Fertility Policy and Implementation in China, 1986–88

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In 1979 China announced the one-child policy, the world’s most stringent effort to slow a country’s population growth. Over the past decade, the one-child policy has been maintained; although it has been implemented to differing degrees over time and by location. Use of high-pressure methods in the family planning program reached a peak in 1983 and then diminished in many areas between 1984 and 1986. In 1984 the Chinese government reacted to the backlash against compulsion in enforcing the one-child policy by replacing Qian Xinzhong, head of the State Family Planning Commission, with Wang Wei. During Wang Wei’s tenure from 1984 through 1987, China’s national government frequently disseminated ambiguous, contradictory messages about national family planning policy. Cadres were told, on the one hand, to meet birth limitation targets, but, on the other hand not to force people to accept family planning. These conflicting demands led to mixed results. Cadres in some areas exerted tight control over fertility, while others took this opportunity to slacken work on their assigned tasks.

Since 1986, China has been reacting to a surge in the number of women in the prime reproductive ages and the resulting fertility peak that is expected to last for at least the next decade. The government has begun to reassess its family planning program in an effort to strengthen implementation, so that the national goal of not exceeding a population of 1.2 billion by the year 2000 can be met. In January 1988, Wang Wei was replaced by Peng Peiyun, a move which has apparently signaled that strict control of fertility is once again the rule.

This article looks in detail at population policy and implementation of the family planning program in China between 1986 and the first three months of 1988.1 This period is linked to earlier phases of the one-child
policy through an analysis of the continuities and changes in policy and program implementation over the past decade.

Demographic background

For the past two years, Chinese leaders have been concerned about a "birth peak," or baby boom—a direct consequence of the high birth rates that followed the Great Leap Forward of 1958–61 and lasted from 1962 through the early 1970s.

As shown in Figure 1, the age-specific fertility pattern characteristic of Chinese women by 1981 features childbearing concentrated in the 20s, in contrast with low fertility rates for women in their teens, 30s, and 40s. Substantial increases in the numbers of women in these peak childbearing ages, depicted in Figure 2, are expected to produce a sharp rise in total births. The absolute number of women in China at the peak childbearing ages of 21–30 (that is, women with an age-specific fertility rate of more than 0.1), around 80 to 90 million in the early 1980s, will increase steeply to 110 million or more after 1990, with a peak of nearly 125 million in 1993.

The birth rate has begun to reflect the rise in the number of women reaching the prime reproductive ages and having children. Table 1 shows the reported crude birth rates in China between 1981 and 1986, the implied number of births and total fertility rates (TFRs), and the reported crude death

![Age-specific fertility rates: China, 1981](image-url)
rates and rates of natural increase. The birth rate dropped from 20.9 per thousand population in 1981 to 17.5 in 1984, giving rise to optimism that, after the precipitous drop observed in the 1970s, birth rates were continuing their decline. In 1986, however, the birth rate rose to nearly the level of

TABLE 1 Vital rates and estimated numbers of births and estimated total fertility rate (TFR), China, 1981–86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Birth rate</th>
<th>Death rate</th>
<th>Rate of natural increase</th>
<th>Estimated TFR</th>
<th>Estimated number of births (thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>20.91</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>14.55</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>20,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>21.09</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>14.49</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>21,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>18.62</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>11.54</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>19,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>10.81</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>18,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>17.80</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>11.23</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>18,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>20.77</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>14.08</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>22,005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1981, and the rate of natural increase rose to 14.1 from 11.2 per thousand population in 1985. The 1986 birth rate resulted in some 3.4 million more births in 1986 than in 1985, and an increase in the implied TFR from 2.1 to 2.4. While about one fifth (between 20 and 22 percent) of the rise in the number of births could be attributed to a shift in the age structure, much of the rise was due to an increase in fertility.

Policy developments, 1986–88

The main concern among Chinese leaders in early 1986, reflected in the message they were sending to provincial family planning cadres, was the impending birth peak during the forthcoming Seventh Five-Year Plan period (1986–90). The need for achieving family planning targets was reaffirmed in the Seventh Five-Year Plan, in which provincial targets for the plan period continued to be based on the goal of not exceeding a national population size of 1.2 billion by the year 2000. The short-term national target was to stay within 1.113 billion by the end of 1990, with an average annual rate of natural increase of about 12.4 per thousand during the late 1980s. Provincial family planning reports in 1986, however, indicated that birth rates in many areas were in fact rising during the first half of 1986.

Central Committee Document 13, May 1986

Responding to the impending decade-long birth peak, to evidence that family planning work had not been stringently implemented in many areas of China between mid-1984 and mid-1986 and that the rising birth rate had not been curbed, and to rumors that the policy had changed to allow couples to have two children, the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee issued new guidelines for the family planning program. Document Number 13, promulgated in May 1986, was issued to supplement and clarify Document Number 7 (issued in 1984), but not to completely supersede it. Neither document has ever been published, but citations from each give a reasonably clear picture of their contents.

Document 13 was an attempt to “formulate a policy good for controlling population growth, which the majority of the masses are able to accept by means of education.” It was also designed to keep family planning from “being loose and running on its natural course,” and to strengthen family planning work in backward areas. The document also stressed coordination of efforts between the family planning program and other government units such as public health, civil affairs, planning, finance, medicine, industry, and commerce, and such organizations as labor unions, youth leagues, and women’s associations. It affirmed the success of the program during the Sixth
Five-Year Plan period (1981–85) and discussed the anticipated birth peak of the Seventh Plan period.

While reiterating some of the moderate measures called for in Document 7, such as use of propaganda and education, and ameliorating the relationship between family planning workers and the people by improving workstyle, Document 13 also stressed the need for practical results, for ensuring that the targets set for the Seventh Five-Year Plan were met, and for stabilizing the country’s population policy for the next decade at least. China’s basic population policy remains:

To promote late marriage and late birth. With the exception of special cases and provided that approvals are given, all state cadres, state employees and workers, and urban residents are to have only one child. In rural areas, one child per couple is to be widely promoted, but those with real difficulties may be scheduled in a planned way for a second child. Second children outside of birth plans and excessive [i.e., third or higher order] births are prohibited. Minority nationality couples may in general have two children and, in individual cases, a third birth may be permitted.

Policy statements in 1987

In January 1987, Chang Chongxuan, China’s representative at the 24th session of the United Nations Population Commission, reaffirmed China’s strong commitment to lowering the population growth rate: “China has no reason to slacken but [rather should] redouble its efforts to implement its family planning program.” This message was repeated throughout 1987. A commentary in March 1987 stated: “Party committees and governments on all levels must attach great importance to and continue to strengthen leadership over this work. They must never lower their guard and become negligent. Population must be strictly controlled.” While national leaders stressed that coercion was not advocated, couples were still expected to comply with the family planning program. According to the Chinese periodical Semi-Monthly Forum (Banyue tan), “Every couple reaching childbearing age must respond to the call of the party and the state and willingly practice family planning.”

To mark the “Global Day of the Five Billion” in July 1987, Wang Wei, Minister in Charge of the State Family Planning Commission, gave an address that included a summary of the conclusions reached at the State Council’s Conference on Family Planning earlier in the year:

We must unremittingly uphold the consistent principles and policy in family planning on a stable and long-term basis.

The population target will not change: we must strive to keep the total size of the population at around 1.2 billion by the end of the century.
Since we are facing the third upsurge of population growth, and the population situation is so severe, we must strictly control the growth of the population, continue to keep a tight hand, and allow no slackening of efforts in our work. While controlling the size of the population, we must also do a good job in promoting genetic excellence and bringing up children well in order to improve the quality of our population.

We must strengthen our work at the grass roots level, especially the work of backward areas and some weak links. Effective measures must be taken so that the work of backward areas is improved and problems at the weak links are solved.

Family planning work should occupy an important place on the work agenda of local governments. Different departments should have a clear mind about their responsibilities and make joint efforts to fulfill their population targets.

He added that “we should strictly forbid unplanned second and multiple [higher order] births through ideological, administrative, economic, and scientific measures.”16 "Unplanned" here means not authorized by the local government’s official birth plan; “ideological measures” means applying verbal pressure on couples to change their minds; “scientific measures” implies the application of birth control methods.

At a briefing for foreign and Chinese reporters in July 1987, the director of the General Office of the State Family Planning Commission disclosed that there were 21.58 million births and 11.58 million abortions in 1986. When asked whether abortion was now mandatory for women pregnant with a second child, the director responded: “We think that if a woman gets pregnant with a second child, it is her right to decide whether to have an abortion.” At the same time, he added that “abuses exist among local officials who resort to coercive measures to meet quotas.”17

Statistics showed that the net increase in China’s population in 1986 was 1.68 million more than had been officially planned. This higher growth rate, projected through the end of 1990, would mean that China would have 8 million more people than planned, making it extremely difficult to meet the target of 1.2 billion by the year 2000.18

Policy statements in 1988

In January 1988, Li Peng, Acting Premier of the State Council, reiterated that family planning remains a fundamental policy of China. He said, however, that “family planning is work involving the masses and should be carried out only through propaganda and education and on a voluntary basis rather than through compulsory measures.”19 The government hopes, through propaganda and education, to convince the Chinese people of the necessity of further tightening family planning work. An article in the People’s
Daily in January 1988 put it succinctly: “Perhaps we can reduce our difficulties by telling the public all the facts.” At the same time, the government remains adamant about reaching its policy goal. Li Peng told the National People’s Congress in March 1988 that “to keep the country’s population at about 1.2 billion by the end of the century, China must ‘strictly carry out’ the policies of promoting later marriages and restricting each couple to only one child.”

