

American Geographical Society

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Source: *Geographical Review*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Apr., 1983), pp. 198-210

Published by: American Geographical Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/214644>

Accessed: 24/03/2009 10:55

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PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE 1982 CENSUS IN CHINA

LAURENCE J. C. MA

IN October, 1982, the State Statistical Bureau of the People's Republic of China announced the preliminary results of the census taken on July 1, 1982. The communiqué revealed that the population of China, including Taiwan, was 1,026,503,884 persons.¹ The announcement effectively ended the estimating of China's population that Western analysts had undertaken during the past two decades. The 1982 census differed from the 1953 and 1964 Chinese censuses in two ways: coverage of demographic variables was much broader, and modern census-taking techniques, including computers, were used. During the past three years, the State Statistical Bureau also released countrywide population totals and vital rates for various years that had not previously been available to the public. In this article, I offer some observations about the preliminary census results from 1982 and, when possible, make comparisons between the newly released data and earlier statistics from Chinese authorities.

THE 1982 CENSUS

Preparations for the 1982 census began shortly after the change of political leadership in 1976 following the death of Mao Zedong. The enormous amount of demographic data to be collected by the census necessitated the use of automated data-processing equipment. Planning for the census was thorough and careful. Chinese census workers were sent to the United States Bureau of the Census and to Japan to learn about modern census-taking techniques and the use of computers. A census mission from the United Nations provided both direct advice and indirect assistance through contacts with the United States and Japan. The government of China reportedly allocated \$200 million for the census, while the United Nations Fund for Population Activities contributed \$15.6 million for personnel training and the purchase of computers.² The computers were installed in every province except Tibet and linked to the master machine in the Beijing headquarters of the State Statistical Bureau.

Pretests were conducted in 1980 and 1981 in twenty-four mainland provinces. Approximately 3.6 million persons were enumerated in these pretests.³ The first pretest was carried out on July 1, 1980, in Wuxi City and in six rural communes and a town in Wuxi County, Jiangsu Province.⁴ The purposes of the pretest were to experiment with questionnaire design, to gain experience

¹ State Statistical Bureau, *The 1982 Census Results*, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 25, No. 45, November 8, 1982, p. 20.

² *The World's Biggest Census*, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 25, No. 32, August 9, 1982, p. 18; and John S. Aird, *The Preparations for China's 1982 Census*, *China Quarterly*, No. 91, September, 1982, p. 370.

³ Aird, footnote 2 above, p. 371.

⁴ Yimin Shen, *Wuxi renkou pucha shidian wei fazhan disanci quanguo renkou pucha diandingle jichu* [The Population Census Pretest at Wuxi Laid the Foundation for the Development of the Third National Population Census], *Renkou yanjiu* [Population Research], No. 5, 1982, pp. 7 and 13-15.

in organizing a countrywide census, and to train key census takers for the full census. Approximately 759,000 persons in Wuxi City and 186,000 persons in the countryside were covered by the pretest. The pretest was preceded by small-scale trial runs involving 79,122 persons. The pretest was followed by an accuracy check that sampled 7,004 persons in thirty-three urban residential groups, twenty-four rural production brigades, and one boat brigade. The check revealed an overcount of one person, which means an error rate of only 0.17 per thousand in reporting the total population of Wuxi city and county. The error rate in reporting sex composition in the city—there was no error for the countryside—was 0.34 per thousand, while the error rate for reporting age was 7.11 and 3.65 per thousand respectively for the city and the countryside. These results indicated that the quality of the pretest was excellent. Consequently no major changes were made in the design of the questionnaire for the full census.

The October, 1982, communiqué indicated that the quality of the census enumeration also was excellent. A postenumeration check was conducted in all the provincial-level administrative units, although the size of the sample is unknown. The results of the check showed an overcount of 0.71 per thousand and an undercount of 0.56 per thousand for a net overcount of 0.15 per thousand; an error rate of 0.03 per thousand in reporting sex composition; an error rate of 6.15 per thousand in reporting age; for births in 1981 a net undercount of 1.83 per thousand; and for deaths in 1981 a net undercount of 4.40 per thousand.

