



Children are the foundation of our society and culture, and the healthy development of children is the basis for positive human and social development. In recent years, great improvements have been made in the survival and development of China's children, but great internal disparities remain. Factors such as unbalanced regional development, rapid socioeconomic transformation, and mass internal migration have resulted in survival and development challenges for many children, and the overall situation of child development in China should be further promoted and improved. This publication describes and analyzes the status of China's child population, based on data from the 2010 Census and previous Censuses. The Census is a rich source of basic data and information on the child population and its characteristics by sub-groups, and analysis of Census data can support enhanced understanding of and more evidence-based decision making on issues affecting children.

#### Definitions:

**Children:** According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are persons below 18 years of age, i.e. persons aged 0-17 years.

**Development stages:** In this publication, child development is divided into five stages, based on age range: infant stage (0-2 years), pre-primary stage (3-5 years), primary school stage (6-11 years), junior secondary stage (12-14 years) and senior secondary stage (15-17 years).

**Migrant children:** Migrant children refer to those members of the migrant population who are aged 0-17 years. The migrant population refers to persons whose place of residence is different from the location (e.g. town/township or street committee) of their household registration (*hukou*), and who have left the location of their household registration for more than six months. It excludes the population whose current place of residence is different from that of their *hukou* registration, but is within the same city-level administration.

**Left-behind children:** Left-behind children refer to children who live in their original domicile, but do not live together with their parents, as either one parent or both parents have migrated. Rural left-behind children refer to left-behind children whose household registration locations are in rural areas.

**Poverty-stricken area:** Poverty-stricken areas include the original 592 "key poverty counties" identified by the Government of China for focused poverty alleviation efforts, and the 680 counties that form the 14 "poverty blocks" (11 blocks, along with the Tibet Autonomous Region, ethnically Tibetan regions in four provinces, and South Xinjiang), as defined in the new *Outline for Development-oriented Poverty Reduction for China's Rural Areas (2011-2020)*. There is an overlap of 440 counties between the original list of "key poverty counties," and the updated "poverty blocks." Therefore, there are 832 distinct counties categorized as "poverty-stricken areas."

**Sex ratio:** Sex ratio refers to the ratio of males to females in the population, and is an important indicator of sex composition. It is usually expressed as the number of males corresponding to every 100 females.

**Sex ratio at birth:** Sex ratio at birth refers to the number of live male births corresponding to every 100 live female births. In the absence of intervention, sex ratio at birth lies between 103 and 107.

**Failure to receive or complete compulsory education:** According to the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China promulgated in 1986, children of school age are subject to nine years of compulsory education. In this publication, children who fail to receive or complete compulsory education include those who have never been to school, those who have graduated from primary school only, and those who have dropped out of primary school or junior secondary school.

#### **Data Sources:**

The data in this publication mainly come from the Sixth Population Census conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in 2010, as well as from previous censuses and inter-census surveys. China conducts a national census once every ten years, with six censuses conducted to date, in 1953, 1964, 1982, 1990, 2000 and 2010. China conducts an inter-census population survey every 10 years in years ending in "5", with a sampling fraction of 1% (called One Percent Population Sample Survey). The most recent inter-census survey was conducted in 2005.

China's population census is characterized by some under-reporting of young children. In this publication, with the exception of infant mortality rate, which have been adjusted for underreporting, all other figures are sourced from data directly reported from the census. The internationally comparable estimates included in this publication come from *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision* issued by the UNDESA/Population Division, with some differences from China's census data.

This publication has been developed on the basis of research projects on the Sixth National Census conducted by Professor Chen Wei (Renmin University), Professor Duan Chengrong (Renmin University) and Researcher Wang Guangzhou (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences). These three research projects received the technical and financial support of the NBS/UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Data Project.

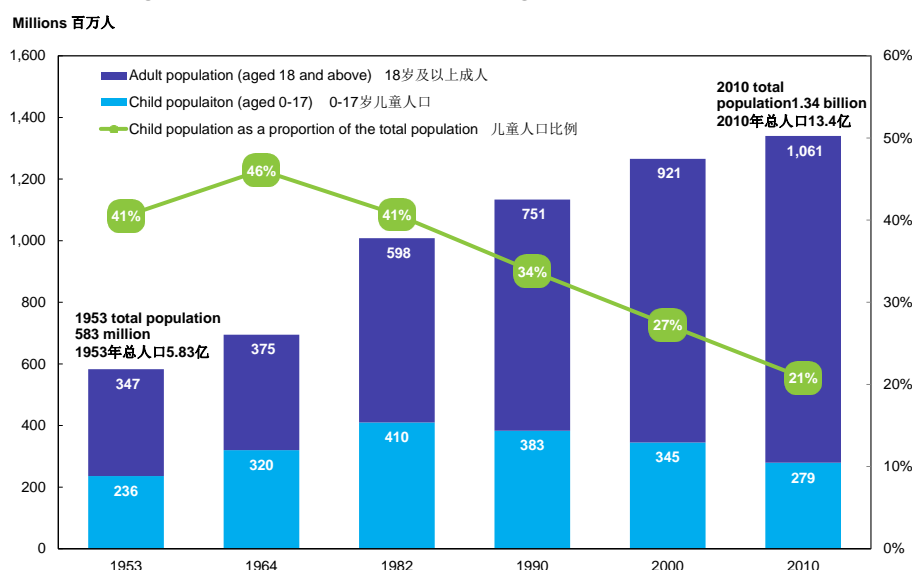
## I. Changes in the size of the child population – child population decreases and population ageing accelerates since the 1980s

### China

According to data from the Sixth National Census, the child population aged 0-17 in China was 279 million in 2010, accounting for 21% of the total national population. With rapid economic development and demographic transition, especially with sustained low birth rates since the implementation of the family planning policy in late 1970s, the size of China's child population has continually declined since the 1980s, and has declined even more significantly in the past 10 years (Figure 1).

Over the past 60 years in China, total population has grown much faster than the child population, leading to an increasingly aged population. Population pyramids plotted by age and sex on the basis of census data clearly show the changes in the population structure and the ageing trend over the past 60 years (Appendix 1).

**Figure 1: Size of child population aged 0-17, China, 1953-2010**

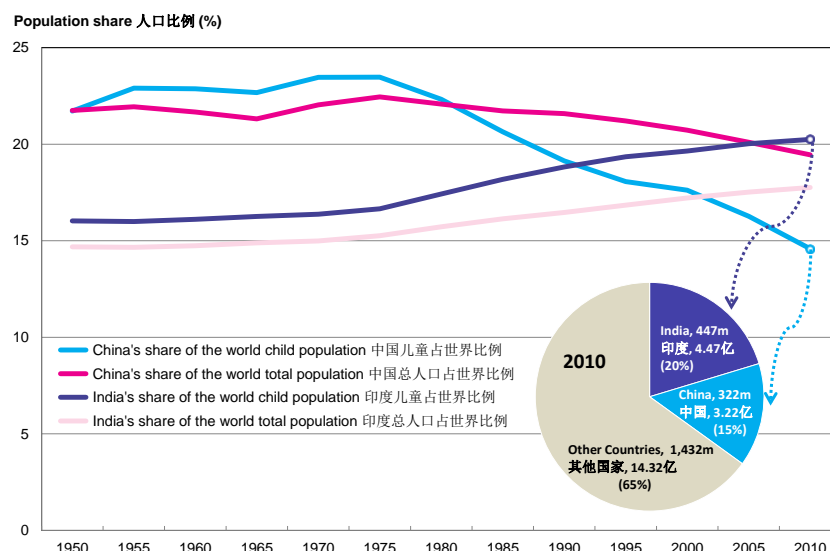


Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, 1953, 1964, 1982, 1990, 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses

### The world

According to the internationally comparable estimates reported in the UN's *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, both global total population and global child population aged 0-17 have grown rapidly over the past 60 years. The total population of the world has nearly trebled, increasing from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 6.9 billion in 2010. The child population more than doubled from 1 billion in 1950 to 2.2 billion in 2010. Since the 1970s, due to the size of China's population, and the influence of Chinese demographic trends on the global demographic landscape, the world's child population began to grow less rapidly than the total population.

