

构建生育友好型社会，应对低生育率挑战

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摘 要

人口问题始终是人类社会发展面临的重大问题，其实质是人口发展与经济社会发展、生态资源开发之间的失调。20 世纪后半叶，人口过度增长引发了全球气候变化、粮食危机等一系列问题。进入 21 世纪，越来越多的国家开始面临低生育率导致的人口老化、甚至人口负增长问题，这同样对经济社会发展构成了挑战。

生育革命导致世界人口发展格局出现变化，低生育率成为不可逆转的全球趋势。1960 年全球仅有 2 个国家的总和生育率低于 2.0，而到了 2018 年有近 80 个国家的总和生育率低于 2.0，约四成的国家已进入低生育社会。

进入 21 世纪，中国的总和生育率也在不断下降，其成因是多方面的，诸如儿童养育成本过高降低了育龄人口生育意愿，结婚率下降助推出生人口减

少，初婚初育年龄推迟导致人口规模增长放缓，女性追求实现自身价值主动控制生育胎次等。纵观国际部分国家和地区的发展进程，低生育率往往通过影响人口年龄结构，在中长期导致社会经济领域面临系统性风险，如劳动力供给不足导致经济发展低迷、老龄化程度加深导致社会保障支出压力增大等。一般而言，通过公共政策调节人口结构具有延时性，因此中国应尽快制定鼓励生育的公共政策。

达能认为，中国政府可以采用制度保障、资源供给、广泛动员、舆论引导等手段，全面构建生育友好型社会，以便有效应对潜在的低生育率风险。我们的建议涉及四个维度。

第一，人口政策的顶层设计：重新审视生育政策，构建更具包容性的人口政策框架。

第二，生育支持的政策构建：建立完善的福利津贴与减免税制度，制定产假/育儿假制度，构建全覆盖的托育机构，并为育龄女性的职场安全提供制度性保障。

第三，婚育观念的舆论引导：倡导婚俗改革，改变“重男轻女”的生育观念，推进性别平等进程。

第四，形成生育友好的劳动力市场：鼓励企业承担社会责任，打造家庭友好型企业文化。

最后需要强调的是，中国少子老龄化程度存在巨大的区域差异，因此制定人口政策时需要考虑各地差异，因地制宜。

中国政府已经充分认识到低生育率的潜在风险，正在积极制定人口长期发展战略，并着力促进生育政策和相关经济社会政策配套衔接。这显示了中国政府对人口问题的准确判断和具有前瞻性的系统治理理念。我们相信，只要尊重人口发展规律，中国一定能够成功应对低生育风险，实现经济社会可持续发展。

1. 生育革命与全球人口演变格局

人口问题始终是人类社会发展面临的重大问题，其实质是人口发展与经济社会发展、生态资源开发之间的失调。20 世纪后半叶，人口过度增长引发了全球气候变化、粮食危机等一系列问题。进入 21 世纪，越来越多的国家开始面临低生育率导致的人口老化、甚至人口负增长问题，这同样对社会经济发展构成了挑战。

2019 年全球共有 76.74 亿人口，若不考虑突发因素影响，未来几十年全球人口仍将继续增长，但增速逐渐放缓。西方学者在 1985 年提出了“生育革命”的概念，用来描述生育率随着现代化发展而不断下降的过程，划分为三个阶段^{1/2}：一是死亡率下降驱动阶段，健康革命使人类不再需要保持高生育率来抗衡高死亡率，总和生育率（Total Fertility Rate，简称 TFR）下降到 3.0 左右；二是生育意愿转变驱动阶段，情感性生育意愿代替功利性生育意愿³成为生育的主要动因，TFR 降至 2.0 左右；三是生育成本约束驱动阶段，生育成本提高导致人们的生育意愿不能完全实现，TFR 降到 2.0 以内。

目前，全球近 80 个国家处于生育革命的第三阶段（TFR<2.0），主要集中在欧洲、北美、亚洲东中部地区；约 50 个国家处于第二阶段（TFR 为 2.0~3.0），主要分布在拉丁美洲、南亚、北非地区；其余国家处于第一阶段或尚未步入生育革命（TFR>3.0），主要分布在撒哈拉以南非洲地区⁴。生育革命进程的地区差异导致全球人口格局发生深刻变化：

其一，低生育率已成为不可逆转的全球趋势。20 世纪中叶以来，人类社会经历了普遍高生育率、生育率分化、逐渐向普遍低生育率转变的过程。如图 1 所示，1960 年世界平均 TFR 为 4.98，至少有 100 个国家 TFR 处于 6.0~

1 Easterlin, Richard, A. Crimmins, & Eileen, M. (1985). The fertility revolution. University of Chicago Press.

2 Schultz, T. (1986). Population and Development Review, 12(1), 127-140.

3 功利性需求主要指人们对于子女的收入效用、劳动效用、保障效用、扩张家庭地位的效用等方面的需求。

4 根据世界银行发布的数据统计。

8.2 之间，仅有 2 个国家低于 2.0；1980 年出现分化，TFR 大于 6.0 的国家约 60 个，TFR 低于 2.0 的国家达到 26 个；2018 年世界平均 TFR 为 2.41，TFR 低于 2.0 的国家约 80 个，TFR 大于 6.0 的国家仅剩 2 个。

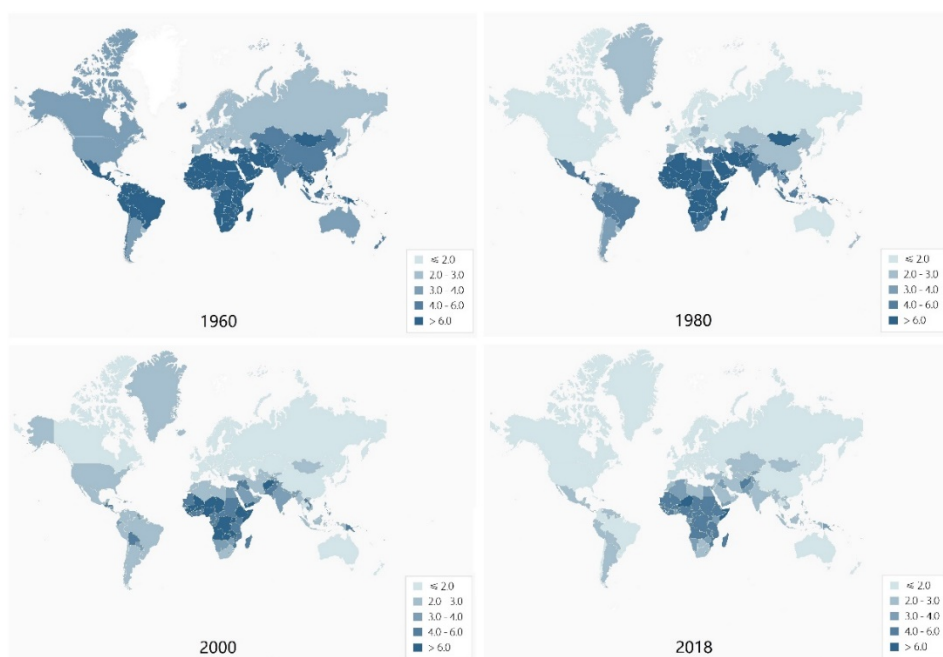


图 1：全球总和生育率（TFR）空间格局演变（1960—2018）

资料来源：世界银行数据库（<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>）

第二，全球人口规模空间分布重心不断向南部欠发达地区移动。在生育革命的影响下，人口规模占比的空间格局也在发生变化。图 2 显示，欧洲和

中亚地区的人口占比从 1960 年的 22.0%锐减至 2018 年的 12.1%；与之对应，拉美、南亚、中东、非洲地区的人口占比则持续上升。这对发达国家和部分发展中国家的社会经济可持续发展构成严峻挑战，并对全球经济的增长产生影响。

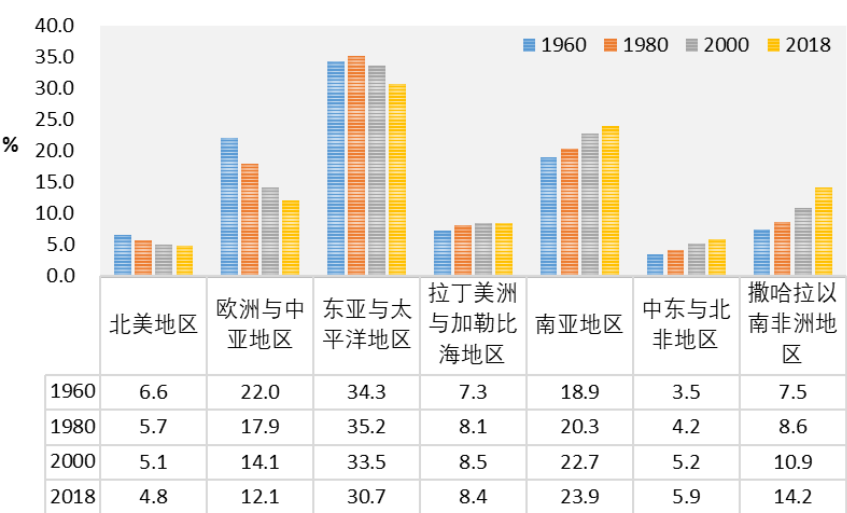


图 2：全球人口规模占比的空间格局演变（1960—2018）

资料来源：世界银行数据库（<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>）

2. 低生育率：不可逆转的全球趋势

2.1. 低生育率危机在全球蔓延

20 世纪后期，全球人口规模过快增长的趋势得到明显遏制，这被誉为“20 世纪人类的奇迹”。但随后却发现很多欧洲国家的生育水平持续下降，甚至低于人口世代更替水平⁵。这一现象不断蔓延，全球约半数的国家都进入了低生育社会。未来几十年，这些国家将先后迎来人口峰值，随后进入人口负增长阶段。