The countrywide census work was planned and directed by the Population Census Leading Group of the State Council. Census-taking groups and offices were established in the lower levels of the Chinese administrative hierarchy, down to rural production brigades—each approximately the size of a village with several hundred persons—and urban neighborhoods—each with an average of 50,000 persons in large cities. Census stations were opened in rural production brigades and urban neighborhoods throughout the country. On census day each household was enumerated by sending a representative to a station. The bulk of enumeration occurred during the first two weeks of July; most of the enumeration and the necessary follow-ups were completed within thirty days. Approximately five million persons were employed as census takers.

The 1982 census covered a wider range of demographic data than found in the 1953 and the 1964 censuses. The 1953 census was taken in connection with the registration of electors for the selection of deputies to the people's congresses and with the design and implementation of the first five-year plan. Only six demographic items were included: name, relationship to head of household, sex, age, nationality, and address. Tallied by hand, the full census has never been made public, but a brief communiqué from the State Statistical Bureau in November, 1954, contained data on countrywide population total, numbers of males and females, numbers of persons more than 18 years old and more than 80 years old, populations of the leading nationalities, and population by province.⁵ Virtually unknown in the West until the early 1980s, the 1964

⁵ Communiqué of Results of Census and Registration of China's Population, New China News Agency, November 1, 1954; translated in *Current Background*, No. 301, November 1, 1954, pp. 1–2, U.S. Consulate General, Hong Kong.

TABLE I—OFFICIAL POPULATION OF CHINA BY PROVINCES, AUTONOMOUS REGIONS, AND MUNICIPALITIES

PROVINCE OR EQUIVALENT	1953	1978	1980	1982	GROWTH 1953-82 (%)
Sichuan	62,303,999 ^a	97,070,000	98,200,000	99,713,310	60.0
Shandong	48,876,548	71,600,000	72,960,000	74,419,054	52.2
Henan	44,214,594	70,660,000	72,850,000	74,422,739	68.3
Jiangsu	41,252,192	58,340,000	59,380,000	60,521,114	46.7
Hebei	35,984,644	50,570,000	51,680,000	53,005,875	47.3
Guangdong	34,770,059	55,930,000	57,800,000	59,299,220	70.5
Hunan	33,226,954	51,660,000	52,810,000	54,008,851	62.5
Anhui	30,343,637	47,130,000	48,930,000	49,665,724	63.6
Hubei	27,789,693	45,750,000	46,840,000	47,804,150	72.0
Zhejiang	22,865,747	37,510,000	38,270,000	38,884,603	70.0
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	19,560,822	34,020,000	35,380,000	36,420,960	86.1
Liaoning	18,545,147	37,430,000	34,870,000	35,721,693	92.6
Yunnan	17,472,737	30,920,000	31,740,000	32,553,817	86.3
Jiangxi	16,772,865	31,830,000	32,700,000	33,184,827	97.8
Shaanxi	15,881,281	27,790,000	28,310,000	28,904,423	82.0
Guizhou	15,037,310	26,860,000	27,770,000	28,552,997	89.9
Shanxi	14,314,485	24,240,000	24,760,000	25,291,389	76.7
Fujian	13,142,712	24,500,000	25,180,000	25,931,106 ^b	97.3
Gansu	12,928,102 ^c	18,730,000	19,180,000	19,569,261	51.4
Heilongjiang	11,897,309	33,760,000	32,040,000	32,665,546	174.6
Jilin	11,290,073	24,740,000	22,100,000	22,560,053	99.8
Taiwan	7,591,298 ^d	17,140,000	17,800,000	18,270,749 ^e	140.7
Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region	6,100,104	8,900,000	18,770,000	19,274,279	216.0
Rehe ^f	5,160,822				
Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region	4,873,608	12,330,000	12,830,000	13,081,681	168.4
Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region		3,660,000	3,740,000	3,895,578	
Xikang ^a	3,381,064				
Qinghai	1,298,102	3,650,000	3,770,000	3,895,706	200.0
Tibetan Autonomous Region	1,273,969	1,790,000	1,850,000	1,892,393	48.5

