

# The enlightenment of other countries' birth policy to our country

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**Abstract:** At present, China is in a period of rapid population ageing, a clear trend of ageing, and a long period of population development. Appropriate adjustment of the birth policy is conducive to sustained and healthy economic development and improvement of the population structure, we should maintain a reasonable size of the labor force, slow down population ageing, and boost economic vitality. Therefore this article selects 8 countries to carry on the combing analysis regarding its birth policy, the policy contrast. To provide reference for China's policy implementation.

**Keywords:** Fertility, Policy

## 1. Introduction

In 2016, China's fertility policy shifted from family planning to a comprehensive two-child policy, as the ageing population deepened. The natural population growth rate was 5.86 per 1,000 in 2016, lower than the target of 6 per 1,000 per year set out in the 13th Five-Year Plan<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, China's population grew by 8.09 million in 2016, which was also below the expected annual average growth rate of 9 million. This is in part due to the lack of supportive policies implemented in China. Population development is closely linked to the adjustment of the implementation of fertility policies. China is now in a period of accelerated population ageing, a clear trend towards advanced ageing and a long population development cycle. Appropriate adjustments to fertility policies are conducive to sustainable and healthy economic development, improving the population structure, maintaining a reasonable labour force size, slowing down the rate of population ageing and enhancing the vitality of economic development. Therefore, this paper selects eight countries to sort out and analyse their fertility policies and compare them. This paper provides a reference for the implementation of China's policies.

## 2. National policy

### 2.1 History of the development of China's fertility policy

#### 2.1.1 Phase I (1969-2013): Family Planning Phase

China's total population reached 800 million in 1969, with an annual population growth rate of 2.74%. 1974 saw the population rise to 900 million and the contradiction between the rapid population growth and the economy became apparent, with China's GDP per capita of only 314 yuan, significantly lower than the level of Japan during the same period<sup>2</sup>. In the four years between 1974 and 1978, China's population grew by about 50 million, but its GDP share of the world fell from 2.7122% to 1.742%. In 1973, the first national conference on family planning officially proposed a policy of "late, thin and few". In June 1978, a meeting of the State Council's Leading Group on Family Planning further clarified the meaning of "late, scarce and few", which may have been the prototype of family planning. Between 1974 and 1981, the average annual population growth rate fell from 2.38% to 1.38%. In order to bridge the gap between the state's family planning policy and the public's reluctance to have fewer children and to ease the contradiction between the two, on 13 April 1984 the Central Government forwarded Document No. 7, "Report on the Situation of Family Planning", which called for further improvement of the current specific policies on family planning in December 2001 the Law of the People's Republic of China on

<sup>1</sup>Outline of the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China, or the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020)

<sup>2</sup>Japan's GDP per capita in 1974 was US\$4,353

Family Planning was promulgated, and on 17 December 2006 the The Organization Central Committee and the State Council issued the Decision on Comprehensively Strengthening Population and Family Planning Work to Coordinate and Resolve Population Issues. It has now been 40 years since the restriction of population planning. The family planning policy has successfully controlled population growth and the fertility rate has shown a significant reduction until 2004, when the average annual growth rate of China's population has dropped to 0.81% and the problem of resource constraints in China has been alleviated.