**Figure 2: China and India's share of the world's child population, 1950-2010**

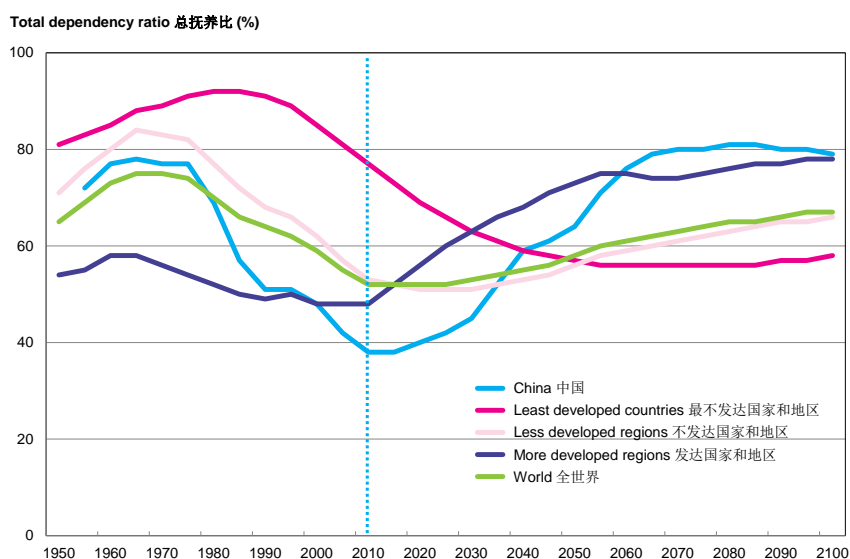


Source: UNDESA/Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, extended CD-Rom

In 2010, China remained the world's most populous country, accounting for 20% of the total population of the world, but China's child population ranked second in the world, only accounting for 15% of the global child population. China's child population as a proportion of global child population began to drop progressively after 1980. In 2010, China's total population was 117 million more than that of India, but its child population was 125 million less than that of India. India became the country with the largest child population in the world in 1991, when its child population exceeded that of China for the first time (Figure 2).

According to the UN's *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, the child dependency ratio in China (ratio of the population aged 0-14 to the population aged 15-64) dropped by half between 1950 and 2010. China is now one of the countries with the lowest child dependency ratios in the world. By contrast, the old-age dependency ratio in China (ratio of the population aged 65 or above to the population aged 15-64) kept rising. With the further transformation and accelerated ageing of the population structure, the total dependency ratio in China is estimated to reach 80% in the next 60 years (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Total dependency ratio in China and the world, actual and projected, 1950-2100**



Source: UNDESA/Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, extended CD-Rom

## II. Composition of child population – including children affected by migration, children in poverty-stricken areas and children without registered residence

### Composition of total child population

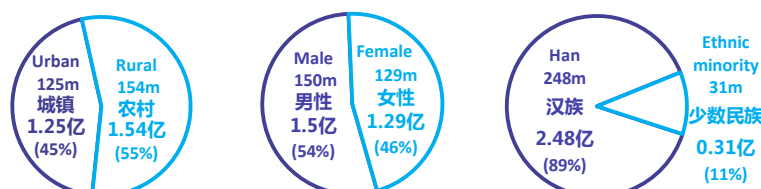
By sex: There were 150 million males, accounting for 54%, and 129 million females, accounting for 46% of the child population in 2010. The overall sex ratio of the child population was 116 males for every 100 females, with 21 million more male children than female children.

By ethnicity: There were 248 million children of the Han ethnic group, accounting for 89%, and 31 million children of ethnic minority groups, accounting for 11% of the child population.

By age: There were 90.26 million children in the preschool stage (0-5 years), 131 million children in the compulsory education stage (6-14 years) and 57.59 million children in the senior secondary stage (15-17 years) in 2010. The changes in the size of the child population at different developmental stages have great implications for educational infrastructure, human resources and planning.

By urban-rural residence: There were 125 million children in urban areas, accounting for 45%, and 154 million children in rural areas, accounting for 55% of the child population. The proportion of the child population that is urban was significantly lower than the national rate of 50% for the total population. This gap reflects differences in birth levels in urban and rural areas, as well as the large number of left-behind children in rural areas as a result of migrating parents.

**Figure 4: Composition of child population in China, 2010**



Age 年龄	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total 0-17岁 合计
Level of education 教育阶段	0-2 years 幼儿			Pre- primary 学前教育			Primary 小学				Junior Secondary 初中				Senior Secondary 高中				
Number of children (millions) 儿童人数 (百万人)	45.06			45.20			84.54				46.52				57.59				278.91
Number of migrant children (millions) 流动儿童人数 (百万人)	3.86			5.12			9.29				4.64				12.90				35.81
Number of rural left-behind children (millions) 农村留守儿童人数 (百万人)	11.72			11.70			19.53				9.95				8.13				61.03

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Population Census

### Children affected by migration<sup>1</sup> – over 100 million children nationwide were affected by migration

In 2010, the number of migrant children aged 0-17 was 35.81 million, and the number of left-behind children aged 0-17 was 69.73 million. Adding these two groups together, the total number of children affected by migration exceeded 100 million, accounting for 38% of the total child population in China. That is, about 4 out of every 10 children in China were directly affected by migration. The number of migrant children and left-behind children increased significantly compared to 2000 and 2005 (Figure 5), while the number of migrant children increased more rapidly during the period of 2005-2010 and the number of left-behind children tended to become stable.

The vast majority of children affected by migration came from or lived in rural areas. Of the 35.81 million migrant children, 80.4% of them were registered with “agricultural” residences (i.e. with agricultural *hukou*). Thus, it is estimated that there were some 28.77 million migrant children living away from their rural place of registration. Of all the left-behind children nationwide, 61.03 million of them were in rural areas<sup>2</sup>, accounting for 87.5% of all left-behind children and 40% of all rural children.

Nationally, the proportion of migrant children among urban children was 26.3% on average, which means that 1 out of every 4 children in urban areas was a migrant child.

The Census found that, somewhat contrary to popular conception, most of the migrant children had lived and studied in the places to which they had migrated for a long time, with duration of migration averaging 3.7 years. Of the migrant children aged 7-14, one third had a migration time (i.e. had lived in the receiving area) exceeding 6 years.

Children affected by migration face a series of challenges to their development. Migrant children lose access to traditional and community support systems, and are confronted with difficulties and discrimination in terms of urban schooling, medical treatment, social security and other aspects. As for left-behind children, with one or both parents working away from home, it is difficult for them to receive emotional support and help with studies from their families, which can be detrimental to their physical, emotional and mental health. These challenges require adequate social and policy responses.

It should be noted that many migrant children of schooling age are confronted with challenges to quality education. Compared to a few years ago, the number of preschool-aged migrant children has increased greatly, but it is difficult for migrant children to enroll in kindergartens in big cities. Meanwhile, some 2.9% of migrant children of compulsory education age failed to receive compulsory education as required. The “Two Priorities”<sup>3</sup> policy needs to be further implemented. The number of inter-provincial migrant children who face the problem of sitting university entrance examinations in places other than their registered residence reached about 300,000 annually, with 27.8% of these children in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.<sup>4</sup> In 2010, some 36% of migrant children were between 15-17 years of age. Most of them attended school, but quite a few of them abandoned senior secondary education to become new-generation migrant workers and face the challenges of the migrant population, including the issue of social exclusion. All of these challenges need to be met with positive and appropriate solutions.