TABLE 1—CONTINUED

PROVINCE OR EQUIVALENT	1953	1978	1980	1982	GROWTH 1953-82 (%)
Shanghai Municipality	6,204,417	10,980,000	11,460,000	11,859,748	91.1
Beijing Municipality	2,768,149	8,500,000	8,860,000	9,230,687	233.4
Tianjin Municipality	2,693,831	7,210,000	7,510,000	7,764,141	188.2
China	590,194,715	975,230,000	1,000,350,000	1,026,503,884*	73.9

Sources: For 1953, Communiqué of Results, text footnote 5, pp. 1-2; for 1978, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo dituji [Atlas of the People's Republic of China] (Beijing: Ditu chubanshe, 1979); for 1980, Zhongguo baike nainjian, 1981 [Encyclopedic Yearbook of China, 1981] (Beijing and Shanghai: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 1981), p. 69; for 1982, *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], October 28, 1982, pp. 1 and 4, and State Statistical Bureau, text footnote 1, pp. 20-21.

^a Sichuan Province and Tibet absorbed Xikang Province in 1955.

^b Includes 57,847 persons in Jinmen and Mazu and a few other islands at the end of May, 1982.

^c Included Ningxia which was established as Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in 1958.

^d 1951 figure from Taiwan.

^e Figure according to Taiwan authorities at the end of June, 1982.

^f Rehe Province was abolished in 1955, and its area incorporated in Hebei and Inner Mongolia.

^g Includes 4,238,210 members of the armed forces, but omits the 5,378,627 persons in Hong Kong and Macao.

census retained these six categories and added educational level, type of household, and numbers of individuals in a household.⁶ No systematic data from this census have been released to non-Chinese users, although piecemeal information about total population, sex ratio, and percentage distribution by age groups has been reported by various sources.

The 1982 census gathered information in nineteen demographic categories, thirteen of which were related to individuals and six of which focused on households.⁷ The categories about individuals were name, relationship to head of household, sex, age, nationality, registration status, educational level, profession, occupation, status of nonworking persons, marital status, number of children born and now living, and number of births in 1981. The household categories were type (domestic or collective), serial number, number of persons, number of births in 1981, number of deaths in 1981, and number of registered persons absent for more than a year. Modern censuses in other countries often have a far larger number of categories, but the number in the recent Chinese census was sufficient to generate more than 10 billion pieces of data that will require an estimated eighteen months and 4,000 workers to enter in computers.

The data will be classified and published under eight major headings: general information; geographical distribution; nationality; age; educational level and employment; family, marriage, and fertility; and mortality.⁸ The State Statistical Bureau plans to release the census data in three stages. The first was to be finalized approximately three months after the taking of the census and marked by a communiqué stating the total population and number of households, numbers by sex, urban and rural populations, nationality, and population by province or its equivalent. The second stage would follow the census taking by a year, during which 10 percent of the data should be compiled to serve as a reliable base to predict the characteristics of the entire population. The data will be available to selected authorities for their use in planning. The data might be published in summary form in certain publications. By the end of 1984, all of the census data should be compiled and published. It is anticipated that data on each of the eight major headings will be published in at least one volume. Approximately 1,000 pages will be required just to print all of the census data at the countrywide level, and hundred of thousands of additional pages will be needed to publish the provincial and local data.⁹ Although it is reasonable to expect the Chinese government to release large-scale areal data, it is difficult to predict how much of the massive amount of local data will be made public.

TOTAL POPULATION

The communiqué, issued on October 27, 1982, marked the completion of the first stage. The total figure of 1,026,503,884 included the 18,270,749 resi-

⁶ Shen, footnote 4 above, p. 13.