### 2.1.2. Phase 2 (2013 to present): The Open Two-Child Policy Phase (13-year policy effects, content, provinces)

Since 2010, China has gradually entered an ageing society<sup>3</sup> and the proportion of the labour force has been decreasing year by year since 2010. In 2013, the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Organization of China on Several Major Issues of Comprehensively Deepening Reform, adopted at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, proposed to "launch the implementation of the policy of allowing couples with one child to have two children", and in December of the same year, the State Council of the CPC Central Committee In December of the same year, the State Council of the Communist Organization of China issued the Opinions on Adjusting and Improving the Fertility Policy, which clarified the importance and general thinking of fertility policy adjustment. The fertility rate in 2015 was significantly lower than that in 2000<sup>4</sup>, and academics are divided on this issue. Xu Shiyang believes that relaxing the fertility policy will not lead to a population boom, but will also bring many benefits such as normalizing the sex ratio at birth and easing social conflicts. However, Cheng Enfu and others argue that China should implement a tougher "one-child policy", fearing that a relaxed fertility policy would lead to a sudden increase in population and would result in a decline in GDP per capita. The Communiqué of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee on 29 October 2015 proposed to promote balanced population development, adhere to the basic state policy of family planning, improve the population development strategy, fully implement the policy of allowing two children per couple, actively carry out actions to cope with the ageing of the population, and stipulate that eligible couples are allowed to have a "second child". "After the full liberalisation of the two-child policy, the birth rate increased from 12.07% to 12.95% in 2015-2016, even so, China's fertility rate is still at a very low fertility rate in the worl<sup>5</sup>, and the average annual population growth rate has dropped to 0.51%, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: China specific policies and contents.

Year	Specific Policies	Policy content
1978	Late, sparse and scarce" Report on the Status of FamilyPlanning	New requirement of "preferably one and at most two" children per couple
1984	Law of the People's Republic of China on Family Planning	(1) continue to open the mouth slightly wider in a controlled manner in rural areas, where two children can be born under the prescribed conditions and with approval; (2) firmly stop the big mouth, i.e. strictly prohibit the birth of two and more children than planned; and (3) strictly prohibit favouritism, and firmly punish cadres who engage in unethical practices in the issue of childbirth. That is, the so-called "opening small mouths and closing big ones." [1] On 29 December 2001, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Family Planning was issued
2001	The Decision on Comprehensively Strengthening Population and Family Planning Work	"The State shall stabilize the current fertility policy, encourage citizens to marry later and raise children later, and advocate that a couple have one child; those who meet the conditions stipulated in laws and regulations may request arrangements for the birth of a second child. Specific measures shall be prescribed by the people'scongresses of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government or their standing committees."
2006	to Comprehensively Address	On 17 December 2006, the Organization Central Committee and the State Council issued
2013	The Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Organization of China on Several Major Issues of Comprehensively Deepening Reform	"Launching the implementation of the policy of allowing couples with one child to have two children"
2015	Population and Family Planning Amendment Act	"The state promotes two children for one couple"

<sup>3</sup> 10% of the total population aged 60 years or over, or 7% of the total population aged 65 years or over as a criterion for a country or region to enter an ageing society

<sup>4</sup> The total fertility rate in 2000 was 1.6 and in 2015 it was 1.67

<sup>5</sup> A total fertility rate between 1.8 and 1.5 is called a very low fertility level, and a total fertility rate below 1.5 is called a very low fertility level.

## 2.2 History of the development of fertility policy in the United States

At the end of the 18th century, the population of the United States was only 5.3 million. The lack of labour was not enough to meet the country's development and the United States began to adopt a policy of encouraging childbirth and began to bring in immigrants, granting them land titles and encouraging their children to have children through tax breaks. In 1862, after the Civil War, the US government passed the Homestead Act, which provided that "every foreign immigrant desiring to become a citizen of the United States shall be entitled to 160 acres of land", and in 1865, when the US government enacted the Contract Labour Act, it asked Congress to appropriate funds to pay for the travel expenses of immigrants who could not afford to pay for them, and Secretary of State Seward was also a strong advocate of the establishment of schools for foreigners. Secretary of State Seward also strongly advocated the establishment of schools to create conditions for the education of foreign children [2]. As a result of these measures, the total fertility rate for white women remained at 4.1 per cent and for black women at 5.2 per cent from 1863 to 1914 [2] and the population grew nearly sixfold over the next 50 years, easing labour shortages for a time. In terms of leave, women who give birth are entitled to 12 weeks of unpaid maternity leave and some states have paid maternity leave for women, but there is no uniform system of paid maternity leave support across the country. Various types of maternity cash benefits are available for poor families, families with disabled and single-parent children.[3] The immigrant population has become a significant part of the US population and the increase in immigration and the number of their children has ensured that there is no need for an explicit maternity policy. The net immigrant population in the US reached 8.86 million in 1997, and from 1977 to 2017, the total US population grew at a steady rate, fluctuating around 300 million, reaching 328 million in 2018, without creating a serious demographic problem. The United States has thus become the third most populous country in the world, after China and India, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: US specific policies and content.