With the recent reform separating the functions of the party and the government, Li said that decisionmaking on key issues of family planning will be made by the party. Government officials at all levels will be responsible for implementing the family planning policy and any decisions made by the party. The family planning program will continue efforts to strengthen its infrastructure by hiring more personnel, providing better training, and establishing more family planning centers, especially in rural areas. The clear message now being transmitted throughout China is that the population policy will be unwavering at least through the end of the century, and that the attitude of “wait and see” among family planning workers will not be tolerated.

Changes in leadership of the State Family Planning Commission

In January 1988, Wang Wei, associated with the softening of the workstyle in China’s population program between 1984 and 1986, was relieved of his post as head of the State Family Planning Commission, and Peng Peiyun was appointed to succeed him. One of the highest ranking women in the party, Peng Peiyun had been party secretary of the Chinese University of Science and Technology in Hefei, Anhui Province. Her past experience also included the posts of Vice-Minister of Education and Vice-Minister of the State Education Commission.

In one of Minister Peng Peiyun’s first public statements, at a national conference in February 1988 to change undesirable marriage customs, she reiterated the government’s current position on family planning:

The 13th Party Congress [held in October 1987] attached great importance to China’s population problem. It stressed that the size of the population be controlled and that the quality of the population be improved. It pointed out that the problem “is an important one, which is related to the overall economic and social development,” and that “China’s population base is large. The population is in a period of birth peaks. Family planning work cannot be relaxed in the slightest. Otherwise, it would affect the realization of the goals set.”

It may be that the new leadership of the State Family Planning Commission signals a shift toward another tightening in China’s population pro-
gram. A recently published indirect criticism of “the existing policymaking structure,” apparently that of the Wang Wei period, suggests as much:

Now that the policy of one child for one couple has been adopted as a national policy, normally it should not be affected by any personnel change in the government. It is much to be regretted that this is not the case. It is quite baffling that a breach of this policy which is of far-reaching significance to the national economy and the people's livelihood was made at the upper level, and, what is more, it was made regardless of the objection by some demographers. What a significant role the interference of officials can play! This breach of policy has resulted not only in the birth of a second child to many families but the birth of multiple [higher order] children to families in many rural areas. So population is almost out of control again.25

This article appeared in Bright Daily (Guangming ribao), a national newspaper published in Beijing whose writings authoritatively reflect the party’s policies.

Links between national, provincial, and local population plans

In the past two years, Chinese leaders have stressed that the one-child policy is just that—a policy, not a law to be enforced throughout China without regard to local conditions. Guidelines issued at the central level are to be adapted to the specific conditions in each province and local area. The leaders also say that when granting permission for a second child, “It is necessary to strictly adhere to the provisions enacted by the province, autonomous region, or municipality involved. . . .”26 What, then, are the links between national, provincial, and local family planning activities and plans?

Each year, following discussions with each province, the national government sets provincial targets, or plans, consistent with the broader national goal of keeping the country's population to within 1.2 billion by the year 2000. A Chinese reporter explained the difference between the population plans for the various administrative levels:

In terms of the strict meaning of population plans, only the national and provincial plans are real population plans. The provincial-level plans, like the national plan, are comprehensive economic and social development plans, which include population plans. They are distributed to the lower levels in standard forms. At the lower levels, population plans in a greater sense are task assignments and work targets.27

Thus for Shanghai, “During the Seventh Five-Year Plan the population plan target assigned by the state must continue to be reached in order to control a rapid population increase. . . . During the Seventh Five-Year Plan, the
average number of births per year will be around 170,000 persons.’’

For Qinghai Province, ‘‘The population plan assigned . . . by the state for the Seventh Five-Year Plan is to keep the total population below 4.47 million by 1990.’’

The provinces and local areas have flexibility in implementing the family planning policy only to the extent that they have some leeway in deciding which categories of people may have a second child, and only as long as they neither interfere with reaching the province’s annual population target nor contradict state family planning guidelines. According to an article in the Semi-Monthly Forum in early 1987, ‘‘All areas, when making improvements in their family planning policies, must take the state’s overall family planning policy as the premise and must not separate themselves from the guideline of strictly controlling population growth. This point must be very clear.’’

For example, Hunan Province issued a circular in mid-1986 pointing out that ‘‘No locality should recklessly change the family planning policy. We should report to the provincial Family Planning Commission for approval those couples who are having a second child.’’ In April 1986 Shanxi Province reported that ‘‘some places have not done a thorough job in implementing the intentions of the central authorities.’’ Between late 1986 and February 1988, Sichuan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Jiangsu, Hubei, Shandong, and Henan, among other provinces, also issued statements or circulars on the importance of adhering to the central guidelines on family planning contained in Document 13.

When provincial leaders report the conclusions of national-level family planning work conferences, and discuss family planning goals for their provinces, the wording they use is very similar to that used by national leaders. For example, in 1987 and early 1988 many provinces have talked about the ‘‘grim reality’’ facing family planning work, the impending ‘‘birth peak,’’ the dangers of ‘‘letting things go,’’ and the necessity for ‘‘stabilization’’ of the population policy.

In 1988, it appears that provinces may be permitted to experiment with reforms to improve implementation of the family planning program. According to an article in the newspaper China Population, ‘‘Each province may have one or two pilot areas to find a way and to formulate regulations to carry out control in collaboration with other relevant organs.’’

**Provincial family planning regulations**

Several provinces have promulgated revised family planning regulations incorporating the new national guidelines. These provincial regulations are based on the national one-child population policy, the 1982 Constitution,
the 1980 Marriage Law, and other national directives and corresponding provincial regulations.

Guangdong Province revised its family planning regulations in mid-1986 to expand the categories of couples who may have two children. Urban residents were limited to only one child unless they met one of five conditions: (1) their first child was crippled as a result of a nonhereditary disease and cannot be expected to provide the family with normal labor; (2) one party in a remarriage is childless and the other has only one child; (3) an apparently sterile woman conceives after adopting a child; (4) the only child of a couple has already married; or (5) a person has worked for five or more years at sea or in a mine, and is still engaged in that work.

Among rural residents, couples must have only one child unless they meet one of the first four exceptions for urban couples, or if their first child is a daughter. Both urban and rural couples who are allowed to have a second child must give birth according to the area’s annual birth plan. National minority couples may have two children and in special cases three. Specific punishments for violators were included in the family planning regulations. Among the other regulations, marriage between close relatives is banned, and pregnancies resulting from such a union “must be terminated.”35

In 1986, Qinghai and Zhejiang Provinces also promulgated family planning regulations, with provisions for having a second child for rural and urban couples with “real difficulties” and for special groups such as, in Qinghai, minority nationality herdsmen.36 In Ningxia, rural couples and couples in which one spouse is a Hui minority are permitted to have two children. Urban couples are allowed only one child, while Hui minorities living in mountainous areas are permitted three.37

Sichuan Province adopted revised family planning regulations in mid-1987. [Reproduced in full in the Documents section of this issue, ed.] In addition to listing the 11 conditions under which a couple may have a second child, the regulations state that either a husband or a wife should undergo sterilization after the birth of their second child. In addition, “Couples who have serious hereditary diseases, including psychosis, mental deficiency, and malformation, must not be allowed to bear children. Those who are already pregnant must terminate the pregnancy.”38

A series of rewards and punishments is listed for couples who comply with or break family planning regulations. Those who continue an unapproved pregnancy are fined during the pregnancy and for seven years after the child is born, at a rate of 10 to 20 percent of both the husband’s and the wife’s wages or income. Those who insult, threaten, or beat family planning personnel, those who drown, abandon, sell, or otherwise mistreat baby girls or their mothers, and those who illegally remove IUDs will be dealt with by the judicial system.39
In October 1987, Sichuan Province ordered an inspection, one purpose of which was to “check if birth policies had been unified according to the ‘Sichuan Provincial Family Planning Rules.’” 40 The province reported that due to the successful implementation of the family planning regulations, the birth rate had dropped from 18.17 births per thousand in 1986 to 16.79 in 1987 and that the rate of natural increase had declined from 11.7 to 10.3 per thousand.41

By March 1988, Guizhou and Hubei Provinces had also promulgated revised family planning regulations. Although the complete details of the regulations are not available, they appear to be similar to those of other provinces.42 The Guizhou regulations include chapters on late marriage, late births, fewer and high-quality births, birth control methods, awards, penalties, and management and division of labor.