2.2. 低生育率抑或导致社会系统性风险

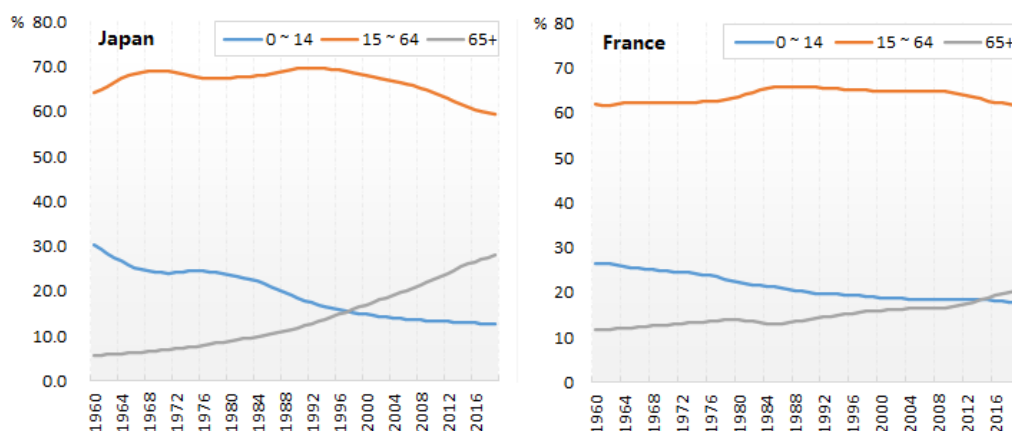
超低生育率通过影响人口年龄结构可能导致社会经济领域面临系统性风险，如劳动力供给减少、老龄化程度加深、储蓄消费结构畸变、财政支出负担加重等。

首先，低生育率导致中长期劳动力人口供给不足，造成经济发展低迷。

低生育率在中长期将导致劳动力供给急剧下降甚至断层。从经济发展角度看，劳动力一旦得不到稳定供给，即使劳动年龄人口占比较高，也会对既有的社会经济结构造成冲击。以法国和日本为例，法国尽管在相当长时期内劳动年龄人口占比低于日本（图 3），但其拥有较高且稳定的生育率，保证了劳动力人口的稳定供给，对经济可持续发展提供了人力资源保障。日本的情

5 世代更替水平是一个变量，而不是常量。目前最多被引用的是发达国家的世代更替水平 2.1，实际上世代更替水平受多种因素影响（如婴儿死亡率、儿童死亡率、育龄期死亡率、性别比等），同时还与社会发展水平高度相关，有学者认为发展中国家的世代更替水平普遍在 2.5-3.3。参见：Espenshade, T., Guzman, J., & Westoff, C. (2003). The Surprising Global Variation in Replacement Fertility. Population Research and Policy Review, 22(5/6), 575-583.

况则不同，20 世纪 90 年代起，日本 15~64 岁劳动年龄人口占比快速下降，少子老龄化程度随之加深。经济学领域有学者研究认为，人口结构急剧变化对日本经济产生多重负面影响。低生育率引发的人口结构变化是日本经济低迷的重要因素之一。



图图 3：日本和法国的年龄结构变化趋势对比（1960—2019）

资料来源：世界银行数据库（<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>）

其次，低生育率加速了老龄化进程，导致社会保障体系遭受挑战。

低生育率和老龄化导致老年人口占比快速上升，加之劳动年龄人口占比下降，推动了老年抚养比的不断提高。这对社会保障体系，尤其是对养老保障体系带来巨大挑战，欧洲国家就饱受困扰。2018 年，欧盟 27 国的社会保障福利总支出占 GDP 总量的比例为 26.7%，在各项社会保障福利中位列前三

的是养老金、医疗保健、儿童/家庭福利，比例分别为 40.3%、29.2%和 8.3%⁶，其中 70%的医疗保健支出用于老年人，少子老龄化带来的财政负担可见一斑。高福利成本不仅加剧了财政负担，而且可能拖累经济增长并引发诸多社会问题。

3. 国际经验借鉴

遏制生育率下降、减缓老龄化进程，已成为许多国家人口政策的重心。发达国家鼓励生育的政策框架普遍较为完善，采取的政策工具也非常类似，包括经济支持政策(津贴/减税)、时间政策(产假/育儿假、弹性工作时间等)、托育服务供给和职场权益保障(保留工作岗位、提供培训等)。但由于各国的政策侧重点和支持力度存在差异，导致生育率调节效果有所不同。进入 21 世纪，法国、瑞典、俄罗斯、德国等国家的总和生育率出现回升，而韩国、新加坡等国家的总和生育率的下降速度虽然有所放缓，但仍属于极低生育率(TFR<1.5)，甚至已跌至 1.0 附近。详见图 4。

⁶ 根据欧盟统计局数据(<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>)计算所得。

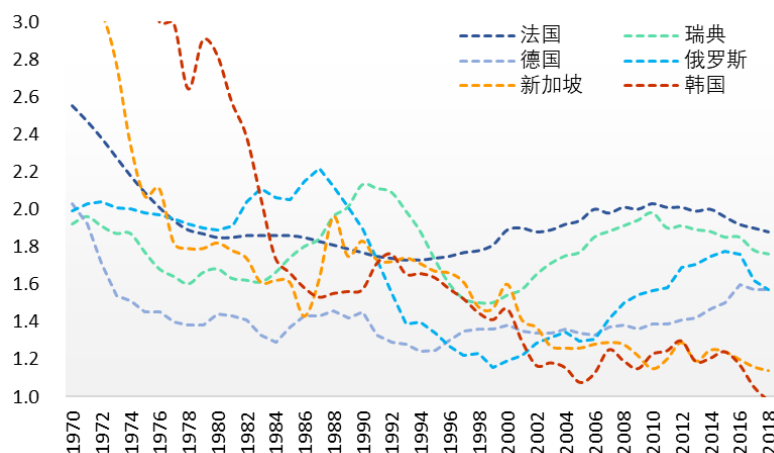


图 4：部分发达国家的总和生育率变动趋势（1960—2018）

资料来源：世界银行数据库（<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>）

法国：持续稳定的家庭政策是保持较高生育率的关键^{7&8}

法国生育友好的政策最早可以追溯到 1939 年颁布的《家庭法典》，确立了家庭政策⁹的雏形，其中就设置了儿童/家庭津贴。随着职业女性的增加，1970 年以后法国逐渐把“工作—家庭”平衡作为重要的政策目标。在政策支持下，法国的总和生育率一直保持在 1.7 以上，甚至在 2006~2014 年之间接近世代更替水平 2.1。2018 年法国的 TFR 为 1.88，位列欧洲之首。法国生

7 Magdalena Kacperska. The Importance of Family Policy for the Birth Rate and Activity Rate of Young European Females: An Analysis of France and Poland. Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan.

8 The French Social Security System IV Family Benefits. 3 March 2021 accessed via the website of Centre des Liaisons Européennes et Internationales de Sécurité Social https://www.cleiss.fr/docs/regimes/regime_france/an_4.html

9 家庭政策是指，国家通过制定法规制度、实施行动方案、配置可用资源，保障家庭生活条件、促进家庭组建和运行，使其发挥各项社会功能。参见：Kammerman S. B. (1994), Rodzina: problemy teorii i polityki, in: O polityce rodzinnej: definicje, zasady, praktyka, "Material z Zagranicy", IPISS, Warszawa.

育友好的家庭政策主要包括以下方面：

- ◆ 产假/育儿假制度。在法国，生育女性至少有 16 周的带薪产假，男性享有 11 个工作日的带薪陪产假。父母可以共用最长 3 年的无薪育儿假，在家照顾者每月可领取数额不等的照顾津贴。
- ◆ 现金补贴。法国为儿童和家庭提供丰厚的现金福利，包括女性生育后的一次性津贴、按月发放的家庭津贴、0~6 岁儿童托幼服务津贴、6~18 岁按学年发放的返校津贴等。此外，政府对多子女家庭、低收入家庭、单亲父母、残障儿童及其照顾者还会有额外的补贴。法国的现金补贴几乎覆盖了家庭生育/养育子女所必须的成本，也给就业女性提供了从市场购买所需照顾服务的可能。
- ◆ 税收减免。儿童的托育费用、部分学费均可以从父母应缴税基数中扣除；孩子越多父母享受的减免就越多。如果企业为员工举办托育机构，其成本可以进行税前抵扣。
- ◆ 儿童托育服务。法国提供了多样化的儿童保育模式，以满足不同家庭的需求，能让不同工作时间、不同工作性质的母亲有更多的选择。0~3 岁幼儿主要由托幼机构、注册保育员、家庭保育员看护，以便父母可以继续工作；3~6 岁儿童均可进入免费的公办幼儿园，适龄儿童入园率几乎达到

100%。

- ◆ 此外，法国的家庭政策还致力于保障非婚生子女及其父母的权利，鼓励企业为员工提供灵活的工作安排、提供托育服务等。

总体上，法国鼓励生育的家庭政策具有连续性和稳定性，确保民众在生育养育孩子的任何阶段都可获取足够的生育支持，实现“工作—家庭”平衡。这强化了育龄人口对生育养育的积极预期和充分信心，从而使得生育率保持在较高的稳定水平¹⁰。

瑞典：充分保障女性就业，鼓励男性分担照顾责任

瑞典家庭政策最重要的目标就是推动充分就业和促进性别平等，而鼓励生育、支持养育则是其内嵌目标。

首先，推动女性就业。瑞典政府几乎承担了儿童生育/养育的全部费用，通过“让成年公民参与劳动，国家最大程度帮助他们育儿¹¹”的去家庭化政策，保证了女性可以在工作和家庭之间自由选择。2018 年瑞典 15~64 岁女性劳动参与率高达 81.1%，与此同时总和生育率保持在 1.76（位列欧盟第二），是工作—家庭平衡的典范。

¹⁰ France's baby boom secret: get women into work and ditch rigid family norms. 21 March 2015 accessed via Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/21/france-population-europe-fertility-rate>

¹¹ Ketola, Outi and Kare Thomsen, Hanne Warming Nielsen. (1997). From Poor Relief to Social Rights and Social Care Services' Clienthood[A]. in Sipilä, Jorma, (ed.). Social Care Services: The Key to the Scandinavian Welfare Model[C]. Aldershot: Ashgate.

