

CHINA'S POPULATION PROBLEM

One-child plan to continue—On March 2, 2011, the Chinese government announced that it will continue its one-child policy, which limits couples to having one child through the 2006-2010 five year planning period.

The rule has been estimated to have reduced population growth in the country of 1.3 billion by as much as 300 million people over its first twenty years.

Abortion and infanticide—This rule has caused a disdain for female infants, abortion, neglect, abandonment; and even infanticide has been known to occur to female infants.

In 2007 there were reports that, in the southwestern Guangxi Autonomous Region of China, officials were forcing pregnant women, without permission to give birth, to have abortions; and they were levying steep fines on families violating the law. As a result, riots broke out and some may have been killed, including population control officials.

Too many men—A new study, published in the *British Journal of Medicine*, puts an alarming number on China's gender gap. In 2005, it says, there were 32 million more males than females under the age of 20.

The cause is no surprise: A one-child policy, combined with a cultural preference for boys, leads some prospective parents to abort female fetuses.

"Sex-selective abortion accounts for almost all the excess males," say the authors. Although choosing to have an abortion on the basis of sex is illegal in China, enforcement is rare.

The result of such Draconian family planning has resulted in the disparate ratio of more males than females among babies, from birth through children who are four years of age.

The study included nearly five million people under the age of 20 and covered every county in China. It found that **overall ratios of boys were high everywhere, but were most striking among the younger age group of 1-4 years and in rural areas, where it peaked at 126 boys for every 100 girls.** In most other countries, boys slightly outnumber girls at birth, with ratios between 103 and 107 boys per 100 girls.

Immense aging population problem—China faces social problems caused by a sharp increase in its aging population, the *Chinese Academy of Sciences* (CAS) warned in a recent report on the issue, the *Beijing* reported on Wednesday.

The number of people aged over 60 in China exceeded 90 million at the end of 2001, accounting for about one half of Asia's over-60s population and one fifth of the world's total over-60s population, accord-

ing to the report from a dozen CAS members.

The rise in the number of octogenarians (those above 80) in China was much higher than 60-year-olds and means a heavy burden on society, the report said.

Statistics show that the number of Chinese people older than 60, which accounts for more than 10 percent of the country's population, is increasing at a rate of 3.2 percent per year.

The huge aging population brings various social and economical problems to China, which is still a developing country, said Li Baoku, vice-minister of Civil Affairs.

The elderly will be a big burden for China through the year 2050, when that population will reach 400 million, **with the elderly accounting for 25 percent of the total population,** according to Zhang Wenfan, president of the Chinese Old-age Association.

More than 70 percent of seniors are financially supported and looked after by their families, and only less than 17 percent of them enjoy pensions.

About 70 percent of seniors are concentrated in rural areas and almost wholly depend on support from their children because of the lack of a social welfare system for people in rural regions.

Those who are childless or do not live with their children make up 25.8 percent of the total elderly population. In Beijing, the rate is 34 percent.

More on abortion rates—Chinese state media reported that **women in the country have about 13 million abortions annually.** According to the *China Daily* newspaper, **the actual number likely is much higher because the 13 million includes abortions performed in hospitals but not unreported procedures performed in rural clinics.** Most of the abortions were among single young women who, experts say, knew little about contraception. **The paper also said that about 10 million pills for medical abortion are sold annually in the country.**

Chinese policies typically do not address the needs of unmarried women, even as national attitudes have become more accepting of sex outside of marriage, the *AP/Chronicle* reports. According to the newspaper, **about 62% of the abortions were among unmarried women, ages 20 to 29.** The Chinese report called the number of abortions "an unfortunate situation."

Multiple birth drugs—Chinese women, hoping to bypass the government's one-child policy, are increasingly turning to fertility drugs to boost their likelihood of giving birth to multiple children at the same time, the state-run *China Daily* reported in July 2011.