Implementation of the family planning program, 1986–88

Each province has a system of rewards and penalties for those complying with or disregarding family planning regulations. According to an official of the State Family Planning Commission, “For those who become pregnant out of the quota, we try to persuade them to stop the pregnancy at the earliest time. If they do not accept this advice, they will be fined.”43 In Guangxi, “Those who violate policies and have more children or pregnancies than allowed must, on the basis of ideological education, undergo administrative interventions and economic sanctions.”44

It appears that in some areas the mandated penalties are not having the desired effect on fertility decisions. According to a 1988 report in the People’s Daily, “The system of rewards and penalties relating to birth control has not been faithfully applied. Those who have money are not afraid of penalties, saying with compelling argument: ‘We can buy a son with money.’ If we do something against those who do not have money, they have nothing to lose as they have no money.”45 In some areas, the rewards and penalties are not applied. In some areas of Qinghai Province, for example, “family planning regulations are ineffective; rewards and penalties are not made good; and too many exemptions from the regulations have been granted.”46

Punishments for cadres disregarding family planning regulations

Cadres and family planning workers “don’t have the privilege to have more than one child,”47 and should be “seriously dealt with” for noncompliance.48 When the new secretary of the Dianbai County (Guangdong) party committee learned of the problem of cadres disobeying family planning regulations, he
“urged No. 1 leaders of all units to personally deal with the problem within a time limit. The No. 1 leaders of the units who cannot fulfill the task should be removed from their posts. As a result of strengthening leadership and taking effective measures, in only two months some 1,225 cadres, staff, and workers have been dealt with for violating family planning since October 1979.”50

Hainan, Jilin, and Shaanxi also have stipulations for punishing cadres who disregard family planning regulations.51 While most accounts do not detail the punishments meted out to cadres, one example—of the deputy mayor of the town of Yuyin—does so. He was not punished after his wife had had an unauthorized birth in 1985, but in the recent tightening up on cadres, “based on current policy regulations, he was punished monetarily, was given a warning from the party, and was discharged from the position of deputy mayor.”52 In Shanxi Province, “Cadres . . . who violate regulations of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the provincial party committee must be restricted and punished. Those who have childbirth in excess of plan will not be made cadres, will not be promoted, will not be given advanced grades, will not be evaluated as an advanced worker, and will not be given additional housing space.”53

Mass mobilization drives for contraceptive surgery

No individual cases of forced abortions or sterilizations have been found in the Chinese press during the past two years. There is evidence, however, that the family planning program is continuing to pressure couples with unauthorized pregnancies to have abortions and those with two children to undergo sterilization, in order to meet family planning targets set by the state and the provinces.

Soon after the midpoint of each calendar year, most provinces have statistics on how many births occurred in the first half of the year, and approximately how many pregnant women in the province will give birth by the end of the year.54 Using these numbers, provincial leaders can predict whether or not the province will stay within its birth quota for the year. This is generally the time when provinces call for renewed efforts to meet the target. For women already pregnant, however, blocking an unauthorized birth can only be done through induced abortion. Sterilizations help ensure that the same problem will not recur in future years.

Hunan Province, for example, announced in late September 1986 that “the busy farm season is over; all areas must fully utilize this opportunity to conscientiously carry out all types of birth control measures to create conditions for lowering the birth rate in this year.”55 Shaanxi Province also undertook a mobilization drive in late 1986. In order to “strictly prohibit
second births and additional births not covered by a plan," provincial authorities chose October and November to step up family planning activities. "From the middle of this month to the end of November, the activities of publicizing the documents of the central authorities on firmly grasping birth control and taking remedial measures [i.e., abortion] should be extensively carried out in all urban and rural areas of the province."\(^{55}\)

In Hebei the provincial family planning work conference in March 1987 concluded:

> As the Seventh Five-Year Plan period is a baby boom period, we should fully understand the arduousness of the work of controlling population growth; should strive to achieve the work for this and following years; and should make efforts to ensure that 90 percent of the women of childbearing age and already with a child wear contraceptive loops [intrauterine devices], 90 percent of the childbearing women with two children or more receive tubal ligation, remedies be given to 90 percent of the unplanned pregnant women, fines be imposed on 90 percent of the women who violate regulations on family planning work. birth control rate reach 90 percent, and multiple birth rate be controlled below 1 percent.\(^{56}\)

In this quotation, "remedies" refers to abortion, "unplanned" means in violation of the government's local birth plan, and "multiple birth rate" means the percent of all births that are third or higher order births. In October 1987, the Hebei Provincial Family Planning Association reiterated the need for these measures.\(^{57}\)

On Hainan Island the regional party committee and the regional people's government issued a circular in April 1987 calling for a "'shock drive in the family planning work in the Han area of Hainan.'\(^{58}\) Family planning workers were to promote family planning under the leadership of the party, to publicize the spirit of the provincial regulations, to carry out a policy of rewards and penalties, and to understand that "our current emergency task of promoting family planning work must center on energetically stressing remedial measures for unscheduled pregnancies. At the same time, we must pay attention to stressing tubal ligations for those who have already given birth to two children."\(^{59}\) By late April, 26,270 sterilizations had been performed (Hainan's population at the end of 1986 was 6.1 million), but authorities were not satisfied, saying "generally speaking this drive has not yet been launched in an all-around way and it has not produced notable results."\(^{60}\)

Sichuan, China's most populous province (with a yearend 1986 population of 103.2 million), carried out a family planning drive in summer 1987. In a speech on the drive, provincial party committee Deputy Secretary Nei Ronggui demanded that:
the leaders at all levels attach great importance to family planning work and take immediate action to launch the major propaganda, inspection, and implementation drive throughout the province to ensure the fulfillment of this year's population plan. It is necessary to ensure that family planning work is carried out within the scope of the policy provisions laid down by the provincial authorities. It is necessary to do a good job in grass-roots work. We must curb early marriage and childbearing and stop unmarried cohabiting couples from having children. We must seriously implement contraceptive measures.61

Because the purpose of this campaign was “the fulfillment of this year’s [1987] population plan,” and the speech was broadcast in June, the meaning is that unauthorized pregnancies, notably those in the second and third trimester with births due before the end of 1987, must be aborted.

At the provincial conference on work in “backward” counties in Guangdong, Vice Governor Ling Botang concluded that “the provincial party committee and government will make arrangements for family planning in the second half of the year in an endeavor to fulfill this year’s provincial population control target.”62 This speech was given on 26 August 1987, so this directive can only mean that second and third trimester abortions must be carried out for unauthorized births due between September and December.

Also in August, the provincial family planning work conference in Guizhou Province “stressed that the focal point in this work this year is to take remedial measures regarding pregnancies not covered by the plan and additional pregnancies, to ensure the fulfillment of the population plan.”63 In other words, unauthorized pregnancies must be aborted.

In October 1987, a standing committee member of the government of Hunan Province (year-end 1986 population of 57.0 million) spoke of the plan to perform 2.5 million birth control operations that year in the province. The Vice Governor added that “The current activities must put stress on using sterilization surgery for those who have given birth to their second or third child, and prevent all unauthorized births not covered by plans.”64 These activities were to be promoted both through propaganda and mobilization and through checking for unauthorized pregnancies.

According to an article in China Population, family planning propaganda activities have continued into 1988, in an effort to “take prevention as the principal task,” which means the prevention of conception using sterilization or intrauterine devices (IUDs), and to “assure fulfillment of the population plan.” The article also stated:

In the past, we proposed that [tubal] ligation not be applied indiscriminately. The intention was to stress starting from facts and treating each case individually. Now, for the same reason, we cannot refrain from doing ligation and from doing IUD insertions indiscriminately. If this work were relaxed, un-
planned second births and excessive [third or higher order] births would naturally run their own course.65

Hainan Island in early 1988 called for regular “shock drives” for family planning, “with the emphasis on practical results.”66 And an article in China Population, reporting on the 1988 national conference of directors of family planning commissions, called for choosing “the appropriate time to carry out several concentrated propaganda and technical service activities, especially in the border areas and areas where regular family planning work is lacking at the basic level.”67

**Propaganda and education**

In addition to mass mobilization drives, the family planning program carries out propaganda and education work to convince couples of the need for family planning and to argue that small families enjoy a higher quality of life. One of the principal components of Document 13 is the stressing of the need to expand and improve propaganda and educational activities to increase popular support for, and to quell discontent about, family planning. In Henan Province, for example, a circular issued in late 1987 said:

Planned parenthood must be publicized deep into the grass roots and among the people, and importance must be attached to results. . . . In the propaganda drive, it is necessary to successfully grasp three key links:

1. It is necessary to disseminate intensively the important directive on population problems that is contained in the report of the 13th CPC National Congress [of October 1987] and the seriousness of the population situation of our country and province so that the cadres and the masses can understand the relationship between population control and the achievement of the strategic target of three big steps: understand the reason for carrying out planned parenthood, understand that the one-child policy is still advocated, and conscientiously carry out planned parenthood.

