

The Little Emperors: China's One-Child Policy

China has long been the country with the highest population in the world. A 2018 census update recorded China's current population to be 1,384,688,986. In 1980, China's government enforced a strict policy intending to curb overpopulation: The One-Child Policy. If families had more children, they faced serious consequences. This law remained in effect for over three decades, until 2016. The children born under the strict policy are referred to as "The Little Emperors." They are the only children of many of these families and receive excessive amounts of attention from parents and grandparents.

Why Was the Policy Created?

In the mid 1950s, government officials realized that China's population was increasing too rapidly. Overpopulation is

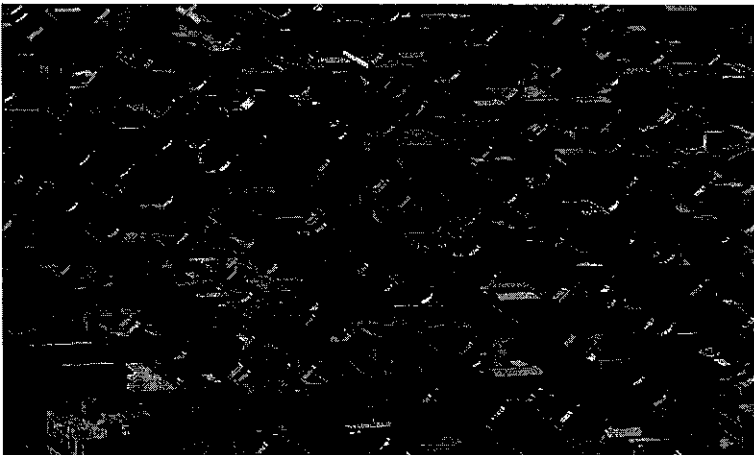
when a nation has more people living there than can be supported by the available resources. This makes it difficult for citizens to find good jobs, find land to live on, and find enough food to eat. Overpopulation is also hard on the natural environment. More people create more pollution.

How Was It Enforced?

The most common consequence for breaking the One-Child Policy was a large fine paid to the government. Other times, women might even be required to be sterilized if they had a second child. Sterilization is a medical procedure that prevents a woman from having children. If families did follow the law, they may be rewarded by financial bonuses or better employment opportunities.

Who Was Impacted?

Virtually all Chinese families were impacted by this law in some way. However, the burden fell heavier on some groups more than others. The policy was enforced more strictly on those families in the urban communities where overcrowding was a crucial problem. Families living in rural areas rarely had to follow this policy.



A crowded residential area in China, the world's most populated country.

Social class often made a difference as well. For wealthy families, it was easier to pay the large fine if caught breaking the law. Many wealthy families were willing to pay that price. For poor families a large fine was too risky and could be financially devastating.

The greatest impact was on the female population. In Chinese society, like many societies, males were expected to earn money for their families. It was easier for males to find good jobs. Male children could also help their families with farm work while they believed female children could not. For this reason, families preferred to have male children. In fact, for very poor families, it was essential to have male children.

If a family had a female child, they faced some difficult choices. Some would break the law and have a second child hoping it would be male. Some abandoned their female child in hopes of having a male one day. Others simply accepted the very real financial burden of only having a female child. There were no good options for families in this position.



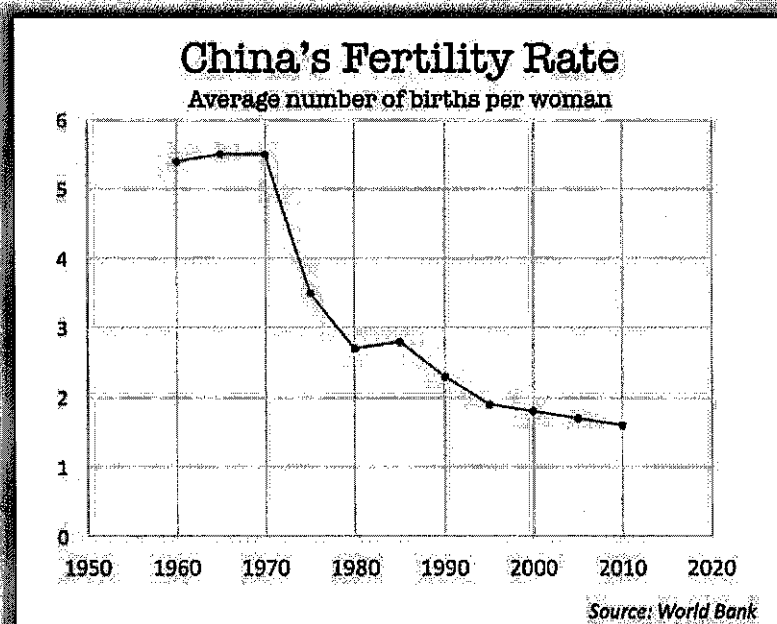
Some American families have adopted girls from Chinese orphanages due to this policy.