⁷ Disanci quanguo renkou pucha banfa [Regulations of the Third National Population Census], *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guowuyuan gongbao* [Bulletin of the State Council of the People's Republic of China], No. 5, April 20, 1982, pp. 155–156; and World's Biggest Census, footnote 2 above, pp. 16–17.

⁸ Weizhi Wang, Renkou pucha ziliaode huizong yu gongbu [Collection and Publication of the Population Census], *Renkou yanjiu* [Population Research], No. 4, July 29, 1982, pp. 22–24.

⁹ Wang, footnote 8 above, p. 24.

TABLE II—MINORITY NATIONALITIES OF CHINA WITH POPULATION OF MORE THAN ONE MILLION

NATIONALITY	1953	1964	1982	GROWTH (%)
Zhuang	6,611,455	7,780,000	13,378,162	102.3
Hui	3,559,350	3,930,000	7,219,352	102.8
Uygurs	3,640,125	3,900,000	5,957,112	63.6
Yi	3,254,269	3,260,000	5,453,448	67.6
Zang (Tibetans)	2,775,622	2,770,000	3,870,068	39.4
Miao	2,511,339	2,680,000	5,030,897	100.3
Manzhou (Manchus)	2,418,931	2,430,000	4,299,159	77.7
Mongols	1,462,956	1,640,000	3,411,657	133.2
Buyi	1,247,883	1,310,000	2,120,469	69.9
Koreans	1,120,405	1,250,000	1,763,870	57.4
Tong		820,000	1,425,100	73.8
Yao		740,000	1,402,676	89.6
Bai		650,000	1,131,124	74.0
Tujia		630,000	2,832,743	349.6
Hani		540,000	1,058,836	96.0

Sources: For 1953, Communiqué of Results, text footnote 5; for 1964, 1965 *Renmin Shouce* [1965 People's Handbook] (Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 1965); for 1982, *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], October 29, 1982, p. 4.

dents of Taiwan (Table I). Compared to the 1953 total of 590.2 million, including 7.6 million on Taiwan, China gained 436.4 million people, or an increase of 73.9 percent, in twenty-nine years. The increase is 73 percent if the population of Taiwan is deleted from both censuses. In 1964 the mainland population was 694,581,759, including members of the armed forces.¹⁰ From that base, the increase recorded in 1982 was 313.6 million persons or 45.1 percent, with an average annual increase of 17.4 million people or 2.1 percent.

The rate of increase since 1964 was not constant. An analysis by the State Statistical Bureau showed that between 1964 and 1972 the population of mainland China increased by 186.66 million, or an average of 20.74 million or 2.7 percent annually. From 1973 to 1982, the increase was 126.93 million, or an average of 14.1 million or 1.5 percent annually. The significant decline in the growth of the total population since 1973 has been attributed to the effectiveness of the family-planning program.¹¹

In terms of sex composition in the 1982 census, males accounted for 51.5 percent of the mainland population, females 48.5 percent. The sex ratio was 106.3 to 100.

NATIONALITIES

The government of China formally recognizes fifty-six nationalities, of which the dominant Han, or Chinese, accounted for 93.3 percent of the 1982 population. The other fifty-five nationalities totaled 67,233,254 or 6.7 percent of the country's population. This sum had grown 22 percent since 1978.¹² The 1982

¹⁰ State Statistical Bureau, footnote 1 above, p. 20.

¹¹ Population Analysis Group, Population Census Office of the State Council, and Department of Population Statistics of the State Statistical Bureau, Guanyu woguo renkou zhuangkuang de jidian fenxi [Some Analyses of China's Population Conditions], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], November 16, 1982, p. 5.

¹² Clifton W. Pannell and Laurence J. C. Ma, China: The Geography of Development and Modernization (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), pp. 87–89.