2. It is essential to succeed in propagating knowledge of contraception, sterilization, childbirth, and child care and in conducting ideological education for those who undergo operations and for their family members.

3. It is imperative to visit those who have undergone operations and to help them solve practically their difficulties in making a living.68

Stressing the need to help one-child families to “get rich” so as to advance the cause of family planning is a recurrent theme in the family planning program. A 1986 commentary on Document 13 talked about “quickly [taking] charge of the work of ‘helping the poor’ and helping one-child families to get rich so that a good effect would be created among the
cadres at all levels and among the masses and that family planning work may be promoted.” 69

In late 1987, Yantai Municipality in Shandong Province outlined five steps to control the birth peak, the first of which is “to carry out repeated propaganda and education.” 70 In early 1988, an article in China Population discussed means of educating and getting feedback from people on family planning: “We must establish . . . a system of visiting households and holding earnest conversations in order to strengthen contacts between family planning commissions of all levels and the masses, to listen to their views, to give guidance, and to guide them in practicing family planning.” 71 The line between education and compulsion, however, is easily crossed when Chinese officials and family planning workers make repeated (and often unwelcome) visits to women and their families in order to elicit compliance with family planning regulations.

Another method of educating people about the effects of rapid population growth is to provide them with information about the economic consequences of population growth for their locality and for their families. One such article, published in China Population in January 1988, discusses the effects of population growth on the labor surplus, the poor quality of the rural population, natural resources, and rural development in Heilongjiang Province. 72

Measures to counter the pronatalist effects of economic reforms

Since China’s rural economic reforms were instituted in the early 1980s, some observers have predicted that birth rates would rise. Under the new rural economic system, households are responsible for economic production. Therefore, rearing children, especially males, is beneficial to the family’s economic welfare. A 1988 commentary notes the continuing need for children and sons as seen by families in rural areas:

Eighty percent of the country’s population live in rural areas and the vast majority of them are mainly farming or doing business on a contract basis. As a matter of fact, this form of production demands that each family have its male labor force, otherwise small-scale production that badly needs manual labor cannot be carried out. Some farm work can only be accomplished by a group of laborers with different special skills, and it will not work if there is a shortage of labor. What is more, this form of production also needs manpower replenishment. The reflection of all these objective requirements on people’s mentality toward having children is that they must have baby boys, at least two to three children, the more the better, and the earlier they get married and have children the better. 73
To counter the increase in births in rural areas as a result of the economic reforms, family planning commissions have instituted regulations, such as the so-called double-contract system, the tying of land distribution to a family size of two children (regardless of actual family size), and, more recently, family planning contracts.

Family planning contracts

Throughout the 1980s, a system in force in many parts of China has required couples to sign family planning contracts over whose content they have no control, and then punished couples who violated the stipulations of these contracts.

To overcome difficulties arising from the introduction of the reforms in agriculture in the early 1980s, a double-contract system was pioneered in some rural areas, whereby households were required to sign a “contract guaranteeing to have only one child,” or, if they already had more than one, a “contract guaranteeing to have no more children,” every year when they signed their agricultural production contract with the production team. If a child was born despite this pledge, the couple had by definition violated its double contract and was subjected to economic penalties. This system has been successful in requiring birth control compliance while incorporating the new agricultural contract system, so the national and provincial governments beginning in 1981 publicized this method and urged or mandated its use. We do not know how widespread the double-contract system has become.

A newer system of required signatures on family planning contracts is the “goal management” system now being promoted, in which not only the couple of childbearing age, but also people at every level of the administrative hierarchy are required to guarantee compliance with family planning regulations dictated from above. Currently available descriptions of the goal management system suggest that it is simply a renewed attempt to expand the geographic and population coverage of the “cadre work responsibility system.” The latter system was introduced in 1981, and China’s national government began promoting its widespread implementation. In some places, cadres have had to sign contracts guaranteeing that their units would meet birth-limitation targets handed to them; if couples under their jurisdiction have unauthorized births, the cadres would be reprimanded and subjected to reductions in their income. This system is intended to ensure that the national family planning program is not weakened or diluted when implemented at the local level.

Family planning was less difficult to enforce in rural areas when residents were organized into communes. According to a well-qualified local
observer’s report from Hubei Province, penalties for noncompliance with birth restrictions were effective while people lived in communes, because people’s work points could easily be reduced to punish an unauthorized birth. When communes were disbanded, a double-contract system was established, whereby rural residents signed economic production and family planning contracts. Violation of the family planning contract brought stiff economic penalties. According to this observer, once tracts of land had been parceled out, however, and annual deliverables had been specified, it was not necessary to sign a production contract every year, especially after 1984 when land was allocated for a term of 15 years. A sort of “continuing resolution” has reportedly taken over in many places in Hubei Province.77

The Hubei observer reported that rural families who have unauthorized births are among the richest and the poorest peasants, because rich peasants can pay the fines while poor peasants are not expected to borrow money to pay family planning penalties. Since the adoption of Document 7 in 1984, family planning cadres are no longer allowed to seize a family’s house to pay the fine, the Hubei observer reported. Where possible, family planning workers try to collect one-time fines for unauthorized births since they are unwilling to collect annual fines for 14 years following the birth.78

Some interpretations dispute the view that the agricultural responsibility system has caused the birth rate to rise in rural areas. Based on a survey conducted in 12 villages of four townships in Guizhou Province, two Chinese authors conclude that farmers need less labor power under the new agricultural system: “The work which took three to four persons to accomplish in a day can now be done by one.”79 The same authors claim that the savings of smaller families were greater than those of large families. The prevailing view, however, is that the economic reforms in rural areas have discouraged the practice of family planning.

One way in which the economic reforms have had an impact on family planning is by abolishing the institutional structure through which the family planning program was carried out. With no commune system, there is a much weaker institutional base and little reinforcement for family planning workers. Because of this institutional breakdown, the government is putting emphasis on setting up grass-roots family planning organizations, training more family planning workers and making sure that they get paid for their work, and ensuring that there is money for family planning work in all areas.

At a national family planning financial control conference in December 1987, it was reported that family planning expenditures in China had increased an average of 18.5 percent annually between 1982 and 1986, and that “financial departments at all levels actively allocated funds for family planning undertakings even under tight financial conditions.” Despite the increase, “some areas are still short of funds and contradictions between supply and demand are still relatively acute.”80
Cadre work responsibility systems

Chinese authorities claim that whenever family planning abuses have been discovered, the "Chinese government did not cover up but openly exposed and condemned these misdeeds. People involved were criticized and even subjected to disciplinary or legal punishment."81

So far, we have been unable to find any documented instance of a Chinese official or family planning worker having been punished or even reprimanded for enforcing involuntary family planning. In contrast, there are frequent reports of family planning cadres being criticized or punished for not meeting family planning quotas, or for "sabotaging" family planning. A July 1987 circular from the Public Security Department of Guizhou Province stated: "Cases of illegal removal of an intrauterine device, obtaining money by deceit, abusing women, and other instances of sabotage of family planning must be promptly investigated and dealt with."82 At a 1986 Shanxi Province family planning meeting of heads of backward counties, "those county heads who failed to attend the meeting were publicly criticized."83

In July 1987, the Governor of Shaanxi stated in an interview that "indiscriminate granting of exemptions [for second births] is forbidden. If they are granted, the matter will be dealt with seriously."84 In February 1988, the Secretary of the Hebei Provincial Party Committee asserted:

Backward counties should be criticized in the newspapers. In next year’s family planning work conference we must arrange the names of counties in the order of their results. . . . [T]he party committee secretary and head of the county that rank last should be summoned to explain why they lag behind.85

In the past year or so, several provinces have strengthened "cadre responsibility systems," penalizing cadres and family planning workers who do not reach their target and using family planning work as a criterion by which to judge their job performance. These systems are being set up or reinstated to guarantee the support and diligence of family planning cadres, who had an easier time with family planning work between 1984 and 1986, when the policy was somewhat less stringent. According to an official of the State Family Planning Commission in June 1987, in areas where family planning work has slackened, cadres are "mentally unprepared" to strengthen family planning effectiveness at the grass-roots levels in order to lessen the predicted peak in the birth rate.86

When national leaders called for an intensification of family planning work in 1986, family planning workers were not necessarily enthusiastic. In Hunan, the Provincial Party Committee acknowledged this problem, saying that the relaxation of family planning work had "resulted in ‘the higher ups yelled vigorously, while the lower levels loosened their hold.’ "87 A survey
in seven counties in Gansu Province in 1987 found that of 100 family planning workers surveyed, 77 wanted to change jobs.\textsuperscript{88} Even in early 1988 confusion remained about the family planning policy; according to the Vice Governor of Shandong Province, “Some people think that the restrictions of family planning have been relaxed when they have not.”\textsuperscript{89}