What is China Like Today?

In 2016, government officials in China began the Two-Child Policy, and this is still in effect today. While the One-Child Policy did prevent 400 million births according to China's National Health Commission spokesman Mao Qunan, it has left a number of challenges in China today. The population has more citizens aged 60 and over to care for. These aging citizens are leaving the workforce to retire. They will soon rely heavily on the Chinese government and workforce for care.

Another major problem is that there are now more males than females. This makes it difficult for some citizens who wish to have families one day. By some estimates, 1 in every 4 young adult men in China will not every marry because there simply aren't enough women.

Finally, the workforce is losing more and more of its population to old age producing a massive labor shortage in the business industries. Today, China is considering the idea of having no limits on the number of children allowed.



China's birth rate shows a steady decline after the One-Child Policy began.

Comprehension Quiz

Answer each question according to the article.

1. What policy did China create to manage the country's overpopulation?

2. How does overpopulation affect the natural environment?

3. What was a consequence of breaking the One-Child Policy?

4. In China, what is the preferred gender for a newborn baby?

5. Why was this gender preferred?

6. Which families were most affected by the policy?

7. What might happen if a family had a child of the less desired gender?

8. What is one major consequence of this policy?

Finding Text Evidence

Find each piece of text evidence in the article and highlight OR underline it with the color specified.

For items 1-4, you'll be citing textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly.

1. Find the sentence that tells how long this policy has been enforced. Highlight it in **blue**.
2. Find the sentence that tells why these children are called "Little Emperors." Highlight it in **green**.
3. Find two sentences that tell the consequences of overpopulation. Highlight them in **purple**.
4. Find the sentence that defines the word *sterilization*. Highlight it in **gray**.

For items 5-8, you'll be citing one piece or multiple pieces of textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text.

5. Find one piece evidence in the article that supports the idea that farming families were usually not punished for having more than one child. Highlight it in **orange**.
6. Find two pieces of text evidence show how following the law was best for your financial situation. Highlight them in **pink**.
7. Find one piece of text evidence that shows how this policy helped some American families and highlight them in **yellow**.
8. Find three pieces of text evidence that explain why this policy may have been a bad idea. Highlight them in **red**.

Objective Summaries

Use the article to answer the questions and complete the graphic organizers.

1. Read the following statements about the article. Then, classify them as objective statements or non-objective (subjective) statements. Write each answer choice in the correct column in the table below.
 - A. The census has shown that China has the highest population in the world.
 - B. The One-Child Policy was not the best way to solve the overpopulation problem.
 - C. Wealthy families had nothing at all to worry about when they had another child.
 - D. Poor families could not afford to break the law and lose money to large fines.
 - E. China now has more males than females because of this policy.
 - F. China seems to have solved the overpopulation problem.
 - G. Some families did break the law to have another child.
 - H. Male children are better than female children.

Objective Statements	Non-Objective Statements

Summarizing

Use the article to answer the questions and complete the graphic organizers.

7. In order to summarize the section **Who Was Impacted**, follow these steps. In the spaces provided next to each paragraph, summarize the paragraph in one sentence that states the central idea of the paragraph without including specific details. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, combine those sentences to write a brief summary of the section.

Virtually all Chinese families were impacted by this law in some way. However, the burden fell heavier on some groups more than others. The policy was enforced more strictly on those families in the urban communities where overcrowding was a crucial problem. Families living in rural areas rarely had to follow this policy.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for summarizing the first paragraph.

Social class often made a difference as well. For wealthy families, it was easier to pay the large fine if caught breaking the law. Many wealthy families were willing to pay that price. For poor families a large fine was too risky and could be financially devastating.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for summarizing the second paragraph.

The greatest impact was on the female population. In Chinese society, like many societies, males were expected to earn money for their families. It was easier for males to find good jobs. Male children could also help their families with farm work while they believed female children could not. For this reason, families preferred to have male children. In fact, for very poor families, it was essential to have male children.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for summarizing the third paragraph.

If a family had a female child, they faced some difficult choices. Some would break the law and have a second child hoping it would be male. Some abandoned their female child in hopes of having a male one day. Others simply accepted the very real financial burden of only having a female child. There were no good options for families in this position.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for summarizing the fourth paragraph.

Integrate Information

View the BBC video clip, "China's One-Child Policy Explained". Then, answer these questions. Review the clip as needed.

1. As you view the video clip, listen carefully for new details mentioned that were not mentioned in the article. Record them below.

New Details	Details in Video & Article
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

2. At the end of this video in the subsection "Will it work?", the reporter mentions a reason why Chinese families may choose not to have a second child now even though they can. Summarize why they feel this way based on the evidence from the video.