TABLE III—EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

LEVEL	NUMBER		% COUNTRY 1982	% INCREASE 1964– 1982	NUMBER PER 100,000 POPULATION	
	1964	1982			1964	1982
College	2,875,403	6,016,969	0.59	109.2	416	599
Senior middle school	9,116,904	66,478,028	6.59	629.1	1,319	6,622
Junior middle school	32,346,873	178,277,140	17.68	451.0	4,680	17,758
Primary school	195,824,459	355,160,310	35.22	81.4	28,330	35,377
Illiterates and semi-illiterates ^a	(264,635,650) ^b	235,820,002	23.50	(–10.0)	(38,100)	(23,389)

Sources: State Statistical Bureau, text footnote 1, p. 20; and Population Analysis Group, text footnote 11.

^a Persons 12 or more years old who cannot read or can read only a few words.

^b Figures in parentheses are derived.

communiqué noted that the minority nationalities accounted for 5.8 percent of the total population of China in 1964. The minority growth rate of 68.4 percent since 1964 was much higher than the Han rate of 43.8 percent. Two reasons have been offered to explain the higher minority rate. Firstly, the enforcement of family-planning policies has purposively been less rigid in minority areas than in Han areas in order to express the special concern of the government for the minorities. Secondly, some minority persons who did not identify themselves as such in the previous censuses did so in the 1982 counting, although the reason for the change is unclear.¹³

The 1982 communiqué listed fifteen nationalities with a population of one million or more (Table II). Only ten groups had such a large total in 1964. Very little is known about the circumstances of any of the minority groups or how the censuses were taken in the areas that they inhabit. The highly variable rates of growth shown in Table II cannot be explained at present.

EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

From the data on educational levels released in the 1982 communiqué, it is apparent that the overall educational level of the country is still very low (Table III). Only about 7 percent of the population had attended senior high school or college, and 235.8 million persons were functional illiterates. However, dramatic progress had been made since 1964 at the junior and senior middle-school levels. The number of persons with middle-school educational training had increased several times, as the figures for the per 100,000 population show.

VITAL RATES

In 1981 there were 20,689,704 births and 6,290,103 deaths, or a net gain of 14,399,601. The birth and death rates were respectively 20.91 and 6.36 per thousand, while the rate of natural increase was 14.55 per thousand population. These fairly low rates resemble those of advanced countries rather than the

¹³ Population Analysis Group, footnote 11 above, p. 5.

TABLE IV—OFFICIAL VITAL RATES 1950–1982^{ab}

YEAR	BIRTH RATE	DEATH RATE	RATE OF NATURAL INCREASE
1950	37.00	18.00	19.00
1952	37.00	17.00	20.00
1957	34.03	10.80	23.23
1962	37.22	10.08	27.14
1965	38.06	9.55	28.51
1970	33.59	7.64	25.95
1971	30.74	7.34	23.40
1972	29.92	7.65	22.27
1973	28.07	7.08	20.99
1974	24.95	7.38	17.57
1975	23.13	7.36	15.77
1976	20.01	7.29	12.72
1977	19.03	6.91	12.12
1978	18.34	6.29	12.05
1979	17.90	6.24	11.66
1980	na	na	12.00
1981	na	na	14.00
1982	20.91	6.36	14.55

Sources: Li, text footnote 14, pp. 15–16; State Statistical Bureau, Communiques on Fulfillment of China's National Economic Plans, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 24, No. 20, May 18, 1981, p. 20, and Vol. 25, No. 20, May 17, 1982, p. 24; and State Statistical Bureau, text footnote 1, pp. 20–21.

^a Rates for Taiwan are omitted.

^b Per 1,000 population.

usually high rates of developing countries. No vital rates from the 1964 census were included in the 1982 communiqué.

Before 1979 the Chinese authorities disclosed very few vital rates. In January, 1982, Chengrui Li, director of the State Statistical Bureau, published an article on the temporal trends of Chinese vital rates from 1950 to 1979.¹⁴ Together with data released in communiqués since 1979, an uninterrupted series of official vital rates since 1970 is now available (Table IV).¹⁵ Most of these rates are identical with ones that were released in publications for foreign consumption, an indication that the State Statistical Bureau was the sole authority for all official vital rates regardless of where they were issued.