In Yujiang County, Jiangxi Province, a contract responsibility system has been set up in which “township cadres are responsible for the villages, village cadres are responsible for the teams, and team cadres and party members are responsible for households.”\textsuperscript{90} In Yunnan, “Population plans should be treated as one of the targets to be examined during a government’s term of office.”\textsuperscript{91} In Liaoning, “Leading personnel at all levels should enhance their leadership over the work and hold themselves responsible for a local failure in this regard.”\textsuperscript{92} In Shaanxi in March 1987, the provincial party committee deputy secretary and acting governor “demanded that leaders at all levels . . . establish the idea of simultaneously grasping ‘two kinds of production’ [economic production and reproduction], and take measures to do this work well and firmly. Otherwise . . . they were not qualified leaders. . . . All levels must implement the system of contracted responsibilities for population.”\textsuperscript{93}

In 1987, the Hunan Provincial Party Committee adopted several measures to improve family planning work, including the “‘three fixes’ (to fix the responsibility of party and government cadres at all levels, to fix the responsibility of basic-level cadres, and to fix family planning quotas with individuals).” These measures “were carried out in all areas of the province. Population contracts were made from the lowest levels to the highest levels. A responsibility system was implemented among those leaders in charge of family planning in the party and in the government at all levels during their term in office.”\textsuperscript{94}

In January 1988, an article on family planning in \textit{China Population} claimed that “the most important problem which needs to be solved in our work is to attach importance to the establishment and the improvement of all types of responsibility systems. . . .”\textsuperscript{95} In early 1988, leaders of Gansu and Fujian called for implementation of cadre responsibility systems,\textsuperscript{96} while Shandong and Henan Provinces introduced such systems.\textsuperscript{97}

\textbf{Individual and group responsibility systems}

In many rural areas, as mentioned above, a double-contract system for agricultural production and reproduction has been in effect since the early 1980s, when communes were disbanded and households were allocated land to farm. Each year, a couple is supposed to sign a contract to provide the state with a fixed amount of agricultural produce as well as to practice family planning. If the couple has an unauthorized child, it is fined.
In practice, this system has not worked in many areas. The example of noncompliance in Hubei was cited earlier. The extension of land rights to 15 years may have weakened the double-contract system in more provinces than Hubei. In addition, many localities lack sufficient rural family planning personnel to enforce the contracts. In late 1987, Wang Wei reported that about 30 percent of China’s villages lacked family planning workers. The government, aware of the problem of staff shortages in rural areas, is now expanding the workforce of family planning personnel. For example, in Guangxi Province (year-end 1986 population: 39.5 million) more than 2,500 additional staff were assigned to family planning work in 1987. Harbin Municipality in Heilongjiang Province and Hebei Province assigned more workers for family planning in rural areas beginning in late 1986, and Sichuan Province began to do so in early 1987.

Family planning is rarely considered a personal matter. In villages of Guzhuangdian Township, Henan Province, blackboards and posters publicize information contained in birth control registration cards of newlyweds, one- and two-child households, and households practicing birth control, so that people can supervise each other and cadres can monitor the situation. “In this way, the situation of ‘concealing and getting through the cracks’ leading to excessive births has been checked.” In Ningxia Province a group of inspectors has been assigned “to clarify the pregnancy situation monthly. Once a month, married women of reproductive age are visited during the time of their periods and a report on their condition is submitted to a higher level.”

As staff sizes are being increased, the government is placing renewed emphasis on contract responsibility systems. In Hunan Province, family planning quotas are fixed with individuals in rural areas. The province is promoting the example of Hengnan County in establishing a contract responsibility system:

In March [1987], the county formulated the “Ten Article Regulation” to narrow the opening [for couples to have second births] and to control population growth strictly. It carried out a comprehensive examination of the implementation of the family planning policy in earlier years throughout the county and resolutely took back those quotas for a second birth, which were issued without conforming to policy regulations. By means of meticulous ideological work, birth contracts were signed one by one. “Notices” were issued to strictly control childbirth. At the same time, birth control measures and distribution of awards and penalties were carried out firmly.

As of today, the county has retrieved more than 1,200 quotas for second births . . . [and] the number of birth control operations completed is 46.34 percent more than the number during the same period last year. . . . Depending on their situation, all 25,367 women of reproductive age in the county have already received their “notices” either allowing them to have a second birth
or restricting them from having a second birth. Those who are eligible are definitely allowed to give birth and those who are not eligible are prohibited resolutely.\textsuperscript{103}

In Zhangzhen Township, Ningxia Province, a system of “universal contracts” was established in 1987 whereby “township cadres were responsible for villages, village cadres were responsible for households, and couples of childbearing age signed family planning contracts.”\textsuperscript{104}

At a national conference on family planning work at the beginning of 1988, it was reported that 2.5 million persons are presently members of family planning associations throughout China.\textsuperscript{105} A February article on family planning added that “New community-based groups will be set up to ensure that people follow sensible family planning practices. For instance, women of childbearing age could be required to sign contracts with these grass-roots organizations.”\textsuperscript{106} Another article, citing an official from the State Family Planning Commission, was more definite about the contracts:

The contract responsibility system will be carried into national family planning, a commission official announced on 15 February [1988] in Beijing. He said that local family planning organizations will be required to sign contracts with childbearing women to ensure that they have only one child. Penalties will be levied against those who break their contracts while social benefits will be provided for those who fulfill them.\textsuperscript{107}

These grass-roots organizations are required “to guarantee the fulfillment of the birth control target, give awards, provide contraceptives and necessary services, and require couples of childbearing age to actually take contraceptive measures.”\textsuperscript{108}

Many areas are setting up systems to evaluate townships and villages on family planning work. In Inner Mongolia’s Linxi County, for example, townships and villages are rated on their family planning performance and are given a series of awards based on their rating on marriages, births, and abortions. “Township cadres and family planning cadres perform their duties according to their contracted responsibilities and are awarded or punished accordingly.” Through this method,

[i]t is beneficial to arouse the masses’ voluntarism and activism for self-management of planned births. [The responsibility system] pushed forward the implementation of family planning policy, whereby it changed the situation of a few people working on a large number of people to one of a large number of people working on a few people.\textsuperscript{109}

Changde Prefecture in Hunan Province employs a system that is being promoted throughout the province. Under the “veto power” system, town-
ships and districts that fail to fulfill their family planning targets are stripped of their status as advanced units of industrial or agricultural production, and of the rewards which accompany that favored status.\textsuperscript{110} In urban areas, birth quotas are strictly enforced through people’s work units. The example of the Daye Steel Factory shows how a contract system can work. The factory has 33,000 workers, of whom 9,144 are women of childbearing age.

In 1986, the main factory signed a “document of contract responsibility” with 32 of its branch factories. All branch factories in turn signed contracts with their respective workshops, which in turn signed contracts with their teams, which in turn signed contracts with each individual team member. . . . In order that the “contracts” do not become empty words, we define clearly the contents of inspection and carry out inspections strictly down to each person. Awards and penalties are meted out.\textsuperscript{111}

Provincial party committees send out inspection teams to ensure the implementation of family planning responsibility systems.\textsuperscript{112} These systems are designed to increase the participation of local leaders and family planning workers by raising the stakes for the success or failure of family planning work. A reporter writing on Hebei Province’s family planning work conference in January 1988 said, “The people will be motivated and inspired with enthusiasm for doing some work only when great pressure is applied on them.”\textsuperscript{113}

Controls on the floating population

As part of China’s economic reforms, more people from rural areas have been permitted to move temporarily to urban areas or other rural areas for work. This group, estimated as comprising 50 million people since 1979,\textsuperscript{114} is called the floating population, because their household registration is still in the rural area of origin even though they spend much of their time elsewhere. The most common type of floating person is a single or married man away from his family, but women are increasingly becoming mobile workers in urban areas. In some cases, husbands and wives travel together as mobile workers.

The degree of success achieved by China’s family planning program depends in part on continuous surveillance of adult women to prevent them from having children they want; therefore, the floating population has continued to cause problems for family planning workers because people away from their place of registration do not fall under the jurisdiction of the urban family planning workers, and they are not within reach of the rural family planning workers. For example,
Yujiang County [in Jiangxi Province] has more than 44,000 married women of childbearing age. More than 1,600 of them are away with their husbands, who are engaging in trade and industry. These people are often stubborn in their thinking. They not only create “dead corners” in family planning work, but also bad influence over the people around them. . . . Therefore, to do well in managing family planning work among this floating population is extremely urgent.115

Counties such as Yujiang are setting up systems through which the floating population must have family planning certificates before they can leave their home area and must present them to their urban work unit as part of the registration process to be permitted to work. In a town in a rural county of Qingdao Municipality, Shandong Province,

Women of reproductive age whose household registration is in this town, but who live permanently in other areas . . . must submit every three months a certificate of gynecological examination from a local hospital to their work unit [where they live]. If they failed to do so, either their food grain ration would be stopped, or they would have to be responsible for moving their household registration and for the expenses incurred by persons sent out by this town to trace [their whereabouts]. Punishment for falsifying the certificate is in the amount of 500 yuan.116

Zhejiang Province in 1987 promulgated “Tentative Regulations on the Management of Family Planning Among In- and Out-migrants” of the province. Without family planning certificates, work permits will not be issued. Furthermore,

