983, when 14.4 million abortions were performed (for comparison, there were only 19 million live births in that year). Because of strong public resistance, the Chinese government changed its stance in the late 1980's and tried instead to emphasize public education and good public relations with the people. Because the birth rate started to climb again, the government tightened up its family planning guidelines in 1987 and 1989. In 2001, a new law was passed to reinforce the one-child policy over the entire country. It includes incentives for following the measure but no longer requires fines to be imposed for couples who have a second child. (20)

China's population policy has brought the average number of children per woman down from 5.01 in 1970 to 1.84 in 1995. But the Chinese population is still growing. This is because the children born during the previous period of high fertility are having children – even if fewer per couple -- of their own. China did not achieve its goal of stabilizing population at 1.2 billion in the year 2000. Instead, it grew to 1.3 billion in 2000 and will inevitably increase to about 1.45 billion by 2031. (29)

Source: <http://darwin.bio.uci.edu/~sustain/bio65/lec24/b65lec24.htm>