The One-Child Policy

Students will learn about the short and long-term effects of the One-Child Policy

Timothy Evans
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The Facts

• China’s population is about 1.34 billion people.
• In other words, about 20% of the human species lives in China.
Population Comparison

Chinese equivalents

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<th>GDP</th>
<th>GDP per person</th>
<th>Population</th>
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Population
2010, millions

Map of countries with population comparisons: China, Germany, Vietnam, India, etc.
China’s Population Growth over Time
Communist Population Policy

• Mao encouraged Chinese families to have lots of children because he believed a large population empowered China to fulfill the Communist ideal.

• Mao was worried about the strength of the U.S. and Soviet Union.
After Mao’s death in 1976 leaders within China feared that the population would exceed the carrying capacity of the country. (Remember Malthus?)

The One-Child-Policy was applied in 1979.
The government uses rewards and punishments to encourage the people into complying with the One-Child-Policy.

Implementation varies depending of the local officials in charge of enforcement.

Access to healthcare is a “reward” for complying.
EXCEPTIONS TO THE LAW

- Families living in rural areas
- Children born overseas
- Ethnic minorities
- Disabled children
- Parents who work in high-risk occupations

\(^2\)In rural areas, the birth of a second child is only encouraged if it is spaced 4 to 5 years from the first.
Effects

- The ultimate effects of the policy are hotly debated.
- Fertility rates have fallen and the growth rates have slowed.
- Many claim this would have happened without the policy.
China’s Demographic Challenges

Students will learn how China’s One-Child Policy has skewed the country’s sex and dependency ratios
Unintended Consequences

• Since the One-Child-Policy went into effect China’s population growth rate has slowed.
• Two specific demographic challenges have emerged.
  1. The population is rapidly aging
  2. The sex ratio has become alarmingly skewed towards males
Population in 2010

• What important details do you notice about China’s 2010 population pyramid that might promote or hinder China’s current and future development?
China 2050

- What challenges will China face if its population develops as predicted?
Overly Dependent

- The aging population along with the One-Child-Policy will create a challenging dependency ratio.
- Far more non-working age citizens than working age.
- Each child has four grandparents and two parents to take care of (4-2-1 problem)

Male Dominant

• Thousands of years of Confucian influence has resulted in a Chinese society where families prefer to have boys rather than girls.

• Selective abortions in favor of boys has created a hugely skewed sex ratio.

Where boys are off balance
Males per 100 females at birth, 2000-05

China
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Georgia
South Korea
India
Serbia
Belarus
Bosnia
Cyprus
Hong Kong
Singapore

Source: United Nations
Sex Imbalance

According to the latest available census data:

**CHINA:**
120 male births for every 100 girls

**INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES:**
103 to 107 male births for every 100 girls

• What are some potential outcomes for a society that has a far greater number of boys than girls?
Solutions?

- The problems associated with both the dependency and sex ratio are extremely challenging.
- What do you think are some things the government could do to combat these demographic challenges?
Two Chinas: Rural and Urban Divide

Students will learn how China’s development has created deep inequalities between the urban and rural populations.
Inequalities

- China is still a developing country that has very high levels of inequality between urban areas and the rural countryside.
- Eastern cities have a much higher standard of living than do western provinces.
Situation Factors

• Due to its access to the Pacific Ocean most of the industrial and economic investment has occurred in the Eastern Provinces.
The Western provinces are disproportionately populated by minority groups who rely on small scale farming for survival.

- 15 year difference in life expectancy between the East and West.
Urbanization

- Millions of Chinese have migrated to cities in search of jobs and a better life.
- This pattern of urbanization is the largest human migration in history.
The government’s *Hukou* system identifies the city or village of one’s birth.

If you migrate outside of your province you may be ineligible for important gov’t services. (i.e. education, health care, pensions)
Underclass

- The *Hukou* system makes life very difficult for urban migrants who are often treated like second-class citizens in their own country.