Those who violate family planning [rules] must be severely treated according to regulations. Serious violators are to be punished with cancellation of employment contracts, closing of businesses, or revoking of licenses. Those who conceal their marriage and childbirth status to obtain “family planning certificates” by deceit and those who purposely give convenience to and shelter incoming and outgoing violators of family planning policies are to be given either financial or administrative penalties.117

Yunnan Province has also issued tentative regulations for migrant workers.118 In addition, Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Fujian, and Qinghai, all of which have large migrant populations, have regulations to monitor family planning use among the floating population.119

Even with such regulations, unauthorized births among the floating population still occur. In mid-1987, a spokesperson for the State Family Planning Commission said that “most places still fail to exert effective control over extra-quota births among the floating population.”120 A 1987 survey of 100,000 migrant workers in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province, found that over 70 percent of the 5,000 women of childbearing age were not following family planning regulations. In Jiayuguan, another city in Gansu,
one-third of the women of reproductive age among the mobile population had given birth to two or more children.121 "Most of these women ignore the requirement to use birth control measures, and many take advantage of their situation to have more children than allowed."122

The State Family Planning Commission is preparing to conduct a survey of the country’s floating population, with the intent of formulating uniform guidelines for handling family planning work among migrant workers.123

The campaign to promote late marriage

The government has recently initiated a campaign to end the practice of early marriage, which often leads to early childbirth. In 1986, an estimated "2 million people under the legal age gave birth to children."124 The legal age at marriage in China, based on the Marriage Law of 1980, which took effect 1 January 1981, is 22 years for men and 20 years for women. Because the number of young people reaching the age of marriage and childbearing has increased recently, there is renewed interest not only in enforcing the legal age at marriage, but also in promoting late marriage and later childbirth among young couples. The practice of either cohabiting before marriage registration and having a child, or simply marrying earlier than the legal age, has become widespread, according to Chinese sources.125 In 1986, early marriages accounted for an estimated 15 to 20 percent of marriages in rural China.126 However, no reliable data on age at marriage since 1981 are available. A survey conducted in mid-1988 should yield pertinent data.

According to a spokesperson for the State Family Planning Commission in mid-1987, "All departments concerned must take effective measures to handle cases of newlyweds below the legal marriage age (including those who have married without registering with the authorities)."127 In Sichuan Province a publicity campaign on marriage was carried out in late 1987. A circular issued by the Provincial People’s Government of Sichuan stipulated the following:

Illegal relationships which should be dissolved must be dissolved. Those who have reached the legal marriage age must carry out marriage registration procedures. Those who are pregnant out of wedlock and have not reached the legal marriage age must undergo remedial operations [abortion] within a prescribed time.128

Similarly in Shulan County, Jilin Province, "Aside from being fined, those who have married early will be ordered to live separately. Those who marry early and are having a child early must undergo remedial measures immediately. If a child were already born, heavy fines will be imposed."129 As this quotation makes clear, if a woman is pregnant for the first time, but she and her husband have not been allowed to register their marriage because
she is below 20 or he is below 22, then the pregnancy is unauthorized and an abortion is required.

Prohibiting cohabitation and early marriages is a priority task during the first half of 1988. In early 1988, a “Circular on Earnestly Implementing the ‘Marriage Law’ and Strictly Prohibiting Marriage in Violation of the Law” was issued jointly by the State Family Planning Commission, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Judiciary, and the National Federation of Women's Associations. The circular suggests solutions to the problems associated with disregard of the marriage law. “Those who marry early before the legal marriage age and have early childbirth and those who allow their children to practice cohabitation without registration will be criticized and educated even to the extent of being disciplined by their work units. . . . Those who violate the law must be punished accordingly.”

A national conference on eliminating bad marriage customs, held in February 1988, called for a firm resolution “to prevent early marriages and early births, [and] to forbid illegal marriages,” among other things. In late 1987, the People’s Congress Standing Committee of Jiangsu Province discussed barriers to fully implementing the marriage law. “These problems include mercenary marriages, abducting young women for sale, not going through marriage procedures, and abandoning baby girls.”

Promoting late marriage is also becoming a key task for family planning and marriage registration offices. Some areas are revising their marriage registration procedures. In the town of Zetou, in Shandong Province, for example, couples used to simply go to the civil affairs assistant to register for marriage. Now they must get a certificate from their village, check their household records with the public security station, and have a premarital examination at the hospital and a talk with the civil affairs assistant and the family planning propagandist before marriage registration can be completed. Yunnan, Shanxi, and Hunan Provinces have also begun to look into early marriage practices.

Guangdong provincial family planning regulations include a chapter on incentives for late marriage and late childbirth. Cadres and workers who marry late (age 23 for women) are allowed an extra 10 days for their honeymoons. Those who give birth late (age 24 for women) are given an extra 15 days of leave when their child is born. “Urban individual laborers, persons awaiting employment, and persons who practice late marriage and childbearing will be commended and suitably rewarded by their local people’s government.”

Basic elements of China’s family planning program, early 1980s–1988

Most of the basic elements of China’s family planning policy and program have been in place since the early 1980s. In addition to family planning contracts, discussed above, these include:
— the stated official policy on voluntarism;
— mandatory family planning;
— national limits on the number of children per couple;
— the one-child pledge;
— required contraceptive methods.

The stated official policy on voluntarism

China’s stated national policy has always been that the country’s family planning program is voluntary, not compulsory, that people are persuaded but not forced to practice birth control, and that China combines the voluntarism of the masses with state guidance or direction in family planning.\(^\text{136}\) Any instances of coercion that come to light are attributed to local cadres exceeding their instructions. Public statements like these have not varied, even during 1979–82 when required abortions in the second and third trimester were mandated by several provinces.\(^\text{137}\) For example, in 1980 the then Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Hua Guofeng, asserted in a speech to the National People’s Congress:

> It is very common for one couple to have only one child in the developed countries. But for people in our rural areas, it is truly an important matter of transforming social customs and traditions. In our effort to achieve this, we rely chiefly on publicizing and implementing the policies of the Party and government and on ideological and political work, not on compulsion and arbitrary orders. . . . However, we must not shut our eyes to the fact that, for diverse reasons, cases of compulsion or even violations of the law and discipline have occurred in this work in some places. We must firmly put an end to this.\(^\text{138}\)

Even in 1983, the peak year of compulsion in which China carried out a nationwide campaign of mandatory sterilization, abortion, and IUD insertion characterized by a degree of heavyhandedness in family planning unprecedented in the world, official statements that China’s program is voluntary continued to be issued:

A spokesman of the State Family Planning Commission told Xinhua [New China News Agency] today that it is China’s consistent policy to encourage people to practice birth control voluntarily. The Chinese Government has never resorted to compulsory means to force sterilization among people. He said in an interview that there were individual cases of using compulsory measures due to the simple [i.e., crude] working method of local cadres and staff members. But the government will take prompt measures to stop them, whenever it discovers such cases, he stressed.\(^\text{139}\)

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson reiterated China’s stated official policy in late 1985: “By pursuing its family planning program, China
has always followed the principle of voluntary participation under State guidance and opposed all coercive means in the work of family planning."140

Mandatory family planning

China continues to have a nationwide policy of required family planning practice. People are not allowed a choice about whether they will control their fertility. The policy of obligatory family planning was gradually implemented in different locations during the 1970s. Then in the revised national Marriage Law of 1980, an explicit requirement to practice family planning became national in scope. Article 12 states: "Both husband and wife shall have the duty to practice family planning."141 In December 1982 China adopted a new Constitution that reiterated the obligation of married couples to use birth control. According to Article 49, "Both husband and wife have the duty to practice family planning."142

To eliminate any possible confusion about the meaning of these laws, policy statements have explained that they mean family planning practice is mandatory. For example, in 1983 Ningxia Province emphasized, "During family planning propaganda month [January 1983], Ningxia extensively mobilized the masses and achieved very good results. This enabled people to realize that the practice of family planning is state policy and that it is imperative."143 The same year, China’s most populous province, Sichuan, confirmed: "Through legislation, it can be made even more explicit to the broad body of cadres and masses that implementing planned parenthood is not an expendient measure but that it is a principle stipulated by the laws of the nation and that it is a legal duty that the citizens must bear to the state."144

The Constitution and Marriage Law are still in effect. Their requirement that couples practice family planning has not been rescinded, nor has its meaning or interpretation been changed. In Chinese sources, the statement that family planning is a "basic national policy" refers to the national requirement that couples practice birth control. For example, this 1986 Yunnan provincial broadcast reconfirmed the national policy as follows:

Study and implement the spirit of the National Conference of Party Delegates and get a ceaseless grasp of planned parenthood work in Yunnan. Emphasis must be laid on propaganda regarding three things that are unchanged: planned parenthood as a basic national policy; the great goal of holding the country’s population to about 1.2 billion at the end of the century; and the guiding principle of advocating that each couple should have only one child.145