Year	Specific Policies	Policy content
1862	The Homestead Act	"160 acres of land available to all foreign immigrants who wish to become U.S. citizens"
1865	The Contract Labour Act	Congress asked to allocate funds to pay for travel expenses for migrants who cannot afford to pay and to create conditions for the education of foreign children

## 2.3 History of fertility policy development in typical Asian countries

After independence in 1965, Singapore faced a number of social and economic problems, with food shortages being particularly pronounced. After the introduction of the birth limitation policy, Singapore's total fertility rate rapidly fell from 4.46% in 1966 to 1.82% in 1977, below the population replacement level for the first time<sup>6</sup>. The total fertility rate in Singapore was 1.61% in 1985, and only 1.43% in 1986. The early onset of ageing made the Singapore government realise the importance of adjusting its fertility policy. The first round of fertility encouragement policy was instituted in 1987, which cushioned the declining fertility rate in the short term [5]. The government made two changes: on the one hand, it relaxed the government's demographic disincentives; on the other hand, it introduced some limited incentives. The measures taken on the economic front were: (1) Relaxation of tax relief on personal income tax. (2) In 1987 the Minister of Finance, Chad Hoo, proposed in his budget speech that the tax credit would be increased by a small amount. In his budget speech, Finance Minister Chad Hu proposed a special tax rebate for couples who had a third child on or after 1 January 1987.[6] The Singapore government re-introduced the Marriage and Childbirth Package in 2000 and continued to strengthen the incentives in 2004, 2008, 2013 and 2015. However, these policies have not significantly boosted Singapore's fertility rate, but have only somewhat mitigated the magnitude of the fertility decline, with Singapore's total fertility rate remaining at around 1.2 since 2003[5] and falling to 1.14% in 2018.

Japan experienced a fertility peak after World War II, and in an effort to curb this high fertility rate, Japan became the first country in the world to limit population growth. Abortion became legalized in 1948 when the Diet passed the Eugenics Protection Law, which supported reasonable contraception. This policy led to a decline in Japan's fertility rate in the 1950s to half that of the 1940s [7]. In 1957 Japan's total fertility rate fell to world replacement level and in 1989 Japan's total fertility was 1.57%. By this time, the Japanese government became aware of the problems caused by low fertility rates and adopted

<sup>6</sup> Replacement level, a level of fertility sufficient to maintain the population at a generational renewal level with no increase or decrease in numbers, typically 2.1

policies to encourage childbirth. The Japanese government introduced a child allowance policy whereby children under the age of three receive 15,000 yen per month and those between the ages of three and 15 receive 10,000 yen per month. To reduce the pressure of raising children, the Government established the Child Safety Bureau and amended the Child Care Leave Law several times to provide 14 weeks of maternity leave for women and 8 weeks for husbands. 1991 saw the launch of the "Women's Employment Campaign" and the establishment of the "Employment Promotion Centre". In 1994, the government enacted the "Angel Plan", and in 2002, the government gradually improved childcare-related leave and childcare services. In 2003, the government enacted the Basic Law for Measures against a Society with Fewer Children. However, the effect of the policy was not satisfactory, and the total fertility rate fell to 1.26 in 2005, and in 2015, for the first time, Japan's population began to experience negative growth, with one fifth of the population aged 65 and over, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Specific policies and contents of typical Asian countries.