<sup>1</sup> For more information about children affected by migration, refer to *Part IV. Family structure and child-rearing*, and *Part VI: Status of child education* of this publication.

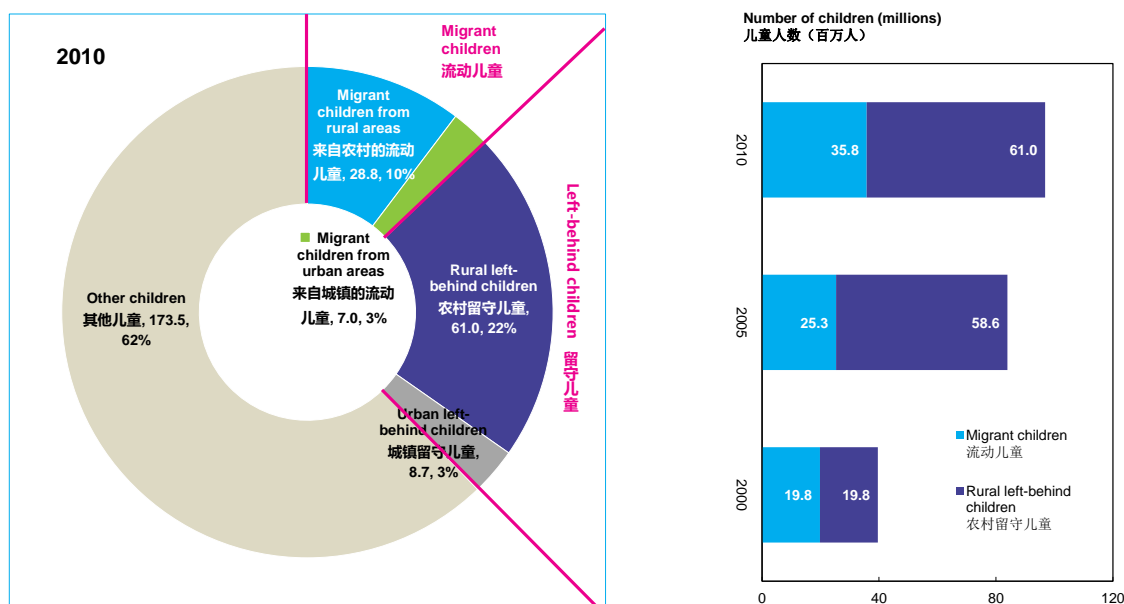
<sup>2</sup> Compared to urban left-behind children, rural left-behind children face more serious problems. Rural children are almost left behind because their parents have migrated for work. In contrast, urban children are left behind for more diversified reasons, such as parents’ job transfer, geographic distribution of urban education resources and other factors. In most discussions of “left-behind children,” the reference is to left-behind children living in rural areas, and this is the group that this publication also focuses on.

<sup>3</sup> In recent years, with the growing number of migrant workers, the issue of education for their children has become prominent. The revised *Compulsory Education Law* of 2006 makes special provisions to ensure that children of migrant workers receive equal access to nine-year basic education. The *National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* requires “the governments of the receiving cities to bear the major responsibilities of providing basic education for migrant children, primarily by accommodating them in public schools” (“Two Priorities”).

<sup>4</sup> The number of inter-provincial migrant children who face the problem of sitting university entrance examinations in places other than their registered residence is estimated based on multiple sources other than Population Census data.



**Figure 5: Number and composition of migrant and left-behind children, 2000, 2005 and 2010**

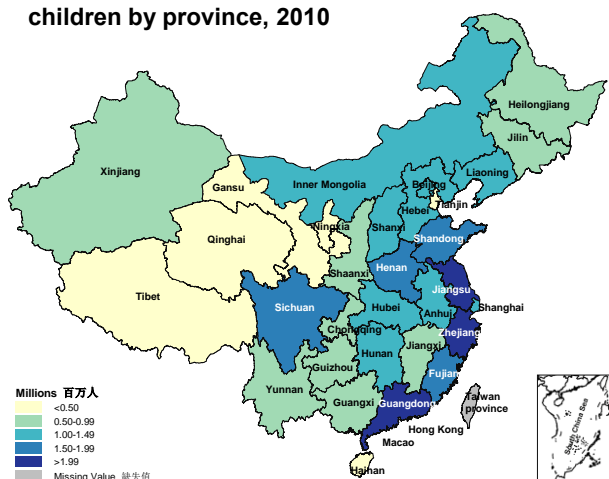


Note : In the doughnut chart the first number refers to the child population in millions; the second refers to its share of the total child population.

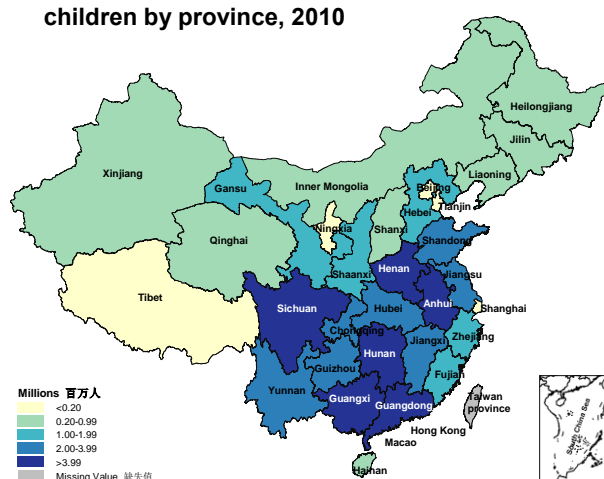
Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses; 2005 One Percent Population Sample Survey

In 2010, there were seven major provinces to which a total of 16.4 million migrant children had migrated (more than 1.5 million to each province), namely Guangdong, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Shandong, Henan and Fujian. The number of migrant children in these provinces accounted for about half of all migrant children nationwide (46%). The places with the highest proportions of migrant children among the total local child population included Zhejiang, Shanghai and Beijing, which have high levels of urbanization and economic development; as well as some central and western provinces and regions such as Ningxia, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Qinghai and Guizhou. In terms of distance and place of migration, 70% of migrant children migrated within their provinces of origin.

**Figure 6a: Number of migrant children by province, 2010**



**Figure 6b: Number of rural left-behind children by province, 2010**



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Population Census

Half of the rural left-behind children were located in six major labor-exporting provinces: Sichuan, Henan, Anhui, Guangdong, Hunan and Guangxi. The number of left-behind children in each of these six provinces was more than 4 million, accounting for more than 40% of the rural child population in each province. Other provinces with highly visible rural left-behind child populations are major labor-exporting areas such as Chongqing (66.5%), Jiangsu (51.6%) and Jiangxi (51.5%), where left-behind children accounted for more than half of the total rural child population in these provinces.

## Children in poverty-stricken areas – 25% of children nationwide lived in poverty-stricken areas

In 2010, the number of children living in poverty-stricken areas (832 counties in total, including “key poverty counties” and counties in “poverty blocks”) was estimated to be 70 million, accounting for about 25% of the child population nationwide. Of the children in poverty-stricken areas, a relatively low 24% lived in urban areas, compared to the national urbanization rate for children of 45%.