National limits on the number of children per couple

China’s national government sets a limit on the number of children couples may have. In 1977 and 1978 the policy stated that urban and rural couples
must stop at two children. Since the beginning of 1979, national policy has been that every couple must stop at one child unless given explicit permission by local officials to bear a second. In March 1982, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council jointly issued a directive clarifying birth restrictions nationwide:

Among government cadres, workers, and urban residents, each couple should have only a single child with the exception of those who for special reasons have obtained permission to have more than one child. In rural areas, each couple should limit themselves to a single child, but some couples may be given permission to have a second child if their requests are justified. No one is allowed to have a third child, no matter what.\textsuperscript{146}

Press commentary softened these requirements for China’s minority groups, constituting 7 percent of the total population, who in general had not been subjected to the family planning program until the introduction of the one-child policy: “Although the policy toward the national minorities may be appropriately relaxed according to actual situations, family planning must also be encouraged among the national minorities.”\textsuperscript{147}

Not only does the government tell people that they may bear only one child, or sometimes two, but also China is unique in that every birth, at least in theory, falls into one of two categories: (1) approved and included in the local government’s birth plan, or (2) forbidden and outside the official birth plan. When a couple applies for permission to have a child, and permission is granted, they are supposed to receive a card certifying that the birth is approved. This card may have to be shown when the woman seeks prenatal care, when she enters a hospital for the birth, or when she seeks postnatal benefits. While urban areas appear to monitor such procedures closely, in many rural areas the whole system is much looser and the government is able to exert much less control.

How can it be that China has a compulsory one-child, two-at-the-most (three-at-the-most for some ethnic minorities) policy if the Chinese continue having millions of unauthorized second births as well as millions of third and higher order births? The most important reason is that China’s network of family planning workers and other officials is not universally pervasive and intrusive.

In urban and many rural areas, women who have not been sterilized and who are still considered fecund are monitored quarterly or even monthly, to see that they are not pregnant and that their IUD is in place or they are using another effective birth control method. In such localities, unauthorized pregnancies are detected early, and the authorities immediately apply severe economic, political, and personal pressure on the couple. Only rarely can someone succeed in carrying a forbidden pregnancy to term under these conditions. Where obedience to the regulations is assured and complete,
China no longer carries out crash campaigns to force sterilizations, abortions, or IUD use because there is no perceived need to do so.

Many cities report almost total compliance with official family planning policies. For example, the city of Tianjin reported that in 1986, about 97 percent of births were officially planned, only 2 percent of all births were unauthorized second births, and 0.2 percent were third or higher order births. The city of Shenyang in Liaoning Province reported achieving 99.76 percent of its family planning targets in 1987; there were 1,000 fewer births than in the official plan that year. In localities such as these, China’s program of compulsory family planning and the one-child (or, for some couples, two-child) limit is working as the government wants it to work.

But many other cities and provinces have been far less successful in enforcing fertility limitation, despite their efforts to follow national instructions. Furthermore, from county to county within a given province, there is a great range in family planning delivery systems from highly effective to barely functioning. Gansu Province reported in 1986: “Family planning work is in a backward state in one-third of our counties.” The populous province of Hunan reported great variation among rural areas:

Hunan’s family planning work is still developing unevenly. Even though it is commendable that Li County with a population of 830,000 persons does not have one excessive birth in this year and that the natural population increase rate of the entire Changde Prefecture for 1985 is 5.06 per thousand, the province still has about 40 percent of its area where family planning is backward, and Party committee and government leadership over family planning is lax in some locations. These must arouse our attention to a great degree.

In many rural and remote areas of China, the family planning program has never been very effective. For instance, as of 1981, 28 provinces of China (all provinces, excluding Tibet) had total fertility rates ranging from only 1.32 births per woman to as high as 4.36 births. Reported contraceptive prevalence rates ranged from 88 percent of married women of reproductive age practicing birth control down to 54 percent.

Another reason why many second and third parity births occur in spite of the compulsory one-child (or for some couples two-child) limit is data problems. In some places, people manage to have unauthorized births, but they have no incentive to register the child’s birth because they will gain nothing and they know that penalties are likely to follow. Local cadres have also been known to falsify birth data before reporting to higher authorities in order to appear successful.

Compilations that include underreporting by households or by officials result in faulty family planning service statistics. When local birth and parity statistics are incorrect, higher levels of government may be unaware just
how far the local areas are deviating from the top-down demands. An example of this problem was reported from Ningxia in 1987: “Aside from large-scale sample surveys, it is impossible to obtain accurate statistics at present. One thing is sure: Currently, the seriousness of population increase far outstrips the seriousness indicated by the statistical figures.”

The one-child pledge

The one-child policy, introduced in 1979, included the innovation of the one-child pledge. Those who already have one child are eligible to sign this pledge and receive a single-child certificate that is supposed to entitle the signatories to certain financial rewards. Apparently in some places couples have a choice whether or not to sign this pledge, while in other areas there has been a universal requirement to sign it. By the end of 1983, in China as a whole 24.77 million couples had reportedly signed the one-child pledge; they constituted 71.8 percent of the 34.49 million couples with one child. The number of couples with one child who had signed the pledge increased to 28.17 million by yearend 1984, and then declined to “over 24 million” by late 1986. We do not know what proportion of couples with one child these numbers represent. The decline in the number of signatories occurred when national and provincial policies were loosened to allow more second births in rural areas. Those couples who signed the one-child pledge, then later had a second child whether approved or not, are probably no longer listed as signatories.

Required contraceptive methods

The government not only tells Chinese couples that they must practice birth control; it often tells them what type of contraceptive method they must use. During 1979 and in subsequent years, in some urban areas and provinces, women pregnant with a second or higher order child were required to abort the pregnancies. Instances of mandatory sterilization were also reported. As shown in Table 2, the first year of the one-child program (1979) registered a surge in the numbers of induced abortions and tubal ligations performed in comparison to earlier years. In every year beginning in 1979 for which data have been reported, at least 7.8 million abortions have been performed nationwide, in contrast to around 5 million each year before 1979.

The policy of requiring specific contraceptive measures for couples in different demographic circumstances originally became national in scope when the government announced in late 1982 that women with one child must use an IUD, those couples with two children must have one partner sterilized, and those with unauthorized pregnancies must undergo abortion. Since then, some localities and provinces have claimed that they are
Table 2 Birth control operations in China, 1971-86

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total operations*</th>
<th>IUD insertions</th>
<th>IUD removals</th>
<th>Vasectomies</th>
<th>Tubal ligations</th>
<th>Induced abortions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>13,051,123b</td>
<td>6,172,889</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>1,223,480</td>
<td>1,744,644</td>
<td>3,910,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>18,690,446</td>
<td>9,220,297</td>
<td>853,625</td>
<td>1,115,822</td>
<td>2,087,160</td>
<td>4,813,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>25,075,557</td>
<td>13,949,569</td>
<td>1,126,756</td>
<td>1,933,210</td>
<td>2,955,617</td>
<td>5,110,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>22,638,229</td>
<td>12,579,886</td>
<td>1,352,787</td>
<td>1,445,251</td>
<td>2,275,741</td>
<td>4,984,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>29,462,861</td>
<td>16,743,693</td>
<td>1,702,213</td>
<td>2,652,653</td>
<td>3,280,042</td>
<td>5,084,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>22,385,435</td>
<td>11,626,510</td>
<td>1,812,590</td>
<td>1,495,540</td>
<td>2,707,849</td>
<td>4,742,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>25,539,086</td>
<td>12,974,313</td>
<td>1,941,880</td>
<td>2,616,876</td>
<td>2,776,448</td>
<td>5,229,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>21,720,096</td>
<td>10,962,517</td>
<td>2,087,420</td>
<td>767,542</td>
<td>2,511,413</td>
<td>5,391,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>30,581,114</td>
<td>13,472,392</td>
<td>2,288,670</td>
<td>1,673,947</td>
<td>5,289,518</td>
<td>7,856,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>28,628,437</td>
<td>11,491,871</td>
<td>2,403,408</td>
<td>1,363,508</td>
<td>3,842,006</td>
<td>9,527,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>22,760,305</td>
<td>10,344,537</td>
<td>1,513,376</td>
<td>649,476</td>
<td>1,555,971</td>
<td>8,696,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>33,702,389</td>
<td>14,069,161</td>
<td>2,056,671</td>
<td>1,230,967</td>
<td>3,925,927</td>
<td>12,419,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>58,205,572</td>
<td>17,755,736</td>
<td>5,323,354</td>
<td>4,359,261</td>
<td>16,398,378</td>
<td>14,371,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>31,734,864</td>
<td>11,751,146</td>
<td>4,383,129</td>
<td>1,293,286</td>
<td>5,417,163</td>
<td>8,890,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>28,470,000</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>11,580,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NR = not reported.

* Sum of IUD insertions, IUD removals, vasectomies, tubal ligations, and induced abortions.

b Excluding IUD removals.