其次，促进性别平等。瑞典在 1974 年率先建立起父亲亲职假制度，鼓励男性共担照顾责任，促进儿童照顾劳动的性别平等化。在瑞典父母每人有 240 天的带薪育儿假，其中有 90 天是父亲/母亲的专有配额，不可相互转让。¹²

德国：赋予女性权利缓解生育压力，接纳国际移民补充育龄人口

1991-2006 年期间，德国的总和生育率一直处于低谷（<1.4），2006 年之后总体呈现上升趋势。2018 年达到 1.57，高于欧盟平均水平。在这个转变背后，有两类政策起到了举足轻重的作用¹²：

一是赋予女性权利，让生育养育孩子变得更加容易。2007 年德国出台的《联邦父母津贴和父母养育假法》规定了孕期和哺乳期妇女的工时限制、津贴、假期以及解雇禁止等，对孕哺期职员及整个新生儿家庭提供了全方位的保护，以期打消育龄人群的顾虑、促进生育水平提升。

二是瞄准国际移民，增加育龄人口。2007—2017 年间，德国共新增移民 465.77 万人，其中不少移民来自叙利亚、阿富汗、伊拉克等家庭规模较大的国家。国际移民对德国生育率的提升具有重要贡献。

¹² Ann-Zofie Duvander and Niklas Löfgren. Leave Policies and Research Country Report: Sweden[R]. https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2020/PMedited.Sweden.with_suplement.1sept2020.pdf. 6 March 2021 accessed.

¹² Why Germany's birth rate is rising and Italy's isn't. <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/06/29/why-germanys-birth-rate-is-rising-and-italys-isnt>. 29 June 2019 accessed The Economist.

俄罗斯：超长育儿假和高额生育补贴助推生育率短期快速提升

俄罗斯的总和生育率在 1999—2015 年间从 1.16 大幅提升至 1.78，这主要得益于超长的育儿假和高额的家庭/儿童津贴。

首先，1991 年俄罗斯的育儿假为 3 年，2014 年延长至 4 年半¹³。母亲休假期间由政府社保基金支付产假和育儿假津贴，保护了休假女性免受雇主支付能力及其他意外因素的影响而遭受损失。超长的育儿假并未导致 15-64 岁女性劳动参与率的下降，近十年来一直稳定在 68% 以上，高于欧盟国家平均水平。

其次，俄罗斯建立起一整套完善的生育补贴机制。每个孩子在满 1.5 周岁之前，视家庭收入情况，每月可获得 3000-6000 卢布的补贴。生育第二个（或以上）孩子的妇女，在孩子满 3 岁后可获得 45 万卢布的“母亲基金”，用于偿还住房贷款、支付教育费用、进行养老金储蓄¹⁴等。

韩国：密集的少子老龄化政策有效控制了生育率的快速下降

韩国于 1996 年取消计划生育后开始实行“新人口政策”，但由于“生育少子化”观念的强大惯性，生育率未见改善。2005 年起，韩国政府开始推行

13 全薪产假最少(单胎)140 天，包括产前 70 天和产后 70 天。半薪产假为 1 年半，领取相当于原工资 40% 的补贴，这笔补贴由国家社会保险基金支付，产假计入工龄。产妇在享受 1 年半的半薪产假之后，如果还想继续在家里照顾孩子，那么她可以继续休无薪产假，直到小孩满 3 岁，这期间的假期是没薪水的，不过雇主必须保留她的工作岗位。参见：Maternity Leave and Benefits in Russia, <https://www.angloinfo.com/how-to/russia/healthcare/pregnancy-birth/maternity-leave-benefits>, 3 March 2021 accessed.

14 Avdeyeva, O. A. (2011). Policy experiment in Russia: cash-for-babies and fertility change. Social Politics(3), 361.

鼓励生育的政策，制定了《低生育、老龄化社会基本法》，成立直属于总统的“低生育及老龄社会委员会”，在一段时期内遏制住了生育率的下跌。

2005 年以来，韩国政府已花费超过 150 万亿韩元试图提高出生率，主要用于修建免费托儿所、提供公共日托服务、多子女家庭经济补贴、育儿假津贴等¹⁵。2010 年后，政府还补充和完善了失业保险制度，保障女性员工的权益。2016 年后，政府将关注对象扩大至青年和新婚夫妇等群体，帮助他们解决就业、医疗、贷款及住房问题；把发放养育补助的儿童年龄从 14 岁放宽至 18 岁，月补助额也从 13 万韩元提高至 17 万韩元。除此之外，为了提高生育率，韩国政府还将政策方向定为尊重所有出生方式，保护未婚妈妈在社会上不受歧视。

根据 2005 年以来韩国的生育率变动情况来看，总和生育率快速下降的趋势得到扭转，并且在个别年份提升幅度较大，例如 2007 年和 2012 年 TFR 分别达到过 1.25 和 1.30（图 5）。与此同时，女性就业情况好转，15~64 岁女性劳动参与率由 2005 年的 54.7%提高至 2019 年的 60.1%，劳动力市场中女性占比也有所提高。

总体上，韩国的生育友好政策还是颇具成效的，一方面扭转了生育率快

¹⁵ Charlotte Gifford. Baby boom or bust: why South Korea is desperately trying to boost its birth rate. <https://www.worldfinance.com/featured/baby-boom-or-bust-why-south-korea-is-desperately-trying-to-boost-its-birth-rate>, 2019-10-10/2021-3-4. 4 March 2021 accessed.

速下降的颓势，延缓了人口规模减少的进程，另一方面为女性发展提供了有利的社会条件，为后续政策的开展打下了良好基础。但是自 2016 年后，韩国总和生育率又出现了较大幅度下降，2018 年甚至降至 0.98，这充分说明人口政策的实施是一个长期的过程，并且在实施过程中需要不断调整和完善，以便最终能够将生育率提升到稳定水平。

4. 中国的低生育率困境

中国已进入低生育社会，少子老龄化日益加深，且属于“未富先老”，未来存在诸多与人口年龄结构相关的不确定挑战。本部分将基于经验数据分析中国人口变动历史、低生育状况以及低生育率的成因。

4.1. 中国人口变动历史与现状

2019 年中国总人口 14 亿，是 1949 年的 2.58 倍。但是中国人口的增长速度不断减缓，年增长率已经从 20 世纪 60 年代的 2% 以上逐渐降低到 2019 年的 0.33%（见图 5）。20 世纪 90 年代初中国人口规模增长放缓，总和生育率也在 1992 年跌破 2.1。此时，政界和学界仍然密切关注庞大的人口规模，而较少意识到低生育率正在悄然改变着中国的人口结构。

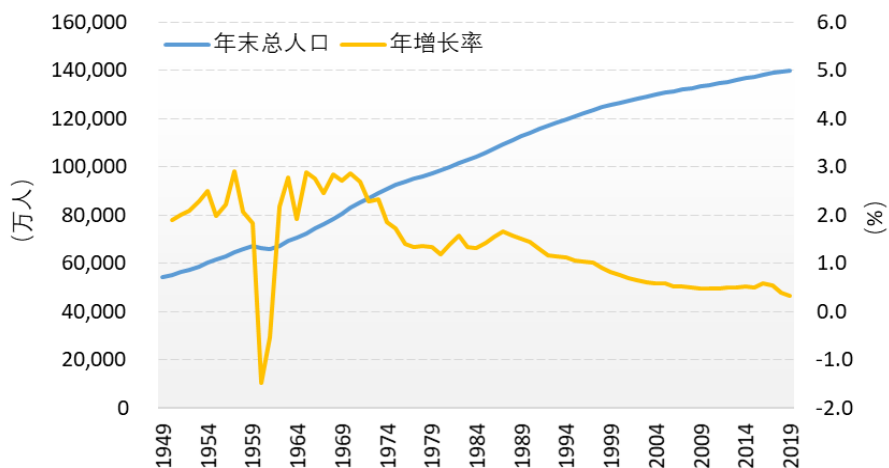


图 5：中国年末总人口变动和年增长率（1949—2019）

资料来源：中国国家统计局

从图 6 的中国人口年龄性别金字塔图可以看出，随着人口预期寿命的增加，金字塔向顶部延伸，老年人口占比增加。2015 年金字塔底部已经变得较小，如果生育率得不到提升，底部会进一步收紧，出现极不稳定的纺锤形人口结构；即使未来人口提升至世代更替水平，长期看总人口也会出现收缩。