Country	Year	Specific Policies	Policy content
Singapore	1965 1969 1970 1987 2013	The Family Planning Act "Abortion Law" "Voluntary sterilisation method" New population policy regulations enacted White Paper on Population	Maintaining a relatively stable population in the future Legislation to allow abortion Enforcement of voluntary birth control laws Families are encouraged to aim for three children and measures have been taken to encourage people to have a third child by cutting income tax, giving priority to primary school enrolment, subsidised childcare allowances, childbirth allowances, priority housing allocation, discouraging abortion and sterilisation, special leave arrangements for married female civil servants, strengthening marriage planning, establishing educational planning for family life, and providing incentives for those who have more than two children Increase Singapore's population by 30% to 6.9 million by 2030
Japan	1948 1989 2004 2006 2007	The Eugenic Protection Act Amending the Child Care Leave Act. Basic Law on Measures for a Society with Fewer Children Responses to the New Decline in Childhood Japan's Focused Strategy for Supporting Children and Families	Support for reasonable contraception, abortion becomes legalised Provision is made for 14 weeks of maternity leave for women and 8 weeks for husbands. Building a healthy childcare society Development of "Family Day", "Family Week" Re-examining the way we live and work
Korea	1961 2005 2006	The Mother and Child Health Act Basic Law on Low Fertility, Ageing Society "Five Year Basic Plan"	Abortion becomes legalised Incentives for marriage, childbirth, child rearing, etc. Tax relief for families, parental leave for parents, subsidies for children under 4 years of age, etc.
Indonesia	1968 1992	"Five Year Plan" The Population and Happy Family Development Act.	"Effort should be concentrated on controlling population growth and reducing birth and death rates" Establishing the status of population and family planning work

Korea's economy was unstable between 1950 and 1953 due to the Korean War, and the population grew to 20 million in 1950 and 25 million in 1960, with a total fertility rate of 6.09%. The rapid growth of the population had affected the economy as a whole, so in 1961 the government established a family planning programme, the Maternal and Child Health Act was enacted to curb the rapid growth of the population, abortion was legalised, publicity was increased, and the post of family planning worker was made official, along with birth control incentives. The total fertility rate continued to decline in 1990. At this time, the government did not adopt an explicit incentive policy, but simply stopped its population restriction policy and maintained a neutral attitude towards fertility, neither encouraging nor restricting it. In 2000, with 7.2 per cent of the population aged 65 and over, Korea had entered an ageing society<sup>7</sup>. The total fertility rate fell to 1.08 per cent in 2005. Korean scholars believe that if the fertility rate continues at this rate, Korea's population will be reduced to 1.4 million by the year 2200, and that an excessively small population will lead to the country's demise.[8] Korea has adopted the Basic Law on Low Fertility and Ageing Society and established the Committee on Low Fertility and Ageing Society and the Headquarters for Low Fertility and Ageing Society Policy under the President. In 2006, the government introduced a five-year basic plan to address the problem of low fertility and an ageing

<sup>7</sup> Internationally, it is common for countries or regions to reach 10% of the total population aged 60 or over, or 7% of the total population aged 65 or over, as the criteria for entering an ageing society.

population. Policies included tax relief for families, parental leave for parents, and subsidies for children under four years of age. The total fertility rate rebounded in 2006-2007, but began to fall in 2008 after the policy was implemented. Since the implementation of the policy to encourage fertility, Korea's total fertility rate has remained below 1.4, with an overall downward trend, and hit an all-time low of 0.98 in 2018.