Child poverty is multi-dimensional. According to the 2010 census, children in poverty-stricken areas lagged behind other children in terms of health level, enrolment in or completion of compulsory education, and household water and sanitation conditions. In poverty-stricken areas, the mortality of children at each age was higher than the national average by 50% or more. In about half of the age groups, this figure was higher than the national average by 80% or more. About 5% of children in poverty-stricken areas failed to receive or complete compulsory education, which was higher than the national average by about 2 percentage points. In poverty-stricken areas, only 64% of children lived with both parents, which was lower than the national average by 6 percentage points. For children in poverty-stricken areas, household latrine coverage was 55% (compared to a national average of 71%) and piped water coverage rate was 40% (compared to a national average of 61%). In addition, the poverty-stricken counties had a higher proportion of left-behind children, and early marriage and early childbearing among young people aged 15-19 were relatively more prevalent.

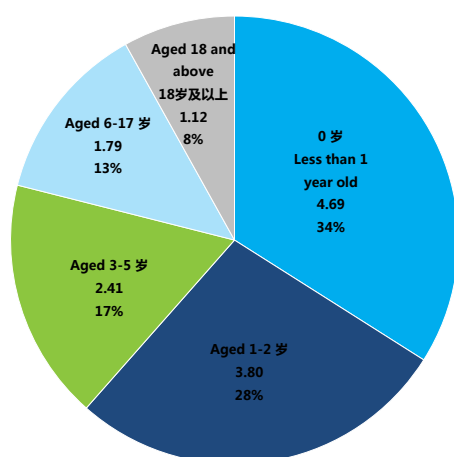
## Children without a registered residence – Youngest rural children a major concern

Estimation based on 2010 Census long-form data finds that some 13.8 million persons in China had no registered residence (also called “undetermined registered residence”), of which some 12.68 million (92%) were children aged 0-17 (Figure 7). The children without a registered residence (*hukou*) were mainly very young children, with children aged 0-5 representing 86% of the total children aged 0-17, of which children aged 0-2 accounting for 67%. Nearly 70% of children without registered residence lived in rural areas, higher than the national proportion of rural children by 15 percentage points.

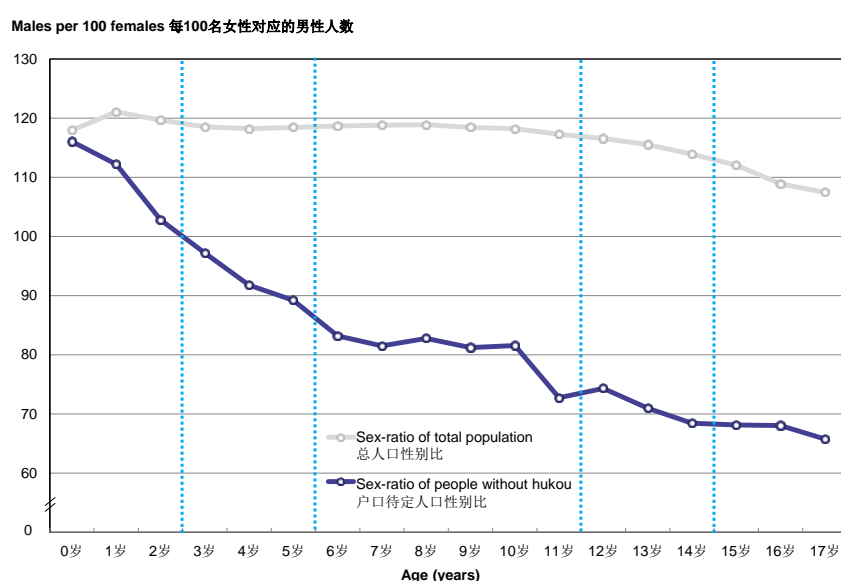
Children without registered residence included 6.44 million male children and 6.24 million female children. The sex ratio was 103, much less than the overall sex ratio for children aged 0-17 (116 males per 100 females). The sex ratio was 116 for children less than 1, and 112 for children between 1-2 years old, while lower than the corresponding age-specific sex ratio, was still notably high. In contrast, the sex ratio among children without registered residence was under 100 for children aged 3 and above, with the trend being that the older the children, the lower the sex ratio (Figure 7).

Based on the age- and sex-disaggregated data for children, most of the population without a registered residence appeared to be young children born outside of the family planning policy, who were not registered with a *hukou*. Boys accounted for a larger share of children without a *hukou* up until the age of 2 years. Among slightly older children, especially among school-aged children, girls were more likely than boys to have unregistered residence and thus more likely to face challenges in accessing public social services, including school and health care.

**Figure 7: Age structure and sex ratio of population without a registered residence (*hukou*), 2010**



Note : In the pie chart, the first number refers to the age-specific population, in millions, of people without *hukou*; the second refers to its share of the total number of people without *hukou*.



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Population Census

### III. Sex structure of children – skewed sex ratio at birth

#### Sex ratio of children aged 0-17

The sex ratio of boys to girls in China has continually increased over the past 30 years. From 1982 to 1990, the sex ratio of the child population rose from 106 to 108 males per 100 females, but was still within the global average range. After 1990, however, the sex ratio of the child population rose rapidly, surpassing this range, reaching 116 in 2010. In mainland China's 31 province-level regions, the sex ratio of the child population ranged from 105 to 128. Jiangxi had the highest ratio, while Hainan, Henan, Hubei and Anhui each exceeded 120. Only Tibet's child sex ratio, at 105, fell within the normal range (Appendix 2). Contributing to this acutely high sex ratio of males to females in the overall child population has been the continually rising sex ratio at birth over the past several decades.

#### Sex ratio at birth

Census data indicate that China's sex ratio at birth (SRB) began to exceed the global range in the 1980s, and has risen steadily since then, increasing from 109 in 1982 to 118 males born for every 100 females in 2010 (Figure 8a). China is now the country with the most severely imbalanced SRB in the world.

China's high SRB has the following characteristics: (1) SRB was higher in rural than urban areas, but the urban-rural gap has narrowed somewhat in recent years (Figure 8b). (2) SRB rose with birth order (Figure 8c). It should be noted that in the absence of sex selection practices, sex ratio remains constant across birth order. (3) The degree of imbalance in SRB differs across regions. In 2010, except for Xinjiang, Tibet and Beijing, all other provinces had a SRB exceeding 110. In Anhui, Fujian and Hainan, the SRB exceeded 125 (Figure 8d). (4) SRB was inversely correlated with the level of education received by women of childbearing age; the lower the education level of women of childbearing age, the higher the sex ratio of their newborns. In 2010, the sex ratio of newborns was above 125 among women of childbearing age with junior secondary education and below, 119 among those with senior secondary education, and 112 among those with tertiary education. (5) The SRB of ethnic minority groups was lower than that of the Han ethnic majority, but showed a similar trend of continual increase, albeit with a lag time of about ten years. SRB among ethnic minorities remained within the upper limit of the normal range until 1989, since which time it has continually increased, reaching 114 in 2010.

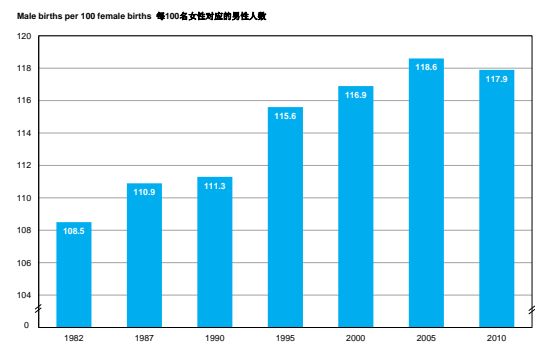
#### Causes and consequences of high sex ratio at birth

The direct cause of high SRB is son preference and corresponding sex selection practices. There are several indirect factors, including the influence of the family-planning policy, unequal social and family status of females, incomplete social security system, and widely available fetal sex determination technologies. These factors may have exacerbated male preference and the high sex ratio at birth, particularly in rural areas and certain provinces.