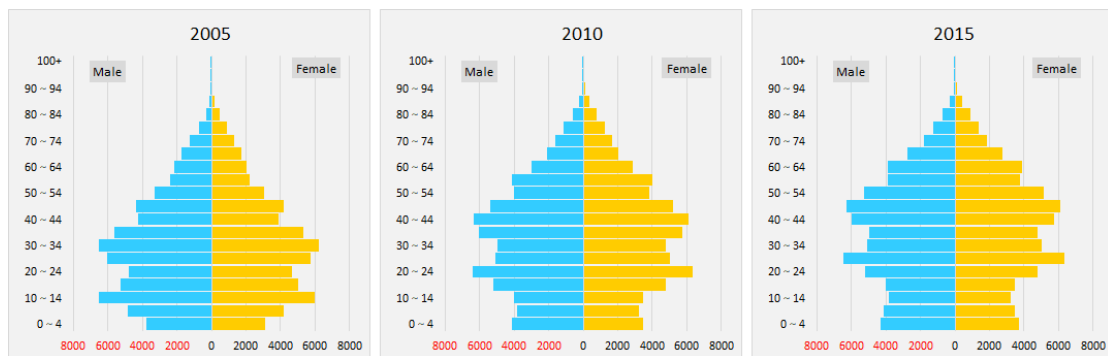


图 6：中国人口性别年龄金字塔变化

资料来源：2000 年五普、2010 年六普、2015 年小普查

人口年龄结构的变化导致中国 15~64 岁劳动力人口占比减少，他们要负担抚养的人口增加。图 7 显示，2010-2019 年总抚养比上升了 7.4 个百分点，老龄化贡献了其中的 5.9 个百分点。

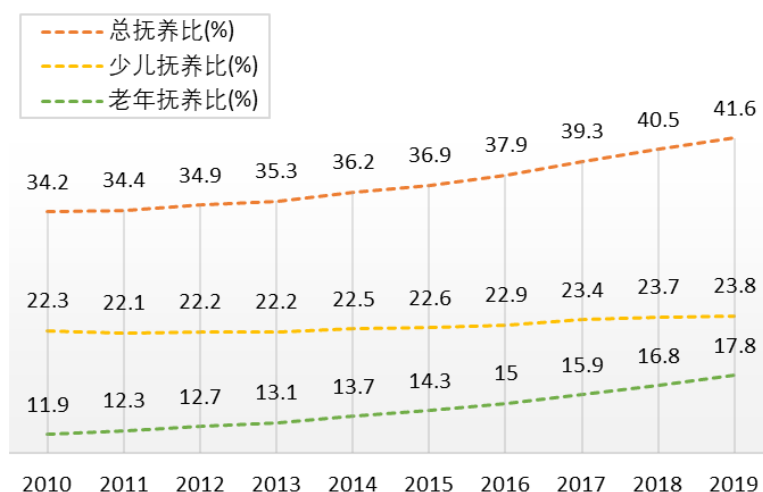


图 7：中国人口抚养比变化（2010-2019）

资料来源：中国国家统计局

4.2. 低生育状况及地区差异

中国政府采取的计划生育政策抑制了人口规模的快速增长，有效缓解了人口对资源环境的压力，助推了中国经济的发展，其积极意义不可否认。计

划生育政策的历史使命业已完成，中国的人口难题正在从控制规模转向调整结构。从中国统计局数据来看，中国出生人口近 30 年来总体呈下降趋势（图 8）。根据 2015 年中国 1%人口抽样调查数据¹⁶测算，总和生育率仅为 1.047，属于极低生育率。

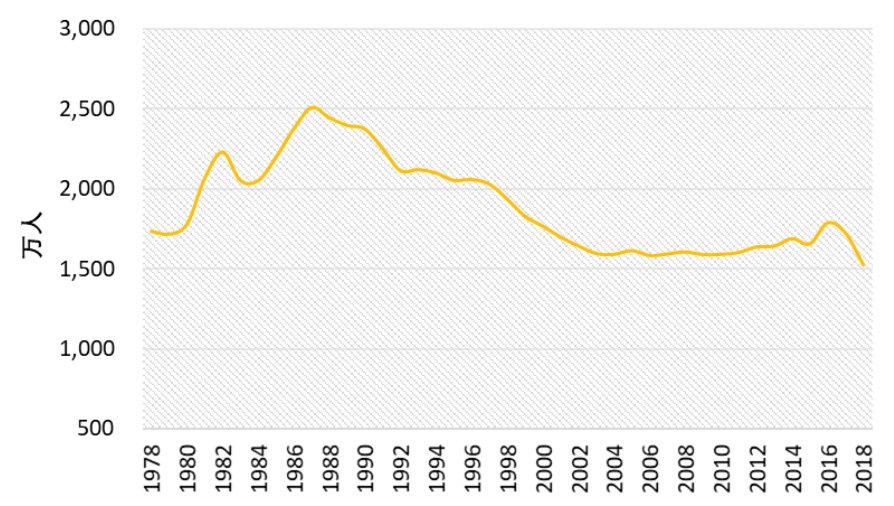


图 8：中国每年出生人口与总和生育率变动（2010-2018）

数据来源：自中国国家统计局

中国幅员辽阔，人口状况和生育情况存在显著的区域差异，各个区域在制定人口政策时要因地制宜。少儿抚养比和老年抚养比可以表征各地区的少子老龄化程度，根据这两个指标 2018 年的数据，我们可以把中国大陆 31 个

¹⁶ 该调查为中国大陆地区数据，不包括香港、澳门、台湾的数据。

省份划分为如图 9 所示的四类地区：A 区属于人口年轻型地区，少儿比例高，老人比例少，多为欠发达地区；B 区属于人口红利区，少儿人口和老年人口占比均较低，劳动力人口占比高；C 区属于人口潜力区，少儿人口和老年人口占比均较高，当前养老压力较大，但未来劳动力可得到补充；D 区属于少子老龄化严重区。

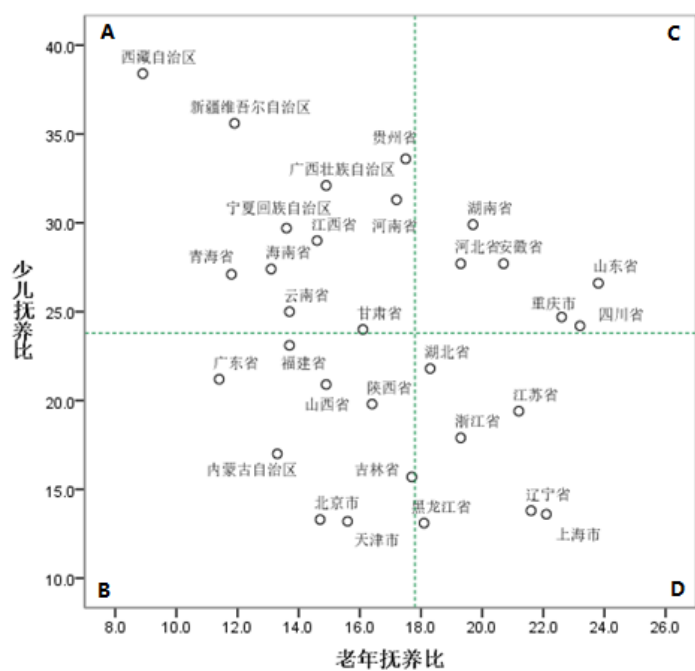


图 9：中国分省份的少子老龄化程度：2018

数据来源：中国国家统计局

4. 3. 中国低生育的主要影响因素

中国低生育的原因非常复杂，但主要包括儿童养育成本高、婚育情况发生变化、社会规范与婚育观念变迁等。

首先，家庭育儿成本制约了生育意愿。

中国家庭养育儿童的成本较高。一是直接成本。根据 2014 年中国家庭发展追踪研究数据估算，0-17 岁儿童所需的直接经济成本为 19.10 万元，城市儿童需要 27.32 万元，农村儿童需要 14.34 万元，收入越低的家庭儿童养育成本占家庭支出的比重越大。二是间接成本。根据第三期中国妇女社会地位调查数据，养育儿童会增加父母操持家务的时间，减少劳动力市场收益。在控制其他变量的情况下，每增加一个未成年子女，母亲面临的“母职惩罚”（motherhood penalty）¹⁷为 12.8%^{18/19}。

2016 年的一项调查显示，未生育二胎的女性当中，不想生育二胎的比例为 58.7%；而在未生育的女性中，不想要小孩的比例为 20.5%。这些女性的低生育意愿的原因集中在生育成本方面。56.8%的女性是因为“抚养孩子费用太高”，53.6%是因为“时间、精力不够”，此外还有 41.9%的女性选择了“担心影响工作、职业发展”²⁰。

¹⁷ 国内研究者对“motherhood penalty”一词有多种翻译，如“母职惩罚”、“生育代价”、“母亲的工资惩罚”、“母亲的代价”等。国外文献中“motherhood penalty”用来描述就业女性因为母亲的角色而遭受的求职、工作评价、薪资、晋升机会等方面的负面影响。笔者认为用“母职”一词表述“母亲的角色”较为准确，故本文采用“母职惩罚”的提法。

¹⁸ 马春华.中国家庭儿童养育成本及其政策意涵[J].妇女研究论丛,2018(05).