It is unclear why Li did not provide rates for the census years 1953 and 1964. It is tempting to believe that the data either were not surveyed in the censuses or were too unreliable to be made public. An official of the State Statistical Bureau observed in 1979 that the vital rates for the country as a whole were not based on complete birth and death counts, but were estimated by the bureau from incomplete data.¹⁶ The absence of data from the periods 1958–1961 and 1966–1969 can be explained by the association of the former with the Great Leap Forward and the latter with the Cultural Revolution. Both periods found the country in a state of economic and political chaos during which all statistical

¹⁴ Chengrui Li, *Zhongguo renkou chushenglü he siwanglü de fazhan qushi* [The Trends of Development of China's Birth and Death Rates], *Renkou yanjiu* [Population Research], No. 1, 1982, pp. 15–16.

¹⁵ John S. Aird, *Population Studies and Population Policy in China*, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 8, June, 1982, p. 268.

¹⁶ John S. Aird, *Recent Demographic Data from China: Problems and Prospects*, in *China under the Four Modernizations, Part 1: Selected Papers Submitted to the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress*, August, 1982 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 179.

work ceased. The missing data for the period 1953–1956 further suggest that the 1953 census did not provide a solid basis for the estimation of vital rates in the years after that census.

On the assumption that the vital rates since 1970 are reasonably accurate, the rate of natural increase declined precipitously for a decade until 1980. The decline was largely due to sharp drop of the birth rate that began in 1974, a year after an extensive and forceful family-planning campaign had been launched throughout the country. The rise of the rate of natural increase after 1980, in the countryside at least, has been attributed to a new farm policy, known as "the system of agricultural responsibility," introduced in 1979. Under this system, collective production has been largely abolished, although the land and the major means of production remain collectively owned. The quotas for production of major crops that are set by the central government are passed to the production teams. Contracts for production are signed between teams and their families, and the families are held responsible for the fulfillment and the delivery of the quotas specified in the contracts. The peasant families decide how to use the land and to grow the crops. Production above the specified quotas belongs to the peasants who may keep it or sell it in local markets. Some of the surplus can also be sold to the state at good prices. Consequently farm productivity and peasant income are widely reported by the Chinese press to have risen significantly since 1979.¹⁷

The new farm policy has had an unexpected, adverse effect on rural family planning, which at the grassroots level is implemented by unpaid, part-time workers. The new system allows higher income to individuals who produce more than their assigned production quotas. Family-planning duties seemingly have been neglected in favor of agricultural production. The new system does not penalize a family for having more than one child, the number set by family-planning policy in 1979. The allocation of "responsibility land" under the new system is based on the number of persons in a family. Hence the larger a family, the more land it receives and the more rapid is the rise of family income.¹⁸ In addition, there is the entrenched tradition that having more than one child, especially males, provides more security in old age than the governmental social security system that now functions in rural areas. Whether the growth of the Chinese population can be curbed in the near future depends heavily on a steady reduction of the rural birth rate. It has been reported that many rural couples have been required to sign a "planned birth contract" with their production teams each year.¹⁹ Presumably the timing of the birth of the one child now permitted to a couple is specified in the contract.

URBAN POPULATION

One demographic mystery of China is the size of its urban population. Chinese sources, published in the last three decades, gave figures for urban

¹⁷ See communiqués on fulfillment of China's economy 1979–1981 from the State Statistical Bureau, published in *Beijing Review*, Vol. 23, No. 19, May 12, 1980, p. 14; Vol. 24, No. 19, May 11, 1981, p. 25; and Vol. 25, No. 20, May 17, 1982, p. 16.

¹⁸ Fan Zhang and Qing Zhou, *Shu gejia zhijian, chang qiecuo zhi feng* [Let Different Opinions Be Expressed and Let Exchange of Views Become Common], *Renkou yanjiu* [Population Research], No. 1, 1982, p. 25.

¹⁹ *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], December 23, 1982, p. 1.