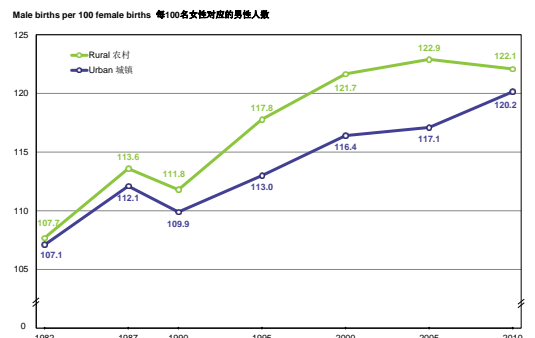
The abnormally high SRB and the considerable number of "missing women" in China highlights the extent to which girls are denied the right to life and reflects deep-seated sex discrimination that adversely affects girls' development, including fuelling trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence. This imbalance also has implications for the ability of men to find spouses, known as the "marriage squeeze" phenomenon, will have a far-reaching effect on future population development. In 2010, there were already 34 million fewer females than males in China. It is also estimated that over the next 40 years, the number of unmarried males aged 35-59 will rise from about 10 million in 2010 to about 23-33 million in 2050, mainly due to the imbalanced sex ratio at birth.

Figure 8: Sex ratio at birth\*

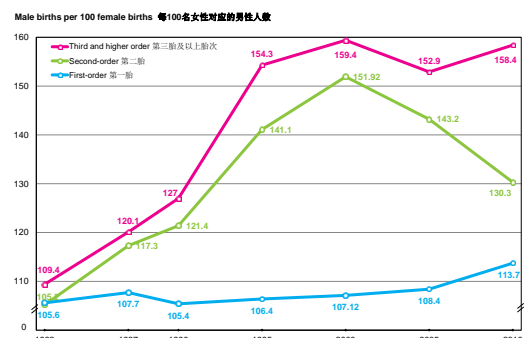
(8a) Sex ratio at birth, national, 1982-2010



(8b) Sex ratio at birth, urban and rural, 1982-2010



(8c) Sex ratio at birth by birth order, 1982-2010



(8d) Sex ratio at birth by province, 2010



Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, 1982, 1990, 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses; 1987, 1995 and 2005 One Percent Population Surveys

\*Note: National and provincial-level data are from the short-form of the Census, while data by urban-rural residence and by birth order are from the long-form of the Census.



#### IV. Family structure and child-rearing – diversification as a result of migration

In 2010, there were 400 million families in China, of which 185 million families (46%) had children aged 0-17. Families with only 1 child accounted for two-thirds of all families with children, while families with 2 children accounted for 27%, and families with 3 or more children accounted for the remaining 6.6%. In urban areas, more than three-fourths of families with children had only 1 child, while in rural areas, this proportion was less than 60%.

In terms of family structure, 70% of children lived with both parents, 16% of children lived with one parent, 8% lived with either one or both grandparents, 3.5% of children lived with siblings or alone, and about 3% of children lived with other relatives. The distribution of family structure was similar for boys and girls.

**Figure 9: Structure of children's families (%), by child's sex and migrant status, 2010**

	National 全国 (%)	Male 男性 (%)	Female 女性 (%)	Total number of children (millions) 儿童人口推算数 (百万人)	Number of rural left- behind children 其中：农村留守儿童 (百万人)
Total 合计	100	100	100	278.91	--
Living with both parents 和父母双方居住	69.7	69.9	69.5	194.46	--
Not living with both parents 不和父母双方居住	30.3	30.1	30.5	84.50	61.03
Living with father 和父亲居住	5.2	5.3	5.1	14.42	10.29
Living with mother 和母亲居住	10.7	10.6	10.9	29.91	22.21
Living with grandparents 和祖父母一起住	8.1	8.0	8.2	22.57	19.94
Living alone 单独居住	1.1	1.2	0.9	3.04	2.06
Living with siblings 和兄弟姐妹住	2.4	2.4	2.5	6.72	6.53
Others 其他	2.8	2.7	3.0	7.84	

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Population Census

Large-scale migration is the key factor behind variation in the structure of children's families. Based on long-form data from the 2010 Census, it is estimated that 30% of the child population, or 84.5 million children, did not live with both parents. While some children did not live with both parents due to various reasons such as divorce or parental death, migration was the most common reason for children not living with both parents. Children affected by migration include left-behind children with one parent or both parents working away from home, migrant children who migrated with one parent, and children who attended school or worked outside of their hometown and away from their families. The 61.03 million rural left-behind children accounted for the vast majority of children not living with both parents.

Half of the rural left-behind children (47%) did not live with either parent, as both parents had migrated from home. Some 70% of these children lived with grandparents, while most of the remainder lived with other relatives. 36% of rural left-behind children had migrant fathers and lived with only their mothers, while 17% of left-behind children had migrant mothers and lived with only their fathers.

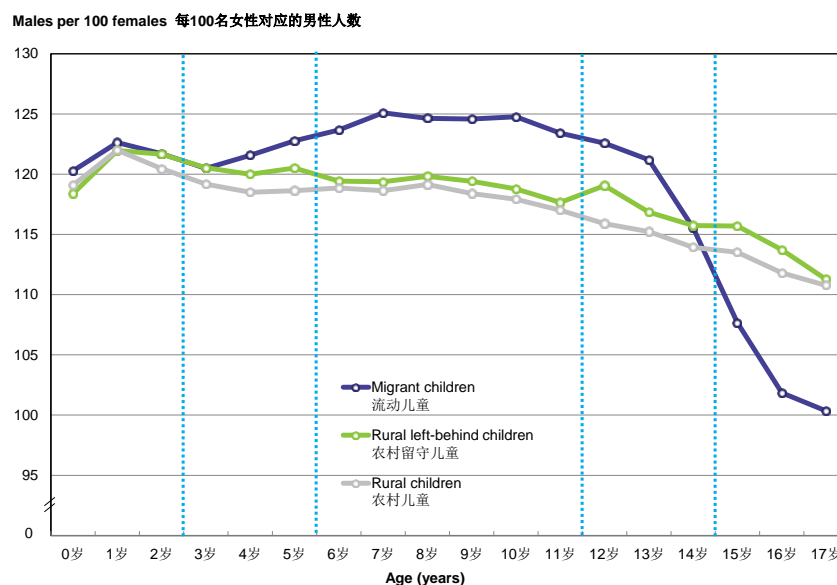
Grandparents are the main caregivers of left-behind children, especially younger left-behind children. One-third of rural left-behind children were taken care of by their grandparents after both parents migrated from home. One-fourth of children left behind by one migrant parent lived with the remaining parent and grandparents. The average age of these grandparents was 59 years, with about 90% of them reporting good health. However, these grandparents typically had limited schooling, with more than half receiving only primary-level education. 70% of the grandparents, in addition to taking care of their grandchildren, worked and were responsible for ensuring livelihood. Under such circumstances, it is difficult for left-behind children to receive adequate care, including for their health and studies.

It should be noted that more than 1% of children nationwide lived alone in 2010. While a small proportion of the total child population, this meant that there were 3.04 million children living alone, including 2.06 million rural left-behind children. The living standard and health and education status of these children is a cause for great concern.