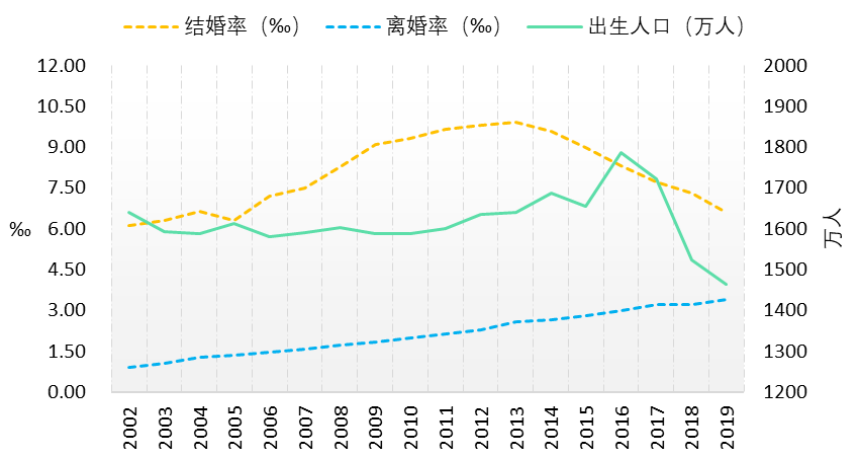
¹⁹ 计算方式：设非母亲(没有子女女性)的工资收入为 A，母亲(有子女女性)的工资收入为 B，则母职惩罚 = (A-B) / B。

²⁰ 资料来源：智联招聘发布《2016 年职场妈妈生存状况调查报告》

其次，婚育情况发生变化。

婚育情况对生育率的影响主要表现在结婚率下降和初婚初育年龄推迟。

(1) 结婚率下降助推出生人口减少。图 10 显示，近年来中国的结婚率不断下降，离婚率持续升高。1999—2013 年间，结婚率总体呈上升趋势；2013 年后结婚率开始下降，尽管有全面二孩政策的激励，出生人口还是在 2017 年之后出现较大幅度减少。与此同时，离婚率不断上升，减弱了婚姻对年轻人的吸引力，进一步助推结婚率下降。(2) 初婚初育年龄推迟导致人口规模增长放缓。1990—2017 年间，中国育龄妇女平均初婚年龄从 21.4 岁推迟到 25.7 岁，并有继续走高趋势；平均初育年龄也从 23.4 岁提高到 26.8 岁²¹。晚婚晚育会导致两代人的年龄差距增加，人口规模增长放缓。



21 资料来源：中国国家统计局网站 http://www.stats.gov.cn/zjtjcz/fxf/ggk40n/201809/t20180918_1623598.html

图 10：中国结婚率、离婚率、出生人口变动

数据来源：出生人口数据来自中国国家统计局；结婚率、离婚率数据来自中国民政部社会发展统计公报

第三， 社会规范与婚育观念发生变化

社会规范与年轻人婚育观念的变化导致婚育动力不足。（1）性别平等的社会规范使得女性角色发生变化。随着女性地位提升，她们更加追求独立自主，试图在劳动力市场实现自身价值，而不局限于生儿育女和操持家务。为了减少潜在的损失，她们会选择不结婚、不生育或控制生育胎次。（2）生育观念的转变使得生育较少具有功利性。传统的“传统接代”“多子多福”“养儿防老”等观念不再被年轻人认可，他们更多出于情感需要去选择生育，自由选择是否生育、生育几个孩子。

5. 达能观点和建议：全面建设生育友好型社会

2020 年 11 月，中国政府发布了《中共中央关于制定国民经济和社会发展的第十四个五年规划和二〇三五年远景目标的建议》，文件明确指出要“制定人口长期发展战略，优化生育政策，增强生育政策包容性，提高优生优育服务水平，发展普惠托育服务体系，降低生育、养育、教育成本，促进人口

长期均衡发展，提高人口素质”。

中国政府已经把应对少子老龄化提升到国家战略的层面，社会各方均有义务建言献策。鉴于生育问题影响因素复杂，要基于系统分析进行顶层设计，着力构建生育友好型社会，才能有效应对低生育率风险。有鉴于此，达能公司提出如下建议供政府参考：

5.1. 重新审视生育政策，让人口政策更具包容性

更具包容性的人口政策能更好地服务于社会经济的发展。中国实施计划生育政策的初衷是缓解人口过快增长带来的社会、环境和资源压力。随着出生率的下降，生育限制的社会基础已经不复存在，中国政府近十年来先后推行了“双独二孩”政策、“单独二孩”政策和“全面二孩”政策。接下来应再向前迈进一步，全面取消生育限制，让人口政策更具包容性。

取消生育限制并不意味着人口政策的终结，相反，这将为我国构建更具包容性的人口政策体系提供契机。面对低生育率困境，生育水平的走向会在很大程度上决定中国未来的人口规模和人口结构。因而，政府应继续把生育政策作为中国人口政策最为核心的组成部分，从生育限制转向生育友好。同时也不应矫枉过正，充分尊重公民的生育选择权和生育平等权。

中国包容性人口政策的构建需要关注家庭生命周期的时间维度和成年人

社会活动的空间维度。在时间维度，福利政策应覆盖家庭的全生命周期²²，包括家庭形成期的住房福利、扩展期和稳定期的儿童/父母福利、收缩期的成年子女就业福利、空巢期父母的养老医疗福利等。在社会活动空间维度，福利政策不仅要分别保障个体在家庭生活空间和职场工作空间的权益，而且要为其避免“工作—家庭”冲突提供支持。

5.2. 完善生育支持政策，创造生育友好的制度环境

第一，国家分担养育成本，缓解儿童家庭经济压力

国家要建立良好的福利津贴与减税制度，分担家庭养育成本。政策要循序渐进，最终实现覆盖家庭生育/养育孩子所必需的直接成本，减轻家庭育儿压力。（1）现金津贴，可包括儿童津贴、母亲津贴、照顾者津贴、家庭津贴等。现金津贴应满足儿童不同成长阶段的需要，并向多子女家庭和脆弱家庭倾斜。（2）税收减免。可在父母缴税基数中扣除用于生育孩子、托育服务、教育培训所支付的费用，根据儿童数量、家庭收入、地区发展水平等因素建立阶梯型减税体系；多子女家庭、脆弱家庭在购买首套或改善性住房时可享受税收减免；企业兴办职工托幼机构可对其进行税收减免等。

22 格里克 (P.Glick) 把家庭生命周期划分六个时期：(1) 形成期：从两个年轻人结婚开始，到第一个孩子出生；(2) 扩展期：从第一个孩子出生，到最后一个孩子出生；(3) 稳定期：从最后一个孩子出生，到第一个孩子离开父母；(4) 收缩期：从第一个孩子离开父母，到最后一个孩子离开父母；(5) 空巢期：从最后一个孩子离开父母，到配偶一方去世；(6) 解体期：配偶双方均去世。笔者声明：本分类未涵盖丁克、离异等家庭形态，但我们尊重任何形式的符合法律的家庭形式。

第二，制定工作—家庭平衡政策，尊重个人作为“职员”和“父母”的双重角色

发达国家普遍以“工作—家庭”平衡为重要目标构建鼓励生育的政策体系。随着经济全球化、技术快速进步和劳动力市场竞争日益激烈，那些同时扮演“职员”和“父母”双重角色的人们越来越难以在工作与生活之间找到平衡，对父母照顾儿童形成困扰。他们需要得到制度支持以缓解“工作—家庭”冲突。

工作—家庭政策的主要内容应包括但不限于：（1）设置产假/育儿假，保障父母的生育权和婴幼儿的被照顾权；增加强制的父亲假，逐渐改变“照顾责任女性化”的传统模式；（2）允许幼儿父母适当减少工作时间，或采用弹性工作制；（3）允许幼儿父母远程办公，或提供更加灵活的工作场所安排；（4）实施工作场所社会支持措施，如哺乳室、办公楼嵌入性托育机构等；（5）实施教育辅导，提高父母处理工作—家庭冲突的能力。

第三，构建全覆盖的托育机构，为父母提供替代性公共照顾资源

图 11 显示，1990 年以来中国 15~64 岁女性的劳动参与率不断下降，且下降速度快于世界平均水平。而报告前文提到的几个发达国家的女性劳动参与率则一路走高。不仅如此，中国女性占劳动力的比例从 1990 年的 45.2%降

至 2019 年的 43.6%，这在某种程度上表征了女性社会经济地位的下降。造成这一现象的原因是多方面的，但缺乏替代性儿童照顾资源是不可回避的重要因素。20 世纪 80 年代中国经济转型以来，城市单位和农村公社举办的幼儿园/托儿所大量消失，使得儿童照顾的责任重心向家庭下沉，更多的女性被迫回归家庭照顾儿童²³。

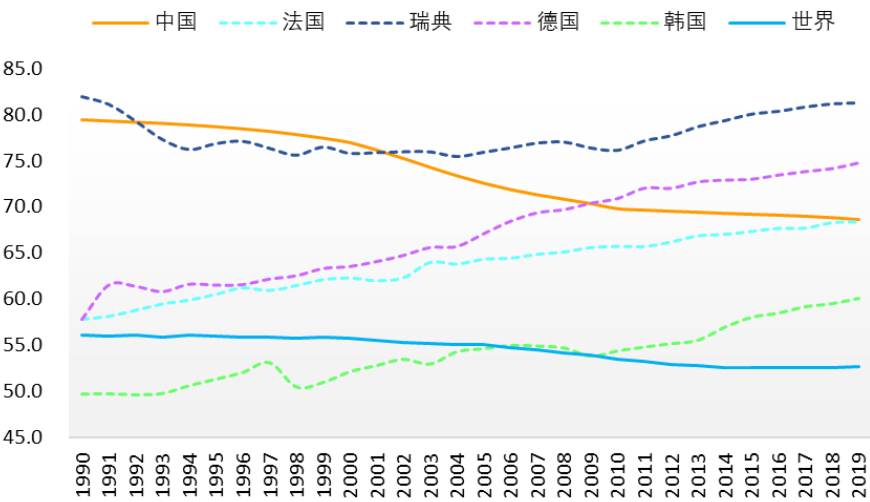


图 11：世界及部分国家 15~64 岁女性劳动参与率变动（1990—2019）

资料来源：世界银行数据库（<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>）

时至今日，中国的学前托育/教育资源仍然供给不足。中国能够提供婴幼儿照护服务的社会机构很少，0~3 岁儿童主要由母亲或祖辈照顾，2019 年全

23 胡湛，彭希哲. 家庭变迁背景下的中国家庭政策[J]. 人口研究, 2012(2).