In 1945 Indonesia defeated the Dutch and drove out the invaders to gain independence. A new country had just been established and its limited resources and national strength could not support an overpopulation; in 1967 Indonesia had a high total fertility rate of 5.58% but a GDP of 5.668 billion, or 0.2494% of the world. A family planning policy was therefore initiated. In 1968, the Indonesian government established the National Family Planning Association. In the same year, the Indonesian government included population control in its first five-year plan (April 1969-March 1974), sending personnel to Singapore to learn modern contraceptive techniques, adding family planning-related courses to medical schools, and establishing mobile clinics to facilitate access to family planning. In 1972, a population plan was drawn up to include 6 million people in family planning between 1971 and 1975 and to reduce the average number of children per family to 2 in order to halve the birth rate by the year 2000. To achieve this plan, Indonesian law set a minimum age of marriage for men, encouraged women to have children after the age of 20, preferably stopping at 30, and spacing births preferably at 3-year intervals [10]. As a result of this plan, Indonesia's population growth rate fell from 2.3% to 1.6% between 1972 and 1996. In 2009, the Indonesian government established the 'Indonesian National Family Agency', a law that makes population control an important factor in national development. As a result of these policies, Indonesia's fertility rate has been in decline since 1976.

#### ***2.4 History of the development of fertility policies in typical European countries***

In 1945, Germany had a total population of 62.45 million and a fertility rate of 1.53%, lower than that of France at the same time<sup>8</sup>. In 1953 the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs was established, which gradually developed into the current Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, responsible for a wide range of family matters relating to childbirth. In 1964, the total fertility rate in Germany rose to 2.53%, and in 1970 it began to fall below replacement level, the highest reduction in the total fertility rate of any developed country, until 1994, when it had fallen to a historic low of 1.24%. In 2002 the "Sustainable Family Policy" was introduced and the "Family Policy Alliance" was set up in an attempt to reduce the conflict between family and work. 2004 saw the adoption of a reform aimed at increasing the number of public childcare places. 2007 saw the introduction of nurseries for younger children and the introduction of a system of income-related childcare leave. A system of income-related childcare leave was introduced in 2007. In order to alleviate the conflict between work and family time and to increase the fertility rate [3], the government began a policy of granting child allowances, parental allowances, childcare allowances, the right to health during pregnancy for working women, maternity and parental leave, and maternity insurance benefits. The policy states that for families with children up to the age of 14 months, the government provides a care allowance to compensate parents for the loss of family income due to caring for a newborn child. Parents with children under the age of 18 can receive a child allowance to cover the costs of their children's education and living expenses. The Protection of Working Mothers Act provides that all women working in Germany, whether they are full-time contract employees, temporary employees, domestic workers or interns, cannot be dismissed after pregnancy and that working women who are pregnant or breastfeeding have the privilege of staying away from dangerous working conditions in order to protect their health. [4] The implementation of these policies continues to be ineffective, the population growth rate is chronically negative, the total population is growing at a negative or zero rate and the rate of population ageing is still slowly increasing; the implementation of these policies cannot reverse the ageing situation, but only slow it down, as shown in Figure 1.

In 1970, Sweden's total population was 8 million, rising to 10 million in 2017, with an overall slow upward trend in the total population, but with a high and fluctuating total fertility rate, which is below the world replacement level. The government has started to introduce various high welfare policies to increase fertility levels. The Swedish government requires municipalities to provide public care for children between the ages of 1 and 12 years. The government grants a monthly allowance of € 79 for children up to the age of 19, and families with more than three children can receive an extended family allowance. The government has also established childcare allowances, child allowances and caregiver

<sup>8</sup> The fertility rate in France was 2.9% over the same period

allowances to ease the burden of raising children [9]. The Swedish government also gives women one year's paid breastfeeding leave, and provides for a country where fathers can take maternity leave. 2002 saw the extension of 'Dad's Month' to 60 days, with the government guaranteeing the retention of the same position during the leave. Parents also have 60 days of sick leave for children under the age of 12 who are ill. In addition, the government provides childcare services for children over the age of one. The government also supports the development of private educational institutions for children and encourages communities to establish free open kindergartens and family childcare centres. Furthermore, the government has begun to focus on the employment of women by offering them a large number of jobs with flexible hours to the point of being able to look after young children, and by retaining women on maternity leave in their previous positions until the end of their maternity leave. As a result of these measures, the employment rate for women in Sweden is higher than the European average. Sweden's total fertility rate has also risen slowly, from 1.56% in 2000 to 1.92% in 2015, as shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4: Typical European country specific policies and content.

