

China's One-Child Policy: Was It a Good Idea?

EV



Family at Beijing Zoo

Overview: In 1980, leaders in China feared that their nation did not have enough resources to support its huge and rapidly increasing population. To avoid what might become an overpopulation disaster, officials implemented a far-reaching population control program called the one-child policy. Three decades later, the government ended the program with the announcement that families could now have two children. This Mini-Q asks whether or not the one-child policy was a good idea for China.

Documents:

- Document A: Population Projections (graph)
- ~~Document B: Fertility (text and chart)~~
- ~~Document C: Environment (text)~~
- ~~Document D: Young Women in the Workplace (text)~~
- Document E: Social Imbalance (text)
- Document F: Two Single Children Speak (text)

ANSWER ALL "DOCUMENT ANALYSIS" QUESTIONS AND WRITE AN ESSAY!

DUE: ___ / ___

GRADED ASSIGNMENT WORTH 20 POINTS POSSIBLE

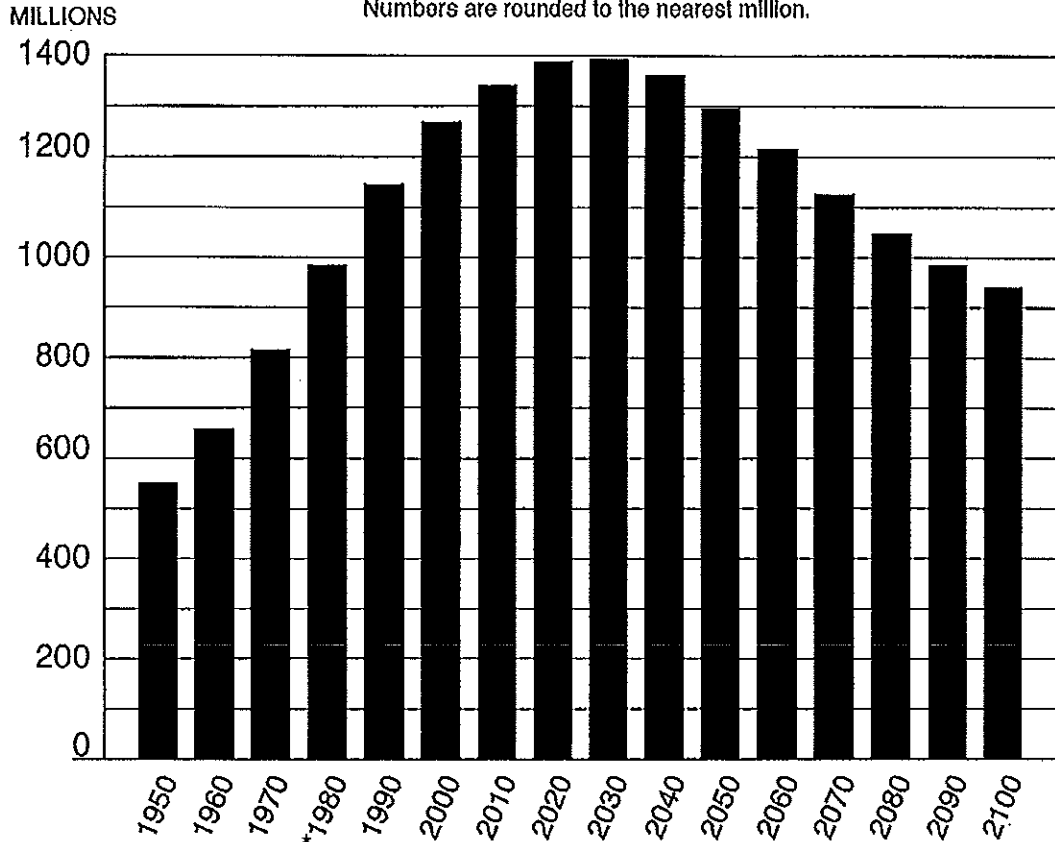
A Mini Document Based Question (Mini-Q)

Document A

Source: Population Division of the Department of Economics and Social Affairs, United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*.

China's Population

Estimates for years after 2010 are based on United Nation's mid-level projections.
Numbers are rounded to the nearest million.



*China's One-Child Policy begins

Document Analysis

1. The population of the United States in 2010 was a little under 300 million. In that same year, what was the population of China?
2. In what year and at what number is China's population expected to peak?
3. Between 1960 and 1980, a growing number of Chinese planners became worried about population growth. How does this document explain their concern?
4. Does this document support the claim that China's one-child policy was working? Explain.
5. How might the numbers in this document worry Chinese leaders?