国 0~3 岁儿童入托率仅为 4.3%²⁴，3~6 岁儿童入园率为 83.4%²⁵，尚无法充分满足家庭的需求。从生育政策的视角，中国应不断加大托儿所、幼儿园等正式学前机构的供给，并积极发展家庭保育、互助育儿等多种托育模式以便为父母提供多样化的替代性照顾资源，为女性就业提供支持。

中国政府在增加学前机构供给时，有两点值得特别关注。首先，中国学前教育资源的区域不平衡状况非常严重²⁶，因此在学前教育建设规划和财政经费配置过程中要充分考虑区域差异，向欠发达地区倾斜。其次，规划与建设托儿所、幼儿园时要与当地的人口年龄结构和生育水平联系起来，以适应生育政策转变后幼儿人口增长的潜在需求。

第四，为育龄女性的职场安全提供制度性保障，降低“母职惩罚”

中国有相当比例的女性“不生、晚生、少生”最重要的原因之一就是担心影响职业发展。而事实也是如此，有研究表明，生育后的女性在后续职业生涯发展中往往遭遇就业困难、晋升机会减少、工资收入下降、工作经验损失等“母职惩罚”。以工资收入为例，中国女性每生育一个子女，母职惩罚为 7%²⁸，也有学者计算出的数值为 12.8%³⁰。无论如何，为母亲提供职场安全保障

24 艾媒报告《2019-2020 年中国婴幼儿托育产业发展白皮书》

25 中国教育部《2019 年全国教育事业发展统计公报》

26 霍利婷，王桂新. 中国学前教育资源空间均衡度变化研究——兼论两期“学前教育三年行动计划”的实施成效[J]. 现代教育管理, 2019(10):14-20.

28 於嘉，谢宇. 生育对我国女性工资率的影响[J]. 人口研究, 2014(1).

30 马春华. 中国家庭儿童养育成本及其政策意涵[J]. 妇女研究论丛, 2018(5).

都是维护女性权益、建设生育友好型社会的必然选择。

具体措施包括：（1）产假/育儿假期间的工资补贴，例如俄罗斯有 140 天的全薪产假，还有 1 年半的半薪育儿假。（2）将产假时间计入工龄，避免女性养老金缩减；（3）规定单位除特殊情况外，应为生育女性保留工作岗位；（4）有条件的单位还应该允许休假结束后返回岗位的女性进行灵活的工作安排，如弹性工作时间或远程办公等。

5.3. 注重舆论引导，倡导现代婚育观念

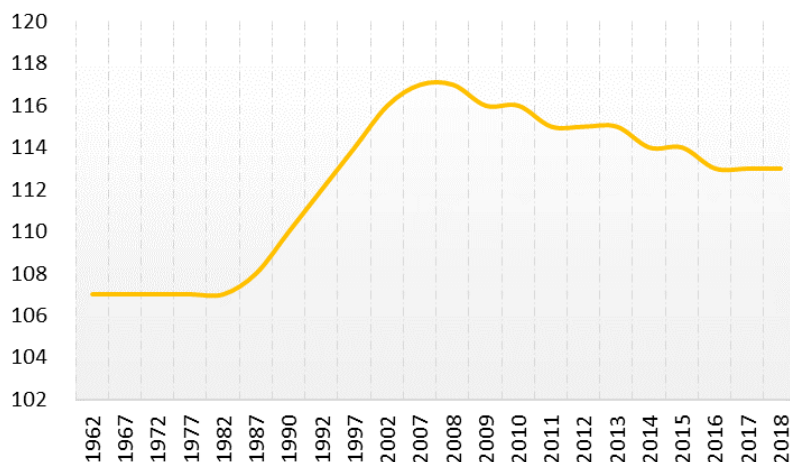
构建生育友好型社会，要“观念先行”，通过舆论对错误观念进行引导、予以矫正。

首先，倡导婚俗改革，减少“轻精神重物质”的婚姻观异化现象

中国社会现在普遍存在“轻精神重物质”的婚姻观异化现象，住房、家用汽车、婚礼费用等一系列高额消费成为了考虑婚姻时的重要因素，这无疑增加了年轻人选择伴侣的时间，助推了婚育年龄的提高。建议政府和社会各界通力合作，通过舆论引导改变这一观念，让婚姻、家庭回归到本来的社会位置，承担更多的情感功能。

其次，要改变“重男轻女”的生育观念³¹

中国计划生育政策对孩子数量的限制，不能满足部分人群的“男孩偏好”，因此或多或少存在性别选择性堕胎、遗弃女婴等社会现象，导致了“女性失踪”。图 12 显示，20 世纪 60、70 年代的出生人口性别比为 107 左右，处于正常范围³²（联合国将出生人口性别比的正常值设定为 103—107）。然而，20 世纪 80 年代起出生人口性别比迅速上升，2008 年之后开始缓慢下降，但仍偏离正常值。这导致了未来母亲数量的减少，也会导致男性婚姻挤压。因此，应通过舆论引导和平等的儿童福利供给，改变“重男轻女”的传统生育观念，让“生儿生女都一样”的现代生育观念深入人心。



31 失踪女性 (missing women)最早由诺贝尔经济学奖获得者阿马蒂亚·森(Amartya Sen)在 20 世纪 90 年代提出，被用来指代那些因人为了干预因素没能来到这个世界或者因性别偏好较早死亡的女性人口。根据阿马蒂亚·森的估计，全世界约有 1 亿多名女性因为人为性别选择而失踪，其中中国和印度是重灾区。这些女性原本可以成为未来的母亲。

32 联合国将出生人口性别比的正常值设定为 103—107。

图 12：中国出生人口性别比（女性=100）的变动趋势

数据来源：《中国人口和就业统计年鉴》

再次，营造性别平等的社会氛围，提高女性社会经济地位

中国的性别平等进程有待继续推进。首先，在家庭领域存在家务劳动分工不平等的现象。中国家庭追踪调查 2016 年数据显示，0~6 岁幼儿家中，母亲和父亲的日均家务时间分别为 2.71 小时和 1.36 小时，前者几乎是后者的两倍。其次，在劳动力市场也存在显著的性别差异。2018 年中国劳动参与人口中男性占 56.3%，女性仅占 43.7%³³，并且女性平均工资仅为男性的 84%³⁴。因此，未来一方面应鼓励男性分担家务劳动和儿童照顾责任；另一方面要采取措施，在劳动力市场实现女性与男性的同工同酬。

上述观念的转变，需要全社会共同努力。既要在政策层面给予支持，也要在舆论方面进行宣传引导，用现代家庭婚育理念取代不合理的传统观念。让家庭发挥其应有的情感功能和儿童抚育功能，让年轻父母（尤其是母亲）不再受“工作—家庭”冲突的困扰，增强年轻人组建家庭、抚育子女的信心。

5.4. 鼓励企业承担社会责任，形成生育友好的劳动力市场

³³ 数据来源：世界银行数据库。

³⁴ 数据来源：BOSS 直聘研究院《2018 中国性别薪酬差异洞察》。

根据发达国家的经验，如果仅仅靠政府发放补贴、提供托育服务已经不足以有效激励生育率的提升。形成一个生育友好、家庭友好的劳动力市场才能对人口生育产生积极的推动作用。

企业要尊重职工作为家庭成员的角色，打造家庭友好型企业文化。可以为雇员制定灵活的工作时间；反对工作狂性质的企业文化，拒绝超长时间的工作和加班；推动女性雇员的升迁；推动父亲使用全薪陪产假等。此外，有条件的企业可以为员工提供托育服务、安排亲子活动等。事实上，企业帮助员工平衡工作和家庭生活也会带来“企业效益”：如更高的生产率，更低的员工流失率，更低的缺勤率等。

作为一家法国公司，达能公司在建设家庭友好型企业文化方面进行了一些尝试。2017 年，达能发布了《达能全球育儿政策》(Danone Global Parental Policy)。这项政策适用于世界各地的长期雇员，旨在帮助新生儿父母履行亲职，并帮助他们在孩子出生后成功回归职场。政策内容主要涉及三方面：一是倡导性别平等，防止歧视；二是提供长达 18 周的带薪产假和 4-8 周无薪休假的福利；三是提供产前、产中、产后和复工的多项支持与保护措施，如营养建议、工作条件保护、弹性工作时间、工作场所母乳喂养支持、产后复工支持等。这些“父母友好”的举措受到员工的普遍欢迎，或许能为中国企业提供一些借鉴。

结语

面对已经出现的低生育风险，中国政府提出了“增强生育政策包容性”、“促进生育政策和相关经济社会政策配套衔接”、“加强人口发展战略研究”等观点。显示了中国政府对人口问题的准确判断和系统治理理念。中国人口政策的宽松化为构建生育友好型社会创造了条件。达能认为构建生育友好型社会的目标就是要采用制度保障、资源供给、广泛动员、重塑社会观念等手段，形成“国家—社会—家庭”共同养育的制度框架，建成“多元化、全覆盖”的托幼资源供给系统，打造“政府—社区—企业”联动的生育/养育社会支持体系，营造“家庭友好、生育友好”的人文舆论环境。我们相信只要尊重人口发展规律、积极应对，中国一定能够成功抵御低生育风险，实现经济社会可持续发展。

Building a Birth-Friendly Society to Cope with the Challenges of a Low Fertility Rate

Danone

By Emmanuel Faber, Chairman and CEO

Executive Summary

Population problems have always been a major problem facing the development of human society. The core of such a problem is typically an imbalance among population trends, economic and social development and the management of ecological resources. In the second half of the 20th century, excessive population growth caused a series of problems, including global climate change and food crises. In the 21st century, more countries are beginning to face the problem of population aging and even negative population growth caused by low fertility rates, which also poses a challenge to economic and social development.