Country	Year	Specific Policies	Policy content
Germany	2002	"Sustainable Family Policy"	Reducing the conflict between family and work
Sweden	1974	"Family Policy Alliance"	All women working in Germany cannot be dismissed
	1995	Working Mothers Protection Bill	Legislation for fathers to take maternity leave
		Parental Leave Act	Provides for the first father-only, non-transferable, 30-day "Father's Month" holiday

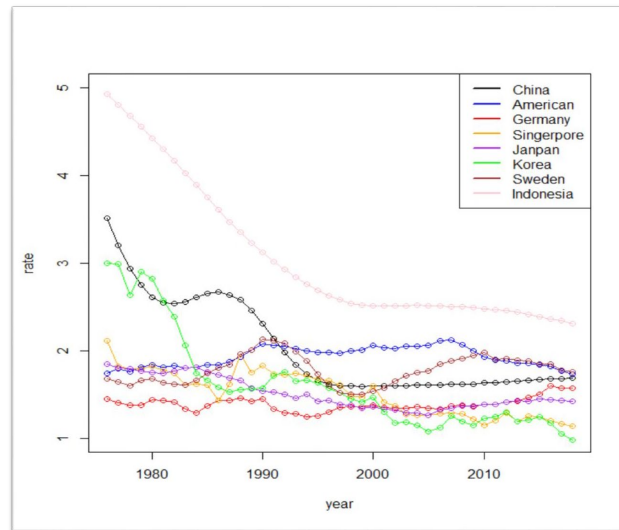


Figure 1: Total fertility rate line chart for the eight countries selected for this paper.

Table 5: Comparison of fertility rates for the eight countries selected for this paper.

Country	Evolution of the fertility rate (1976-2016)	Total fertility rate (%) in 2016	Population policy directions for 2016
China	From a steep decline Slightly enhanced	1.68	Comprehensive Second Birth
United States	Smooth fluctuations	1.82	Neither Encouraged nor restricted
Germany	Slowly fluctuating at low levels	1.57	Encouraging childbirth
Singapore	Slow decline	1.2	Encouraging childbirth
Korea	From sharp decline to gentle decline	1.17	Encouraging childbirth
Japan	Slow fluctuations	1.44	Encouraging childbirth
Sweden	Wide range of fluctuations	1.85	Encouraging childbirth
Indonesia	Sharp decline to gentle fluctuation	2.36	Restrictions on childbirth

### 3. Conclusion

A study of fertility policy reveals that it is closely linked to three main areas: the granting of family allowances, increased parental leave, and tax relief. These three aspects are understood in detail from the above. However, there is still disagreement about the policy of protection for women. Women are forced to leave the labour market in order to raise young children, and the lack of job security leads to a lower willingness to have children. In the above, the female employment rate in Sweden is higher than the European rate for the same period, which has led to a fluctuating fertility rate of around 1.8 in a European country where fertility levels are generally very low. To increase fertility levels, therefore, policies to protect women need to be increased. China is currently at the crossroads of considering whether to fully liberalise its fertility policy. (Zhao, Lei and Zhao, Xiaolei, 2018; Wan, 2016) argue that today's ageing situation is an inevitable result of modern technological development and cannot be solved simply by increasing the number of people. And China will never reward childbirth as Western countries do, given that it has huge economic pressure. And (Liang and Huang, 2018; Zhou, 2018) believe that population is the fundamental factor to enhance innovation and the most important factor to develop the economy. Therefore, the country should stop population planning and study and formulate strategies and policies to promote population development as soon as possible to improve China's current situation of increasing childlessness and accelerated ageing.

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