

THREE CASE STUDIES ON FAMILY PLANNING POLICY

Below are three case studies in which governments have passed policies to restrict the number of children families can have. Read each case study, keeping in mind the question “*Should governments control the number of children families are allowed to have?*” Why-Light important points and note in the margins why you highlighted each point. Be ready to discuss.

Case study: China

Root issues: Overpopulation and food shortages

Policy details: In 1980, China was home to almost one billion people, and the government was investing heavily in agriculture to feed its large population. However, population growth was outpacing these efforts, and the amount of food distributed per person had been declining since the 1950s. As a result, the Chinese government introduced a one-child policy to control population growth. Similar measures had been taken before in the Sichuan Province, where couples who pledged to have only one child were given more food. However, the one-child policy went further, making it illegal for couples to have more than one child. This law was strictly enforced.

Effects: The one-child policy successfully curbed population growth, but it created a new problem known as the “4-2-1 problem.” The 4-2-1 problem describes a situation where four grandparents rely on two adult children for support, who in turn have only one child to provide old-age support. This puts a significant burden on each young person. This also means there will soon be more retired people than working people in the labor force, which means there may be too few workers to support the economy.

Case study: Vietnam

Root issues: Overpopulation and economic hardship

Policy details: In 1988, Vietnam introduced a two-child policy to address the country's high poverty rates. The Vietnam War and rapid postwar population growth were two factors contributing to these rates. The two-child policy aimed to reduce population growth and prevent Vietnam from experiencing more severe poverty.

Effects: Vietnam now has one of the world's fastest-growing economies. and though the two-child policy is still in place, the government is now focused on strengthening the labor force. However, the two-child policy still negatively affects some workers. Families with more than two children face different punishments, such as being fired from their jobs or having their parental leave withheld for a third child. These consequences leave some families unable to financially support themselves.

Case Study: India

Root issues: Population density and housing shortages

Policy details: In the last 20 years, several Indian states have passed two-child policies barring people with more than two children from serving in the local or state government. Other states offer incentives to delay having children. In one district, the government pays couples a lump sum of money if they wait two extra years before having a child. One major issue stemming from India's dense population is lack of

available housing, with 73.6 million families living without adequate housing. This is especially true in densely populated cities like Kolkata and Mumbai.

Effects: In the 1950s, the average family in India had six children. By 2003, that number had fallen to three, and today, the national average birth rate is about two children per family. Critics of two-child policies point out that these policies do not work as well as past measures like improved education and work opportunities for women, increased availability of healthcare clinics, and improved awareness of family planning strategies and contraceptives.

Additionally, due to traditional customs like dowries (where a marrying bride's family gives money to the groom's family) and because women do not inherit wealth, Indian families who have fewer children tend to want boys over girls. People sometimes choose to abort female embryos or commit female infanticide due to this preference for boy infants. This happens not just in India, but in China, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

Sources:

Butterfield, F. (1979, April 24). *As Population Nears a Billion, China Stresses Curbs*. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1979/04/24/archives/as-population-nears-a-billion-china-stresses-curbs-several.html>

Chaurasia, A. R. & Singh, R. *40 Years of Planned Family Planning Efforts in India*. International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. https://iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/IUSSP_40FP_0.pdf

Ebenstein, A. (2014). *Fertility and population in developing countries*. In *Encyclopedia of Health Economics* (pp. 300–308). Elsevier.

Goldman, R. (2021, May 31). *From One Child to Three: How China's Family Planning Policies Have Evolved*. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/31/world/asia/china-child-policy.html>

Hoekstra, A. (2017, June 26). *Vietnam considers end of two-child policy*. *UCA News*. <https://www.ucanews.com/news/vietnam-considers-end-of-two-child-policy/79525>

Housing Poverty in India: Tackling Slums & Inequalities. (2017, October 26). Habitat for Humanity GB. <https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/country/india/>

Howe, N. (2019, March 29). *Nations Labor To Raise Their Birthrates*. *Forbes*.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/neilhowe/2019/03/29/nations-labor-to-raise-their-birthrates/?sh=671a685d707d>

Kramer, S. (2021, September 21). *Religious Composition of India*. Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/21/religious-composition-of-india/>

Rinčić, I., Muzur, A., & Sodeke, S. O. (2018). *Sex selection, gender selection, and sexism*. In *Clinical Ethics At the Crossroads of Genetic and Reproductive Technologies* (pp. 113–130). Elsevier.

Rukmini, S. (2014). *2-child norm for local bodies hurts sex ratio*. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/twochild-norm-for-local-bodies-hurts-sex-ratio/article6388785.ece>

Waldman, A. (2003, November 7). *States in India Take New Steps To Limit Births*. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/07/world/states-in-india-take-new-steps-to-limit-births.html>

Yardley, J. (2010, August 22). *India Tries Using Cash Bonuses to Slow Birthrates*. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/world/asia/22india.html>