TABLE V—URBAN PLACES AND POPULATION IN CHINA 1953–1982

YEAR	PLACES (N)			POPULATION IN 1,000s			
	CITIES	TOWNS	TOTAL	CITIES	% CHINA	TOTAL URBAN	% CHINA
1953	164	5,404	5,568	43,523	7.0	77,257	13.2
1978	189	3,261	3,450	112,000	13.0	167,164	20.0
1980	216	3,200	3,416	na	na	na	na
1982	236	2,664	2,900	144,679	14.3	206,589	20.6

Sources: State Statistical Bureau, text footnote 1, p. 21; and Pannell and Ma, text footnote 12, p. 223.

population that varied between 11 and 20 percent for the same reporting year. The confusion stems mainly from the lack of clear definitions for terms such as urban, suburb, city, and town.²⁰ The Chinese have no equivalents for well-established American terms such as urbanized area and standard metropolitan statistical area. Although the State Council in November, 1955, issued criteria for the demarcation between urban and rural areas, there is no evidence that they have ever been used.

The 1982 communiqué from the State Statistical Bureau reported that 20.6 percent of the mainland population, or 206.6 million persons, lived in cities (excluding the population of counties under their administration) and towns (Table V). Of the total urban population, 144.7 million persons, or 70 percent, lived in 236 cities; the remainder in 2,664 towns. These figures are too sketchy to permit an analysis of trends in urbanization or of the system of cities. It seems clear that the degree of urbanization is very low, a result of deliberate policies to discourage the expansion of large cities and to favor the growth of small cities and towns.²¹ Significantly, while the degree of urbanization is low, the absolute size of the Chinese urban population is enormous—206.6 million persons. Only three countries—India, the Soviet Union, and the United States—have a larger total population.

PROVINCIAL DATA

Official population data for the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities of China are now available for the years 1953, 1978, 1980, and 1982 (Table I). Substantial population growth occurred in all provincial-level areas during the past three decades (Table VI). The high percentage growth rates for the municipalities of Beijing and Tianjin are largely due to the extension of their administrative boundaries to include rural counties rather than to high rates of either natural increase or migration. The densely populated agricultural provinces in the eastern part of China have been settled for centuries and had relatively slower growth rates than peripheral areas in the past three decades. Large numbers of migrants have been sent to border regions such as Inner Mongolia and Qinghai for industrial and mining activities, to Heilongjiang for

²⁰ Leo A. Orleans, *China's Urban Population: Concepts, Conglomerations, and Concerns*, in *China under the Four Modernizations*, footnote 16 above, pp. 268–277.

²¹ David D. Buck, *Policies Favoring the Growth of Smaller Urban Places in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1979*, in *Urban Development in Modern China* (edited by Laurence J. C. Ma and Edward W. Hanten; Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 114–146.

TABLE VI—POPULATION DENSITY OF CHINA 1964 AND 1982^a

PROVINCE OR EQUIVALENT	1964	1982	GROWTH (%)
Shanghai Municipality	1,745	1,913	9.6
Tianjin Municipality	553	687	24.2
Beijing Municipality	452	549	21.4
Jiangsu	434	590	35.9
Shandong	363	486	33.9
Taiwan		508	
Henan	301	446	48.2
Zhejiang	278	382	37.4
Anhui	224	356	58.9
Hebei	210	282	34.3
Guangdong	191	280	46.6
Liaoning	185	245	32.4
Hubei	180	255	41.7
Hunan	177	257	45.2
Fujian	138	213	54.3
Jiangxi	126	199	57.9
Sichuan	120	176	46.7
Shanxi	116	162	39.6
Guangxi	101	158	56.4
Shaanxi	101	141	39.6
Guizhou	97	162	67.0
Jilin	84	120	42.8
Yunnan	52	83	59.6
Heilongjiang	43	69	60.5
Ningxia	32	59	84.3
Gansu	28	43	53.6
Inner Mongolia	10	16	60.0
Xinjiang	5	8	60.0
Qinghai	3	5	66.7
Tibet	1	1.6 ^b	60.0
China	74	107	44.6

Source: Population Analysis Group, text footnote 11.

^a Persons per square kilometer.

