



# THE ONE-SON POLICY

Rural Sichuan roadside sign:  
"It is forbidden to discriminate  
against, mistreat or abandon baby  
girls."



The **one-child policy** in China was a great success in terms of controlling fertility. But in a country where there was already a strong cultural preference for boys, it resulted in a serious imbalance between the number of girls and boys; the widespread use of techniques for determining a foetus's sex opened the door to sex-selective abortion.

The preference for boys, sex-selective abortion, and excessive mortality of young girls isn't an exclusively Chinese phenomenon and isn't therefore entirely due to the one-child policy. But the one-child policy accentuated this imbalance, by "forcing" parents who wanted at least one boy to eliminate girls from the first children born to them.

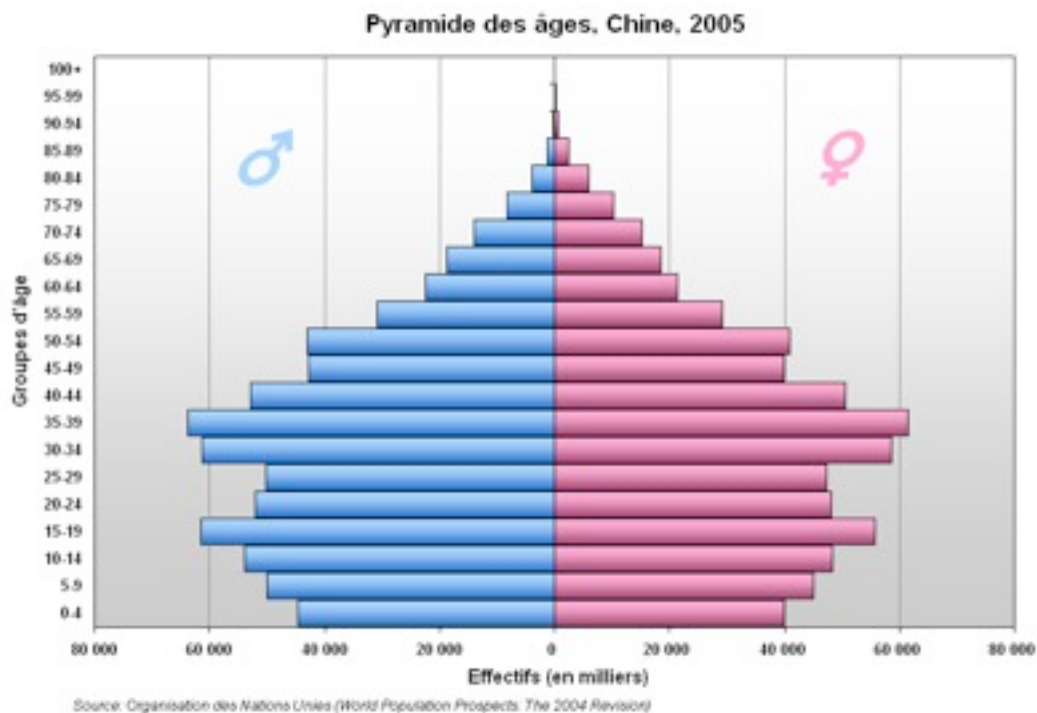
All of these factors combined led to an explosion of the boy-girl ratio. There were about 102 boys for 100 girls among children born in 1978. Today, there are 37 million more men than women, and there are as many as 120 boys born for 100 girls.

China is beginning to realise the consequences of this demographic imbalance. Boys are having trouble getting married. And young men, particularly single ones, have more behavioural problems and commit more crimes than young women. Since 1998, the number of crimes has risen 13% per year on average. Seventy percent of criminals arrested are between 16 and 25 years old.

The one-child policy is the population control policy of the People's Republic of China. It officially restricts the number of children married urban couples can have to one, although it allows exemptions for several cases, including rural couples, ethnic minorities, and parents without any siblings themselves. It was introduced in 1978 to alleviate social, economic, and environmental problems in China.



"For a prosperous, powerful nation and a happy family, please use birth planning."  
Government sign in Nanchang.



A response to the many disadvantages of the one-child policy might be the **one-son policy: A family stops the reproduction exactly when a son is born.**

A one-son policy would obviously increase the population pressure, since there might be families with more than one child. But it would most probably decrease the abortion and the mortality rate for baby girls, because the parents would not have to decide between having a daughter or a son any more.

With the one-son policy two questions arise:

- a) How big would the impact on the population growth be?  
In other words: how many children would an average family have?
- b) What would the impact on the sex ratio be?  
In other words: how many girls and how many boys would an average family have?

1

Simulate the growth of a family:

Toss a coin ("head" for son, "tail" for girl) until a son is born and note down how many children there are. Repeat the procedure 50 times and calculate

- a) the average number of children in a family.
- b) the average number of girls and boys in a family.

2

Calculate theoretically

- a) the average number of children in a family.
- b) the average number of girls and boys in a family.