The migrant population was somewhat more likely to bring male children than female children with them to their place of migration. At both the preschool stage and the compulsory education stage, the male to female sex ratio of migrant children was higher than that of left-behind children. The data indicate that at the preschool education age, and especially at the compulsory

education stage, boys are more likely to live with their migrant parents and benefit from urban education resources (Figure 10). Compared to children in the compulsory education stage, children aged 15-17 (i.e. in the senior secondary school stage), migrated for a broader range of reasons. Study and training (60%) was still the main reason for migration among this age group, applying to slightly more female children (61.7%) than male children (57.5%). Employment and trade (15%) was the second main reason for migration among this age group, applying to slightly less female children (14.2%) than male children (16.1%).

**Figure 10: Male to female sex ratio of migrant children and rural left-behind children, 2010**



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Population Census

Parental absence is detrimental to child development. In formulating and improving child and family policies, more attention needs to be paid to the survival and development of children who live alone or live with just one parent. More attention also needs to be paid to migrant and left-behind children, especially female children affected by migration.

## V. Child health status – notable decrease in infant mortality, relatively high child mortality in poverty-stricken and ethnic minority areas

With rapid economic development, continuous improvement of people's living standards and the progressive improvement of the medical security system, the average life expectancy of people in China has continuously increased, reaching 74.8 years in 2010. The increase in average life expectancy is the result of declining mortality at each age, with declining infant mortality playing a particularly important role.

In 2010, infant mortality rate was 13.93 deaths per 1,000 live births nationwide, dropping by more than half since 2000. Compared to the period 1990-2000, infant mortality in 2000-2010 not only continued to decline, but did so at a faster rate.

Statistical data over the years from countries around the world have shown that the mortality rate of baby girls is typically lower than that of baby boys. In contrast, the census data in China show that while infant mortality rate continues to decline, it was higher among girls than boys, indicating a relatively inferior living environment for infant girls in the past. The gap in female-male infant mortality rate has decreased from 9.8 in 2000 to 0.7 in 2010, indicating that survival conditions for female infants have improved significantly over the past ten years in China.

**Figure 11: Infant mortality rate by sex (deaths per 1,000 live births), 1990, 2000 and 2010**

Year 年份	Total 合计	Male 男性	Female 女性	Male-Female difference 男女之差
1990	32.9	32.4	33.5	-1.1
2000	28.4	23.9	33.7	-9.8
2010	13.9	13.6	14.3	-0.7

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, 1990, 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses;  
available at [http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/t20120921\\_402838652.htm](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/t20120921_402838652.htm)

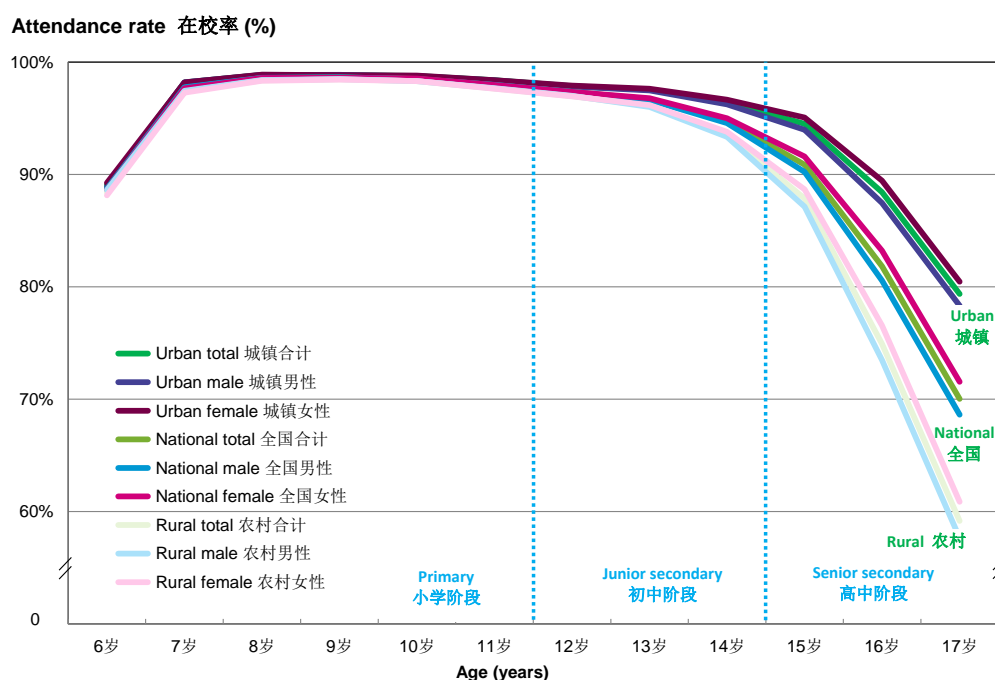
Census data show that disparities in child mortality by urban-rural residence and ethnicity have also decreased over time. However, in some deprived rural areas and ethnic minority areas, medical treatment conditions and the general health status of children continue to lag behind national averages, and mortality rates are higher. In poverty-stricken counties, child mortality in almost all age groups was higher than the national average by 50% or more. In about half of the age groups, child mortality was higher than the national average by 80% or more. Mortality among ethnic minority children was more than 50% higher than among Han children up to the age of 10; and more than 80% higher for ages 11-17. This indicates that certain sub-populations need greater attention and that infant and young child health needs to be further improved.

**VI. Status of child education** – compulsory education has been basically universalized, but millions of school-aged children still failed to receive or complete compulsory education as required. Older children had a lower school attendance rate, with a clear urban-rural disparity.

The 2010 census data show that the level of education of children in China has improved significantly, with nearly universal compulsory education, and school attendance rates among primary and junior secondary school-aged children both above 96%<sup>5</sup>. In 2010, there was no obvious urban-rural or sex difference in terms of children's school attendance rate at the compulsory education stage. Even at the senior secondary school stage, female school attendance rate was not lower than that of male children.

However, as children get older, their school attendance rate falls gradually, and the urban-rural disparity begins to become prominent (Figure 12). The average school attendance rate for children aged 15-17, i.e. senior secondary school age, was 80.6%, falling to 70% for children aged 17. This indicates that a considerable number of children did not access education beyond compulsory education. In terms of urban-rural disparity, the school attendance rate of senior secondary school-aged rural children was 60%, and lower than that of urban children by 16 percentage points. Due to different levels of urbanization among provinces, urban-rural education disparity means that there are also educational disparities among provinces. Child education in rural areas in central and western provinces lagged behind significantly, and is deserving of greater attention.

**Figure 12: School attendance rate of children aged 6-17 by age and urban-rural residence , 2010**



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Population Census

Some 8.2% of all children aged 6-17 years, or an estimated 15.5 million, were out of school. Of this group, 65% were in rural areas. Apart from 1.5 million children aged 6 who had not yet begun schooling, there were 14 million children aged 7-17 who were out of school, including 10 million children aged 7-14 who should have been subject to compulsory education but were out of school.

<sup>5</sup> According to the *Compulsory Education Law* of the People's Republic of China promulgated in 1986, "Children who are over the age of six, regardless of their sex, ethnicity or race, should go to school to receive compulsory education for the specified number of years. In some areas, schooling age may be postponed to seven, subject to local conditions." School attendance rate among children aged 6 is less than 90%, because in some areas in China, it is prescribed that children begin schooling at the age of seven.

Some 3.0% of children aged 6-17 years failed to receive or complete compulsory education as required.<sup>6</sup> This meant that 5.7 million children aged 6-17 failed to receive or complete compulsory education as required, of which 70% were in rural areas (Some 3.9% of rural children aged 6-17 failed to receive or complete compulsory education as required). Excluding the 1.5 million children aged 6 years who had not yet begun schooling, more than 4 million children aged 7-17 failed to receive or complete compulsory education as required.