^b Based on enumerated areas only.

land reclamation, and to Xinjiang for both industrial and agricultural development. The slight decline of population in the three northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang since 1978 perhaps resulted from the return of millions of former youths to cities elsewhere that they had been forced to leave during the late 1960s and early 1970s. For the period 1964–1982 the rate of density increase for the eleven coastal provincial-level administrative units (excluding Taiwan) was 37.8 percent; this rate during the same period for the eighteen inland provinces and autonomous regions was 50.9 percent. Immigration and high rates of natural increase account for the faster growth in the inland areas.

FAMILY PLANNING

Three family-planning campaigns have been undertaken in China since the 1953 census. The first two campaigns occurred in the mid-1950s and the early 1960s, but their effect on the birth rates of the country was limited by the absence of rigorous programs and the interruptions of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. A third birth-control campaign began in 1973 and has been implemented with much more organized effort, intensity, and deter-

mination than the first two. One result has been a steady drop in the rates of natural increase to less than 20 per thousand since 1974 (Table IV).

Prior to 1979 married couples were encouraged to have no more than two children. In a further effort to reduce the birth rate, a new policy urging each couple to have only one child was introduced in 1979. As I noted previously, this policy has not been as effective as expected in rural areas where resistance by peasants is widespread. However, the commitment of the government to controlled population growth is firm, and the one-child policy has been implemented with increased pressure and coercion. The government is now determined to limit the population of the country to no more than 1.2 billion by the end of this century.²² For the immediate future, the goal is to limit population to 1.06 billion in 1985, a goal clearly specified in the sixth five-year plan adopted in December, 1982, by the Fifth National People's Congress.²³ It will not be easy to achieve this goal because the annual rate of natural increase must be kept under 13 per thousand, and for the remainder of the twentieth century only 191.8 million persons, or 11.3 million annually, could be added to the existing total population. The annual growth rate would thus have to be below 9.5 per thousand. Realization of such a low rate would be unprecedented in China.

An immediate obstacle to this goal is that the number of births may be expected to rise again in the next few years when the large cohorts born in the 1960s reach marriageable age. The three-year period 1983–1985 will be particularly crucial because an estimated 13 million couples will reach marriageable age each year.²⁴

Between the 1953 and the 1982 censuses the population of China increased by 425.6 million persons, an enormous number by any standard. The increase was not accompanied by a corresponding expansion of the agriculturally productive area. Instead, the amount of the country's prime agricultural land declined in this period from approximately 106 million hectares (43 million acres) to slightly less than 100 million hectares (40 million acres). The loss resulted from urban expansion, rural-housing construction, and other economic activities. Agricultural land per capita declined from approximately 1.2 hectares (half acre) to 0.6 hectare.²⁵ Clearly such a trend of dwindling man-land ratio cannot be sustained indefinitely.

The Chinese leadership has recognized the urgency to control the size of the country's population. Current governmental population policy "strongly encourages one child per married couple, strictly controls second births and resolutely prevents additional births."²⁶ The policy was designed to limit population expansion in a short period of time without regard to consequences of sudden limitations. For example, a sudden change in the size of age cohorts can produce an unbalanced age structure for generations, which in turn can result in disproportionately large numbers of elderly for decades. The social

²² *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], December 10, 1982, p. 2.

²³ *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], December 13, 1982, p. 4.

²⁴ *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], December 23, 1982, p. 3.

²⁵ *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], May 15, 1979, p. 3.

²⁶ *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], December 13, 1982, p. 4.

and economic implications of these sudden changes have not been discussed publicly by Chinese demographers.

CONCLUSION

The 1982 census promises to be the most complete and best conducted census in the history of China. The preliminary, hand-tallied results of the 1982 census revealed much useful information, especially about population size. It is hoped that detailed countrywide and regional data will be released on schedule and will be made available to domestic and foreign analysts. One also hopes for the publication of the results of the 1953 and the 1964 censuses and for the establishment of census taking at fixed intervals, beginning with the 1982 census.