China - Population Change

At one time China had encouraged large families so they had more workers and in rural areas people had large families to help with farming and support parents in old age.

In 1975 an average Chinese family had 3 children and, if this continued, China's population would have risen to 2 billion in the next 1000 years. The Chinese government introduced the one child policy in 1979 in order to slow down the rate of population growth in China. The one-child policy meant that each couple was allowed just one child once they were over the age of 25 and had been given permission.

Benefits, including extended maternity leave, paid medical and hospital expenses, priority access to housing, employment, childcare and schooling for the child were offered to families that followed this rule but these were taken away if the couple have more than one child. Also because there were fewer babies being born more care was provided for the lesser number of infants and their mums so therefore there were much healthier births so there was more chance of survival so people won't have lots of children in case many die.

While the policy has reduced China's growth it has raised several other issues. One of these is that because of the falling birth rate the population structure is becoming unbalanced between young and old, as the relative number of elderly people rises. At the same time there are fewer people of working age to support the growing number of elderly dependents. In the future China could have an ageing population.

Millions of baby girls have ended up homeless, in orphanages or even killed in China, drowned or abandoned, so their parents could try for a boy who would be able to support their parents in their old age - daughters having entered their husband's family. As a result, the gender balance of the Chinese population has become distorted. Today it is thought that men outnumber women by more than 60 million in China.

The increased shortage of women lead on to further problems such as more prostitution, much older marriages, richer men offering prospective brides money and abduction of women. In China 2 abducted women were imprisoned for attempting to murder their husbands.

If the family have more than one child the authorities could come and kill it for example it was revealed that officials in one Chinese village had drowned a new-born baby in front of its parents because he was the third baby and his father had no money to pay the fine.

Since the international outcry of the stories describing the killings of infant girls the Chinese government have been forced to compromised and have now allowed couples to apply to have a second child if their first child is a girl, or if both parents are themselves only-children and if their child is disabled.

It has been said that 97.5% of abortions are performed on female foetuses. This is because of sonic imaging and amniocentesis being used in China to determine the gender of foetuses and to abort them if they are female.