

ONE-CHILD POLICY IN CHINA

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■ In 1979, three years after Mao's death, a one-child policy was introduced to control China's exploding population, help raise living standards and reduce the strain on scarce resources. The policy is officially credited with preventing 400 million births and keeping China's population down to its current 1.3 billion.

■ Today, China's birth-planning laws already allow so many exceptions that many demographers consider it a misnomer to call it a "one-child" policy. Families where both parents are only children can have an extra child. People in rural areas are also allowed to bear a second child if their first child is a girl or disabled. Ethnic minorities are allowed more children. According to the policy as it has most commonly been enforced, a couple was allowed to have one child. If that child turned out be a girl, they were allowed to have a second child. After the second child, they were not allowed to have any more children. In some places, though, couples were only allowed to have one child regardless of whether it was a boy or a girl. It is unusual for a family to have two sons.

■ Under the one-child program, a sophisticated system rewarded those who observed the policy and penalized those who did not. Couples with only one child were given a "one-child certificate" entitling them to such benefits as cash bonuses, longer maternity leave, better child care, and preferential housing assignments. In return, they were required to pledge that they would not have more children. In the countryside, there was great pressure to adhere to the one-child limit. Because the rural population accounted for approximately 60 percent of the total, the effectiveness of the one-child policy in rural areas was considered the key to the success or failure of the program as a whole. [Source: Library of Congress]

■ Posters promoting China's one-child policy can be seen all over China. One, with the slogan "China Needs Family Planning" shows a Communist official praising the proud parents of one baby girl. Another one, with the slogan "Late Marriage and Childbirth Are Worthy," shows an old gray-haired woman with a newborn baby. Others reads: "Have Fewer, Better Children to Create Prosperity for the Next Generation" and "Have less children, have a better life"

■ Slogans such as "Have Fewer Children Live Better Lives" and "Stabilize Family Planning and Create a Brighter Future" are painted on roadside buildings in rural areas. Some crude family planning slogans such "Raise Fewer Babies, But More Piggies" and "One More Baby Means One More Tomb" and "If you give birth to extra children, your family will be ruined" were banned in August 2007 because of rural anger about the slogans and the policy behind them.

■ The one-child policy actually only covers about 35 percent of Chinese, mostly those living in urban areas. The conventional wisdom in China has been that controlling China's population serves the interest of the whole society and that sacrificing individual interests for those of the masses is justifiable. The one-child policy was introduced around the same time as the Deng economic reforms. An unexpected result of these reforms has been the creation of demand for more children to supply labor to increase food production and make more profit.

Also See Separate Articles: 1) ABDUCTED CHILDREN, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THE ONE-CHILD POLICY IN CHINA and 2) REFORMING THE ONE-CHILD POLICY IN CHINA

Good Websites and Sources: Wikipedia article [Wikipedia \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-child_policy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-child_policy) ; Family Planning in China [china.org.cn \(http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/familypanning/\)](http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/familypanning/) ; New England Journal of Medicine article [nejm.org \(http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/353/11/1171\)](http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/353/11/1171) ; One Child policy articles [harker.org \(http://faculty.harker.org/adm/population/studentpages/china1/\)](http://faculty.harker.org/adm/population/studentpages/china1/) **Links in this Website:** POPULATION IN CHINA Factsanddetails.com/China