The fertility revolution has led to changes in the development pattern of the world population. Low fertility has become a seemingly irreversible global trend. In 1960, only two countries in the world had a total fertility rate below 2.0. By 2018, nearly

80 countries had a total fertility rate below 2.0. About 40% of countries have become low-fertility societies.

Entering the 21st century, China's total fertility rate is also declining. There are many reasons for China's low birth rate. For example, the high cost of child rearing has reduced the willingness of the childbearing-age population to have children. Meanwhile, a decline in the marriage rate has contributed to the reduction in the birth population, as delays in the willingness of people to embark on a first marriage and make a first attempt at conception have led to a slowdown in population growth. Women are also seeking to control their pregnancies in order to realize their own personal potential.

Looking at the development process of some countries and regions in the world, low fertility often affects the age structure of the population, leading to systemic risks in the socio-economic field in the medium and long-term. For example, insufficient labor supply leads to sluggish economic development and increased spending pressure on the social security funds necessary to protect an aging population. Generally speaking, the effects of population structure adjustment

through public policies come after a delay, so China should formulate public policies to encourage childbirth as soon as possible.

Danone believes that the Chinese government can build a birth-friendly society in an all-round way by adopting institutional measures, paying attention to resource supply, extensive encouragement and changes in the public mindset. Our proposal involves four dimensions.

First, the top-level redesign of the population policy. The state should review the fertility policy and build a more inclusive population policy framework.

Second, the establishment of birth-support policies. The state should establish a complete welfare allowance and tax relief system to share the cost of family upbringing; formulate a maternity/parental leave system; build a fully-covered childcare institution network to provide parents with alternative public childcare resources; provide institutional guarantees for the job security of women of childbearing age.

Third, progressive transformation of established views regarding marriage and childbirth. Here the state should advocate changes in marriage customs; change the

concept of ‘preferring sons over daughters’ and return the sex ratio at birth to a normal level, and promote gender equality.

Fourth, formulation of a birth-friendly labor market and encourage companies to take social responsibility.

Finally, it needs to be emphasized that there are huge regional differences in the degrees of declining birthrate and aging in China. Therefore, when formulating population policies, it is necessary to consider local differences and adapt measures to local conditions.

The Chinese government has fully realized the potential risks of low fertility and is actively formulating a long-term population development strategy. It is striving to promote population policies in line with economic and social development. This demonstrates the accurate judgment of the Chinese government on population issues and the forward-looking concept of systematic governance. We believe that by respecting the law of population development and taking precautions, China will be able to successfully cope with low birth risks and achieve sustainable economic and social development.

1. The Fertility Revolution and the Global Population Evolution Pattern

Population problems have always been a major problem facing the development of human society. The core of such a problem is typically an imbalance between population trends or policies, economic and social development and the management of ecological resources. In the second half of the 20th century, excessive population growth caused a series of problems, including global climate change and food crises. In the 21st century, more countries are beginning to face the problem of population aging and even negative population growth caused by low fertility rates, which also poses a challenge to economic and social development.

In 2019, the global population reached 7.674 billion. Excluding the impact of unforeseen circumstances, the global population will continue to grow in the next few decades – but its growth rate will gradually slow down. The term ‘fertility revolution’ was put forward by western scholars, which is used to describe the process of declining fertility rate in contrast to advancing modernization. It can be divided into three phases^{18/19}: first, the phase driven by mortality change – the health revolution makes mankind no longer need to maintain high fertility to fight against

¹⁸ Easterlin, Richard, A, Crimmins, & Eileen, M. (1985). The fertility revolution. University of Chicago Press.

¹⁹ Schultz, T. (1986). Population and Development Review, 12(1), 127-140.

high mortality, so the total fertility rate (TFR) tends to decrease to about 3.0; second, the phase driven by fertility preference change – emotional fertility willingness replaces utilitarian fertility willingness²⁰, and TFR drops to about 2.0; third, the phase driven by fertility cost constraint, as an increase in fertility costs reduces people's willingness to give birth, and TFR drops to less than 2.0.

As of now, about 80 countries have reached Phase 3 (with their TFRs lower than 2.0), mostly in Europe, North America and East and Central Asia; about 50 countries have reached Phase 2 (with their TFRs between 2.0 and 3.0), mostly in Latin America, South Asia and North Africa; and the other countries are in Phase 1 or are yet to embrace the Fertility Revolution (with their TFRs higher than 3.0), mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa²¹. Differences in the process of fertility revolution among different countries and regions have caused profound changes in the global population pattern.

First, low fertility rates have become an irreversible global trend. Following the mid-20th century, human society experienced a move from universally high fertility rates, fertility rate differentiation and gradual transition to universally low fertility

²⁰ Utilitarian needs mainly refer to people's needs for aspects such as children's income utility, labor utility, security utility, and family status expansion utility.

²¹ Based on data published by World Bank.

rates. As shown in Figure 1, the world average TFR in 1960 was 4.98, with at least 100 countries between 6.0 and 8.2, and only 2 countries below 2.0. In 1980 there was differentiation – about 60 countries had TFR higher than 6.0, and 26 countries had TFR lower than 2.0; in 2018, the world average TFR was 2.41, with about 80 countries lower than 2.0, and only 2 countries higher than 6.0.

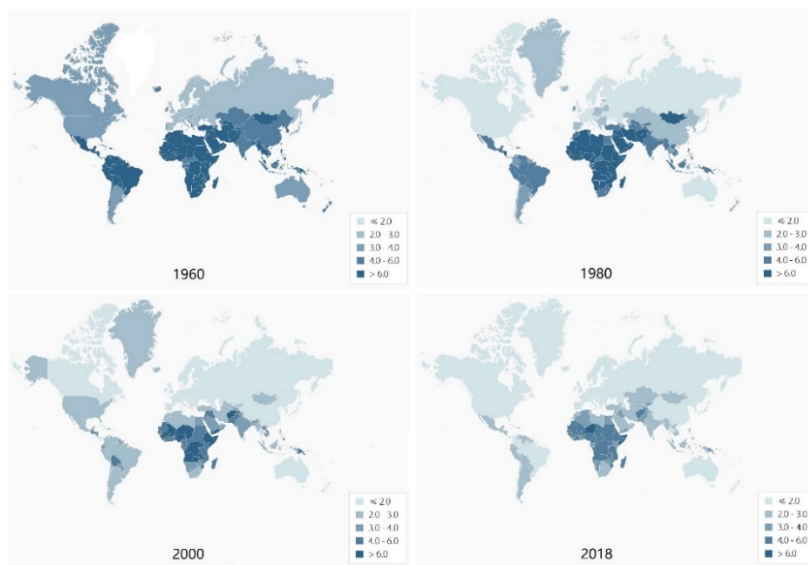


Figure 1: Spatial pattern evolution of global TFR (1960-2018)

Source: World Bank Database (<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>)

Second, the spatial distribution centers of the global population are constantly shifting to the southern underdeveloped areas. Under the influence of the fertility revolution, the spatial pattern of population proportion has also been changing.

According to Figure 2, the proportion of Europe and Central Asia in the global population has fallen sharply from 22.0% in 1960 to 12.1% in 2018; correspondingly, the proportion of people from Latin America, South Asia, the Middle East and Africa in the global population has been continuously rising, posing a grave challenge to the sustainable social and economic development of the developed and some developing countries and even the world economy.

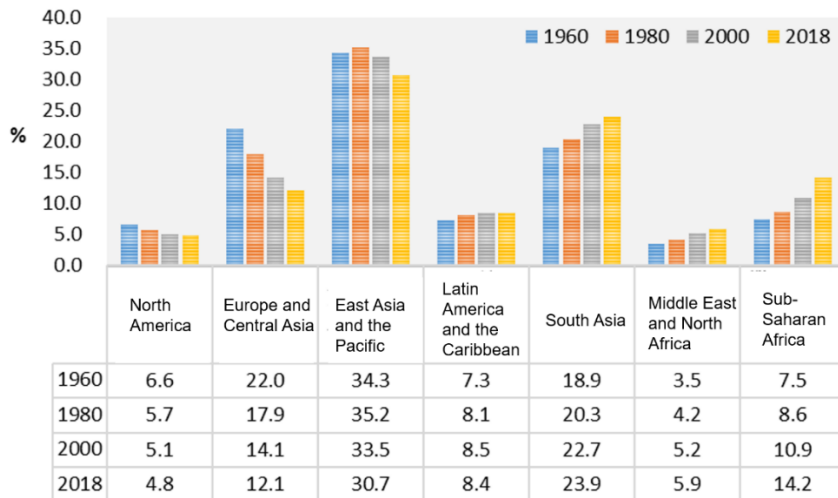


Figure 2: Spatial pattern evolution of the proportion of global population (1960-2018)

Source: World Bank Database (<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>)

2. Low Fertility Rates: An Irreversible Global Trend?

2.1. Global spread of low fertility crisis

In the late 20th century, the momentum of excessive growth of global population was obviously curbed. This was described as “the miracle of mankind in the 20th century”. But then, it was found that the fertility level of many European countries continued to decline, sinking even lower than replacement level fertility²². Such a phenomenon has continued to spread, and about half of the countries in the world have entered the Low Fertility Society phase. In the next few decades, these countries will see their populations peak and then enter the stage of negative population growth.