In terms of school attendance and compulsory education completion rate, rural left-behind children did slightly better than rural children overall, while migrant children lagged behind urban children but did better than rural children. Older children aged 15-17 in rural areas, and within this category older left-behind children, received the least compulsory education, with 5.8% and 4.8%, respectively (Figure 13), not receiving compulsory education as required. Among left-behind children, those whose mothers left home had the poorest education status, with 5.1% of them failing to receive compulsory education as required.

**Figure 13: School attendance rate and proportion of children who failed to receive or complete compulsory education as required, by age, urban-rural residence and migrant status, 2010**

	Total 全国	Urban 城镇	Rural 农村	Male 男性	Female 女性	Migrant children 流动儿童	Rural left-behind children 农村留守儿童
<b>Attendance rate 在校率 ( % )</b>							
<b>Aged 6-17 岁</b>	<b>91.8</b>	<b>93.7</b>	<b>90.3</b>	<b>91.6</b>	<b>92.1</b>	<b>90.7</b>	<b>93.0</b>
Aged 6-11 岁	96.6	97.0	96.3	96.6	96.6	96.4	96.5
Aged 12-14 岁	96.3	97.3	95.5	96.2	96.4	96.2	96.1
Aged 15-17 岁	80.6	86.8	74.3	79.5	81.7	77.4	81.0
<b>Failed to receive or complete compulsory education as required 未按规定接受或完成义务教育的比例 ( % )</b>							
<b>Aged 6-17 岁</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Aged 6-11 岁	3.2	2.9	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.5	3.3
Aged 12-14 岁	2.0	1.1	2.6	2.0	2.0	1.7	2.3
Aged 15-17 岁	3.7	1.5	5.8	3.8	3.5	2.4	4.8

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Population Census

## VII. Adolescent marriage and birth – both marriage rate and birth rate maintained the stable low level

In the 2010 census, there were nearly 100 million persons in the 15-19 age group, of which 1.32 million were married persons. The marriage rate among the 15-19 age group was 1.3%. Most of the married persons were aged 18-19, and they accounted for about 90% of all married persons aged 15-19. The marriage rate was 2.1% among females aged 15-19, and less than 1% among males of the same age.

For a long time, China has been among the countries with the lowest adolescent birth rates in the world. In 2010, the adolescent birth rate was 27 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age aged 15-19, and most of the women who gave birth were aged 18-19. Adolescent births only accounted for 2.3% of total births.

Over the past 10 years, both the marriage rate and adolescent birth rate in China have remained stable at an overall low level, but with notable urban-rural and ethnic differences. In rural areas and ethnic minority areas, the marriage rate and adolescent birth rate are relatively high.

<sup>6</sup> The *Compulsory Education Law* prescribes that children of school age must receive the 9-year compulsory education. Compulsory education should be cost-free, universal and mandatory, as required by law.

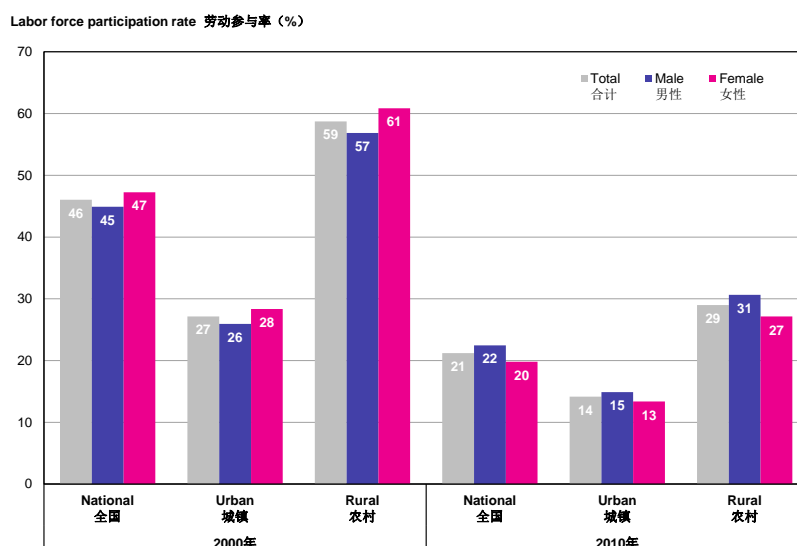
## VIII. Employment status of children aged 16-17 – dramatic decline in labor participation rate since 2000

The legal age of entry into employment in China is 16 years of age. According to the 2010 Census, there were 39.57 million children aged 16-17 in China, of which 8.39 million or 21.2% were economically active. Between 2000 and 2010, the labor participation rate of children aged 16-17 dropped by about 25 percentage points.

More boys than girls aged 16-17 years participated in the labor force, with the participation rate of girls 2.6 percentage points lower than that of boys. Rural children entered the labor market earlier, and the labor participation rate of rural children aged 16-17 was as high as 29%, more than double that of children in urban areas.

**Figure 14: Labor participation rate of children aged 16-17, 2000 and 2010**

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses



## IX. Response of the Government of China

The Government of China has always attached importance to the promotion and protection of children's rights, implementing the Children First principle advocated by the 1990 World Summit for Children, and associated development strategies. The Government of China has firmly supported and facilitated the realization of children's rights of survival, protection, development and participation by integrating child development into overall plans for national economic and social development, as well as into the state budget, and by formulating and implementing the National Programme of Action for Children (NPA).

China has further supported the protection of children's rights in legislation, and ratified international treaties that advance children's rights, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. China has formulated and revised several laws and regulations that involve children's rights, such as the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors*, the *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* and the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Maternal and Child Health Care*.

China has promoted child development and rights by formulating and implementing a series of three NPAs for Children, for 1990s, 2001-2010, and 2011-2020. The NPAs not only align with national economic and social development plans, but have also facilitated the realization of international goals, such as the UN's Millennium Development Goals, through multi-sectoral coordination. According to the NPA, each province also formulates its own provincial-level Programme of Action for Children, sets child development goals, and defines and implements specific measures for realizing such goals. The third and current NPA (2011–2020) sets 52 major objectives in 5 major fields, namely health, education, welfare, social environment and legal protection, and puts forward 67 strategies and measures, providing important guarantees for child development.

The relevant government departments including those in charge of education, health and poverty alleviation have also formulated corresponding plans to realize child development goals, such as the *National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* and *Nutrition Improvement Action Plan of China*. The *Outline for Development-oriented Poverty Reduction for China's Rural Areas (2011-2020)* has pointed out specifically for the first time that children should be included as a key population for poverty alleviation efforts and that more support should be given in this regard.



### UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is on the ground in over 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. UNICEF first assisted China between 1947 and 1951, providing emergency services, food and nutrition, health and hygiene training. In 1979 UNICEF officially commenced its cooperation with the Government of China.

For more than 30 years since 1979, UNICEF has worked in cooperation with the Government of China to support the survival, protection and development of children in China. The 2011-2015 UNICEF-Government of China Programme of Cooperation focuses on supporting social policy and reform for children; promoting the health and nutrition status of children and women; improving access to and delivery of quality early learning, basic education and non-formal education; and increasing access to improved drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. UNICEF is also working with the Government of China to improve access to family and community-based child protection services, accompanied by supportive policies.

UNICEF's work is guided by both international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; as well as China's own national strategies and priorities for children, as encapsulated in the National Programme of Action for Children.

In accordance with the organization's equity focus, much of UNICEF China's work takes place in rural parts of western and central China, where economic and social development indicators lag behind national averages. By documenting, analyzing and scaling up experiences gained from innovative models and approaches that demonstrate impact on the most disadvantaged children in pilot areas, the UNICEF-Government of China Programme of Cooperation aims to influence national policies, programmes and budgets for the benefit of vulnerable children throughout the country.

For more information about UNICEF in China, please visit <http://www.unicef.cn>.