SOURCES: Data for 1971 through 1984 were reported in Public Health Yearbook of China Compilor Committee, Public Health Yearbook of China 1985 (Beijing: People’s Public Health Publishing House, 1986, p. 57). The total number of operations in 1986 was reported by Yan Renying, “Family planning promotes health care work for women and children” (in Chinese), China Population, 23 October 1987, p. 3. The number of abortions in 1986 was reported in “Family planning head admits ‘coercive activities,’” in FBIS, No. 130, 8 July 1987, p. K1.

Flexible about what technique is used as long as it prevents births. Others, however, have continued to echo the 1982 guidelines by insisting that women of childbearing age “who have already given birth to a child must be mobilized to be fitted with IUDs”; that “either the husband or the wife of a couple who has two or more children should be sterilized”; or that “when pregnancies are discovered, remedial measures [abortion] must be taken promptly.”

Table 2 also documents the extraordinary numbers of tubal ligations, vasectomies, IUD insertions, and abortions carried out in 1983, the peak year of compulsion in the family planning program. In that year, the number of IUD insertions and abortions peaked nationwide, and the number of sterilizations increased to 20.8 million from 5.1 million in 1982.

It is no accident, then, that by the end of 1983, 50 percent of all couples practicing contraception in China had the wife or husband sterilized, 41 percent of contraceptive couples were using the IUD, and only 9 percent were using other methods. More recent data on the contraceptive mix in China show very little change: by yearend 1985, 51 percent of contraceptive couples used sterilization; 39 percent used IUDs; and 10 percent used other...
methods.\textsuperscript{161} There is no reason to expect a major shift from this pattern to have occurred since 1985.

In addition to telling couples what type of contraceptive method to use, the government has also made it a crime to remove an IUD without official permission. The crime of "illegal IUD removal" appears to be unique to China. Elsewhere in the world, a woman would not be required to have an IUD inserted when she did not want it, and she would be able to have it removed legally by a physician or paramedic upon request. In China, those who provide the illegal service of removing IUDs are considered criminals and are sometimes imprisoned.\textsuperscript{162} Of course there are also legal IUD removals, as shown in Table 2. IUDs may be removed for medical reasons, such as pain or excessive bleeding, or because the couple has received permission to have a second child, or prior to required or voluntary tubal ligation surgery.

\section*{Summary}

This article has documented the recent trends in Chinese policy concerning the control of fertility, emphasizing the period from 1986 through the first three months of 1988. There have been changes in the leadership of China’s family planning program and fluctuations in the degree of compulsion applied to couples. Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s the program has remained one whose regulations and guidelines are decided at the national level and then prescribed to provincial and lower levels of government and ultimately to couples of childbearing age, with only small variations allowed. Cadres and family planning workers are held to their difficult, often unpopular tasks by "cadre work responsibility" or "goal management" systems that include financial penalties and reprimands for those who fail to prevent unauthorized births. Chinese couples are given little choice about whether they practice family planning, how many children they have, when they have the allowed birth or births, whether or not to sign family planning contracts, or what form of birth control to use.

In urban areas and throughout some provinces, surveillance of women of childbearing ages is coupled with strong threats and penalties for attempted noncompliance. In these places, almost complete conformity with birth restrictions is assured. In many rural areas of numerous provinces, on the other hand, especially where the family planning network is weak, and among China’s floating population, many couples still succeed or have a chance to succeed in marrying early and having unauthorized first births, or in bearing second or higher parity children outside the official plan. In "backward" areas and among certain subpopulations, China’s provinces continue to implement mass mobilization or "high tide" campaigns to carry out required abortions, sterilizations, and IUD insertions.

At present the Chinese government continues to hold to the ambitious
goal of keeping the country’s population size to about 1.2 billion by the year 2000. But given the large number of women who will enter the prime childbearing ages during the next decade, the attainment of this goal will require even more intensified efforts in family planning. As recent policy developments reviewed in this article indicate, the national and provincial governments are in the process of further tightening up on family planning in order to achieve the country’s goal.

Notes

This article is a shortened version of "Family planning in China: Recent trends," Center for International Research, US Bureau of the Census Staff Paper no. 40. Readers interested in the full text should contact the authors.


4 In April 1987 it was estimated that 30 percent of localities were lagging behind in family planning work. Lu Mu, “Our country’s birth rate increased last year; it is imperative to strictly control the birth rate,” People’s Daily, 11 April 1987, in FBIS, No. 073, 16 April 1987, p. K3.

5 Gao Ping, “There is no change in the family planning policy” (in Chinese), Semi-Monthly Forum, No. 6, 25 March 1987, pp. 7–9.


10 Commentator, “To let the entire society be concerned and to collaborate with

11 “To resolutely correct the loosening of family planning work and the situation of letting it take its natural course must be seen in action” (in Chinese), China Population, 4 September 1987, editorial, p. 1.


The “third upsurge of population growth” alluded to by Wang Wei follows those of the 1950s and the 1960s.


The figure of 21.58 million births for 1986 is probably based on the birth registration system and is low in comparison to the 22.0 million births implied by the official 1986 birth rate derived from the State Statistical Bureau’s annual survey of population change.


22 Ai Xiao, cited in note 20, pp. 44–47.


25 Liu Jingzhi, “Experts concerned are not optimistic about China’s population situation, and think that interference by officials is an important reason why birth rate has risen again,” Bright Daily, 6 March 1988, in FBIS, No. 053, 18 March 1988, p. 14.


30 Gao Ping, cited in note 5, pp. 7–9.


32 Taiyuan Shanxi Provincial Service, in Chinese, 22 March 1986, station commentary, “Continue to get a tighter grasp of
planned parenthood work.” in JPRS, No. JPRS-CEA-86-040, 11 April 1986, p. 76.


34 “To have overall control of the situation by carrying out reforms and to resolutely accomplish the tasks of this year” (in Chinese), China Population, 29 January 1988, pp. 1–2.


39 Ibid., pp. 77–83.

40 Huang Jialiang and Long Zhongmin, “Five major groups in Sichuan went deep into the basic level to check on work” (in Chinese), China Population, 9 October 1987, p. 2.


45 Ai Xiao, cited in note 20, p. 44.

46 Xining Qinghai Provincial Service, in Chinese, 26 April 1987, “Family planning
work must be grasped continuously without relaxation.’” in JPRS, No. JPRS-CEA-87-009, 18 June 1987, pp. 93–94.


62 Wan Li, “Family planning work should be brought into the orbit of construction of socialist spiritual civilization,” speech presented at the National Conference to Commend Advanced Collectives and Individuals in Implementing Family Planning Programs, mimeographed, Beijing, 1 March 1986.


67 “To have overall control of the situation by carrying out reforms and to resolutely accomplish the tasks of this year” (in Chinese), China Population, 29 January 1988, pp. 1–2.

68 “Henan joint circular on planned parenthood,” cited in note 33, p. 33.


71 “To have overall control of the situation . . . .”, cited in note 67, p. 1–2.

72 Jiang Ying and Song Yuanjie, “To correctly solve Heilongjiang’s rural population problems to promote a stable development of the rural economy” (in Chinese), *China Population*, 4 January 1988, p. 3.

73 Ai Xiao, cited in note 20, pp. 44–47.


76 For documentation of the cadre work responsibility system, see ibid., pp. 726–727; and Banister, *China’s Changing Population*, cited in note 1, pp. 198–199.

77 Interview conducted by Judith Banister at the US Bureau of the Census, April 1987.

78 Ibid.


81 “Statement by Mr. Chang Chongxuan . . . .”, cited in note 13, p. 5.


88 Cheng Hong, “Family size increasing in some provinces,” *China Daily*, 2 February 1988, p. 3.


93 “Stabilize the birth policies, control population growth,” *Shaanxi Daily*, 25 Feb-

95 “To have overall control of the situation . . . .”, cited in note 67, pp. 1–2.
97 “Shandong officials cited on family planning work,” cited in note 89, p. 37.
113 “Hebei’s Xing attends birth control conference,” cited in note 85, p. 23.
115 “On managing family planning work among people on the move.” cited in note 90, p. 3.
116 Shi Hailong, “To attach importance to having control over family planning of the floating population—the practice of Qingdao Municipality” (in Chinese), China Population, 18 December 1987, p. 3.

123 Ibid., pp. 8–9.

124 Gong Yan, “Director of the State Statistical Bureau says that China’s population increased by 3 million last year,” Hong Kong Ming Pao, 9 April 1987, p. 5, in JPRS. No. 047, 24 May 1987, pp. 77–78.


154 Some instances of required signatures on one-child pledges are documented in Banister, *China’s Changing Population*, cited in note 1, p. 203.


158 The *PRC State Council Bulletin* of 12 February 1983 published a circular that had been issued on 6 December 1982 by the PRC State Council and the State Family Planning Commission jointly with eight other national organizations and government ministries. This is discussed in Banister, “Family planning and fertility in China,” cited in note 137, pp. 153–154.


161 Data from the State Family Planning Commission reported in Quan-He Yang and Terence H. Hull, “High production or low reproduction? Conflicts between China’s reforms and population planning,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Chicago, 30 April–2 May 1987, Table 2.