Document E

Source: Jane Golley, "The Costs and Benefits of China's One-Child Policy," *The Conversation*, November 21, 2013.

The one-child policy has unquestionably caused fertility to decline more rapidly than it otherwise would have . . . and has therefore played a significant role in China's demographic transition . . . explaining up to one-quarter of its per capita GDP growth in the last three decades. . . .

With that rapid GDP growth has come better nutrition, rising levels of education, longer life expectancies, and higher living standards for the vast majority of Chinese people. . . .

This is not to deny the substantial, and in many cases immeasurable, costs of the policy. . . . Aside from the obvious economic costs of having more dependents and fewer workers in the population, the policy places a huge burden on single Chinese children at the bottom of the resulting "4-2-1" family structure (four grandparents, two parents and one child).

Even more consequential is the dramatic rise in China's sex ratio at birth, the costs of which will be borne by an estimated 30 million or more Chinese men who will be looking for a wife in 2030 but unable to find one. The one-child policy—in combination with a traditional preference for sons and widespread access to ultrasound technology to detect gender* since the mid-1980s—is at least partly to blame.

Other significant emotional costs result from not being allowed to determine your family's size, being coerced into terminating second pregnancies, or giving birth to a second child who is not allowed to enroll in school or to access the healthcare system.

*Ultrasound technology enables doctors and parents to see a picture of the fetus when it is in the mother's womb. Some Chinese parents choose to abort fetuses that ultrasound shows to be female.

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Document Analysis

1. According to the article, what were some benefits of the one-child policy?
2. Imagine that you are a young Chinese worker living with your parents and grandparents. Do you support the one-child policy? Explain your thinking.
3. What does the term "sex ratio" mean? Why is it important in relation to China?
4. According to the article, what are some of the emotional costs of the one-child policy?
5. How can you use this document to argue for China's one-child policy?
6. How can you use this document to argue against China's one-child policy?

Document F

Source: Jaime FlorCruz, "China Copes with Promise and Perils of One-Child Policy," *CNN*, October 28, 2011.

Xiao Xuan

The high cost of the one-child policy is felt deeply by Beijing resident Xiao Xuan, an only-child daughter of a college professor and shopping mall manager. Xiao, 22, says she was blessed with all the attention and resources showered at her from childhood.

Still, she says, she had a mostly lonely childhood. "I used to cut myself on my wrist after being yelled at by my mom and dad because I didn't know who I should talk to or turn to," she says. "I was like that for almost two years, but I am very tough so I made it through."

"I hate to say it but the one-child policy should partly be blamed for some social issues of youth today," she adds. "It's been a ridiculous government interference on family issues."

She wished she had a brother or a sister to share all the attention.

Note: An Internet survey of 7,000 Chinese only children between the ages of 15 and 25 found that 58 percent admitted to being lonely. A majority also described themselves as being selfish. However, many enjoyed being the "sun" around which the family revolved. (Source: NPR, November 24, 2010.)

Source: Louisa Lim, "China's 'Little Emperors' Lucky, Yet Lonely in Life," *NPR*, November 24, 2010.

A. J. Song

"I really appreciate [being the] one child, especially from the countryside," admits 23-year-old A.J. Song, whose parents are from the Gelao minority in Guizhou province.

"My parents, they give me everything. I'm the center of attention in the family. My mother has seven brothers and sisters; my father has six brothers and sisters. Most of my parents' brothers and sisters have two kids. They are all very jealous about me being the only child," he says.

Other Chinese research finds advantages to being an only child: They tend to score higher on intelligence tests and are better at making friends, according to Chinese studies.

Song agrees, saying he believes only children care more about their friends. He says the extra investment parents make in an only child is significant.

"If I had a sibling, I probably wouldn't be who I am now. Probably I'd still be in my small village, getting married and having kids. If you have more kids in your family, probably they're lacking in education, lacking food, lacking any kind of support, no matter emotional or financial. Basically, everybody is going to be average."

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Document Analysis

1. How does Xiao Xuan feel about the one-child policy? What are her reasons?
2. How does A. J. Song feel about the one-child policy? What are his reasons?
3. For a student writing an analytical paper on the pros and cons of the one-child policy, which is more valuable – the two interviews or the Note? Explain your thinking.
4. Which only child, Xiao Xuan or A. J. Song, would you rather be? Explain your answer.
5. Based on this document, was China's one-child policy a good idea? Explain your thinking.