### UNFPA

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is an international development agency that aims to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

UNFPA's key areas of work are:

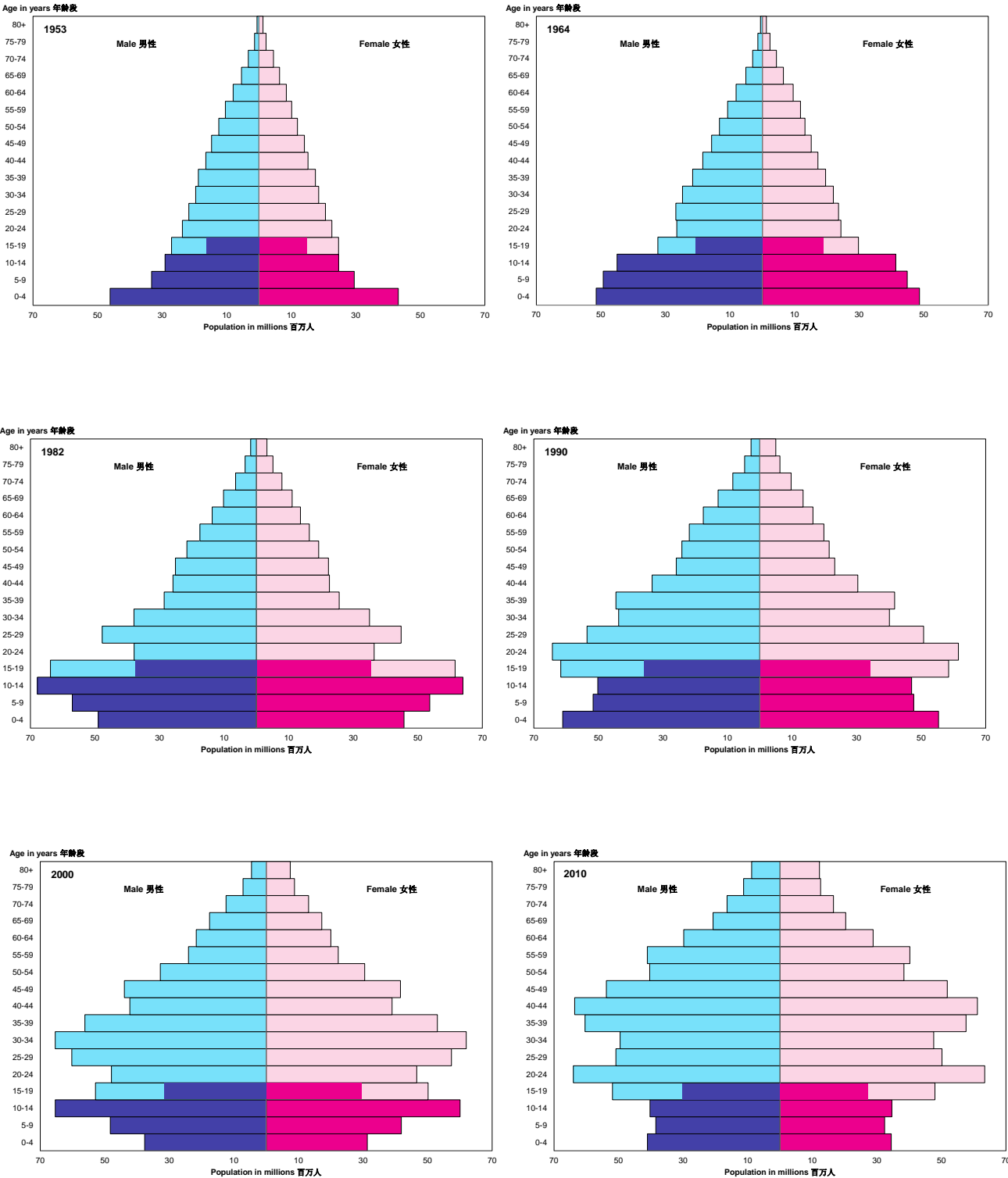
- Population and development: UNFPA assists governments in collecting, processing and analyzing population data and trends, supporting governments in using the resulting information in the formulation of national and sectoral development policy plans and strategies in order to appropriately address people's current and future needs.
- Reproductive health: UNFPA supports the government's efforts to increase access to and utilization of: a) quality maternal and newborn health services; b) quality, voluntary and informed choices of family planning services for individuals and couples; c) HIV and STI prevention services, especially for young people and other key populations at risk; and d) midwifery education.
- Gender equality: UNFPA advocates for the advancement gender equality and reproductive rights and the elimination of gender based violence, and supports the formulation and implementation of laws and policies in this field.
- Youth: UNFPA aims to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services and sexuality education for young people (including adolescents).

For more information about UNFPA in China, please visit <http://www.unfpa.org>.

Data for development is the foundation for good policy making. In China, UNFPA and UNICEF have been working with the National Bureau of Statistics and other partners to increase availability, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age and region, from both regular population census/surveys and administrative reporting systems, and to enhance monitoring and reporting by the national and sub-national statistical systems on national development plans such as the National Programmes of Action for Women and Children, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Appendix 1: Population pyramid

Children (under 18) 0-17岁儿童  
Adult (18 and above) 18岁及以上成人



Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, 1953, 1964, 1982, 1990, 2000 and 2010 Population Censuses

## Appendix 2: Child population and sex ratio by province, 2010

		Number of children (Millions) 儿童人口合计 (百万人)	Male (Millions) 男性 (百万人)	Female (Millions) 女性 (百万人)	Sex-ratio of children aged 0-17 0-17 岁儿童 性别比	Sex-ratio at birth 出生人口 性别比
全国	National	278.91	149.88	129.04	116	118
北京	Beijing	2.13	1.12	1.00	112	109
天津	Tianjin	1.63	0.87	0.77	113	114
河北	Hebei	14.98	7.95	7.03	113	115
山西	Shanxi	8.22	4.26	3.96	108	110
内蒙古	Inner Mongolia	4.47	2.33	2.14	109	112
辽宁	Liaoning	6.49	3.40	3.09	110	110
吉林	Jilin	4.22	2.21	2.01	110	111
黑龙江	Heilongjiang	5.87	3.05	2.82	108	112
上海	Shanghai	2.46	1.31	1.16	113	111
江苏	Jiangsu	13.29	7.21	6.09	118	116
浙江	Zhejiang	9.26	4.91	4.35	113	118
安徽	Anhui	13.42	7.35	6.07	121	129
福建	Fujian	7.23	3.95	3.29	120	126
江西	Jiangxi	11.72	6.58	5.15	128	123
山东	Shandong	18.06	9.71	8.35	116	119
河南	Henan	23.89	13.21	10.68	124	118
湖北	Hubei	10.72	5.91	4.81	123	124
湖南	Hunan	13.91	7.56	6.36	119	123
广东	Guangdong	23.22	12.64	10.58	120	120
广西	Guangxi	12.06	6.52	5.54	118	123
海南	Hainan	2.18	1.21	0.97	125	125
重庆	Chongqing	6.35	3.34	3.01	111	113
四川	Sichuan	17.60	9.22	8.38	110	112
贵州	Guizhou	10.66	5.70	4.96	115	122
云南	Yunnan	11.79	6.22	5.57	112	112
西藏	Tibet	0.89	0.45	0.43	105	107
陕西	Shaanxi	7.42	4.00	3.42	117	115
甘肃	Gansu	6.16	3.27	2.90	113	117
青海	Qinghai	1.47	0.76	0.71	107	112
宁夏	Ningxia	1.68	0.87	0.80	109	114
新疆	Xinjiang	5.47	2.81	2.66	105	106

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2010 Population Census

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