2.2. Low fertility rates will challenge social security systems

An excessively low fertility rate may lead to systemic risks in the socio-economic field by affecting the age structure of the population. Challenges such as a reduced labor supply, deepening of the aging degree, the distortion of the savings and consumption structure and increased financial expenditure burdens emerge.

First, low fertility rates lead to insufficient supply of the labor force in the

²² The generational replacement level is a variable rather than a constant. The generational replacement level is affected by many factors (such as infant mortality, child mortality, mortality during childbearing age, sex ratio, etc.), and is also highly related to the level of social development. Some scholars believe that the generational replacement level in developing countries is generally between 2.5 and 3.3 (Espenshade, T.J., Guzman, J.C. & Westoff, C.F., 2003). At present, the most cited generational replacement level is 2.1 in developed countries.: Espenshade, T., Guzman, J., & Westoff, C. (2003). The Surprising Global Variation in Replacement Fertility. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 22(5/6), 575-583.

medium and long term, resulting in an economic downturn

Low fertility rates in the medium and long term will lead to a sharp drop in labor supply and even a disruption. From the perspective of economic development, once a stable supply of labor is unavailable, it will have an impact on the existing social-economic structure, even if the working-age population accounts for a relatively high proportion. Take France and Japan for example, although it has a lower proportion of the working-age population than Japan for a long time (Figure 3), has a relatively high and stable fertility rate, which ensures a stable supply of labor force and provides human resources for sustainable economic development. But the situation in Japan is different, since the 1990s, the proportion of working-age population aged 15-64 in Japan has dropped sharply, while issue of the declining birthrate and aging population has increased. Some scholars in economics believe that the rapid changes in the demographic structure have negative effects on the Japanese economy in multiple aspects. Therefore, the demographic changes caused by the low fertility rate are one of the important factors of Japan's economic downturn.

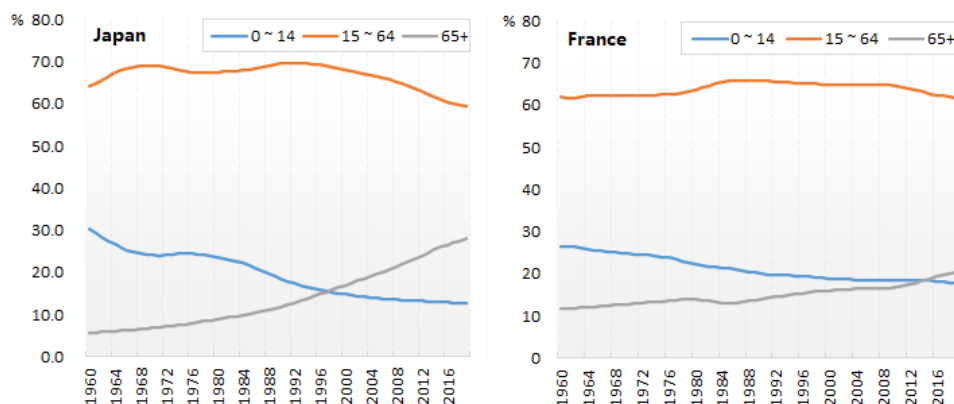


Figure 3: Comparison of age structure changing trends between Japan and France (1960–2019)

Source: World Bank Database (<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>)

Second, a low fertility rate accelerates the aging process, leading to challenges to the social security system

Low fertility rate and increased longevity lead to the rapid increase of the elderly population, together with the continuous decline in the proportion of the labor force, which brings great challenges to the social security system, especially to the old-age security system, and European countries are among the most affected. In 2018, the total expenditure on social protection benefits in the 27 EU member states accounted for 26.7% of GDP – the top three social protection benefits were pension,

healthcare and child/family benefits, which accounted for 40.3%, 29.2% and 8.3%²³ of the total expenditure respectively, while 70% of the expenditure on healthcare was used on the elderly population. The financial burden brought by the aging of the population can be seen. High social protection costs have not only aggravated the financial burden, but also slowed down economic growth, thus leading to many social problems.

3. Global Experiences in Tackling Falling Fertility Rates

Curbing the fertility rate decline has become the focus of many countries' population policies. The policy framework for encouraging childbirth in developed countries is generally complete, and the policy measures adopted are also very similar, including economic support policies (subsidies/tax relief), time policies (maternity/parental leave, flexible working schedule, etc.), childcare services and workplace rights protection (retaining jobs, providing training, etc.). However, due to differences in policy focus and support in various countries, the effects are different. In the 21st century, the total fertility rate of France, Sweden, Russia,

²³ Based on data published by Eurostat.

Germany and other countries has rebounded, while that of South Korea and Singapore has declined with a slower pace, but the fertility rate is very low (TFR<1.5), which has even fallen to around 1.0 (see Figure 4 for details).

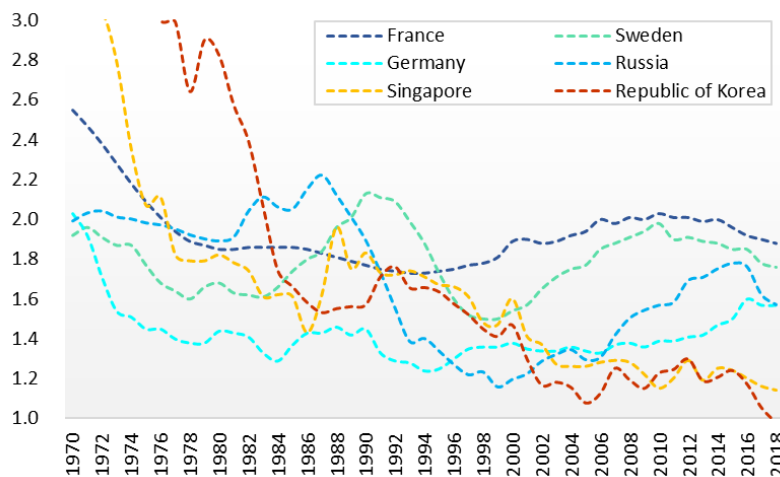


Figure 4: Trends of Total Fertility Rate in developed countries (1960-2018)

Source: World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>)

France: a sustained and stable family policy is the key to keep a high fertility

rate^{24/25}

²⁴ Magdalena Kacperska. The Importance of Family Policy for the Birth Rate and Activity Rate of Young European Females: An Analysis of France and Poland. Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan.

²⁵ The French Social Security System IV Family Benefits. 3 March 2021 accessed via the website of Centre des Liaisons Européennes et Internationales de Sécurité Social https://www.cleiss.fr/docs/regimes/regime_france/an_4.html

The birth-friendly policy of France can be traced back to the Family Code, issued in 1939, which established the embryonic form of the family policy²⁶, including child/family allowances. With the increase in the number of professional women, France gradually regarded a 'work-family' balance as an important policy goal after 1970. With policy support, France's total fertility rate has been maintained above 1.7, even approaching the replacement level of 2.1 between 2006 and 2014. In 2018, France's TFR was 1.88, ranking first in Europe. The French birth-friendly family policy mainly includes the following aspects:

- The maternity/parental leave. In France, mothers who have given births are entitled to at least 16 weeks of paid maternity leave, and fathers are entitled to 11 working days of paid paternity leave. Parents can share up to 3 years of unpaid parental leave, and the parent who stays at home with the child is entitled to monthly care allowances of a certain amount.
- Allowance. France provides a generous allowance for children and families, including one-time allowance for mothers who have given birth, monthly family allowances, childcare allowances for children aged 0-6 years, and back-

²⁶ Kamerman S. B. (1994), *Rodzina: problemy teorii i polityki*, in: *O polityce rodzinnej: definicje, zasady, praktyka*, "Material z Zagranicy", IPISS, Warszawa. A generally accepted definition describes family policy as a set of legal regulations, activities and resources employed by the state in order to provide adequate living conditions to families, and facilitate their establishment, proper functioning and the fulfilment of all significant social roles of families.

to-school allowances for children aged 6-18 years. In addition, the government will provide additional subsidies for families with several children, low-income families, single parents, disabled children, and their caregivers. French allowances almost cover the costs necessary for the family to give birth/rear children, and also provide working women with the possibility to purchase the necessary care services from the market.

- Tax relief. Childcare expenses and part of the tuition fees can be deducted from the tax base payable by parents; if a company runs a childcare institution for its employees, the cost can be deducted before tax. In France, the amount of family tax relief grows with the number of children.
- Childcare services. France offers an efficient childcare system that meets the various needs of parents, allowing mothers to have more choices based on their working hours and types. Children aged 0-3 whose parents both returned to work are mainly taken care of by kindergartens and registered carers, while practically 100% of children aged 3-6 are entitled to go to kindergartens free of charge.
- In addition, the French family policy is also committed to protecting the rights

of children born out of wedlock and their parents, encouraging companies to provide employees with flexible work schedules and childcare services.

Generally, France's family policy to encourage childbearing is continuous and stable, ensuring that people can obtain adequate childbearing support at any stage of childbirth and raising children, and achieve a 'work-family' balance. This has strengthened the positive expectations and full confidence of the childbearing age population on childbearing and rearing, thereby keeping the fertility rate at a relatively high and stable level¹⁰.

Sweden: Fully guarantee women's employment and encourage men to share care responsibilities

The most important goal of Swedish family policy is to promote complete employment and gender equality. Encouraging childbirth and supporting childbearing are its embedded goals.

First, promoting women's employment. The Swedish government bears almost all

¹⁰ France's baby boom secret: get women into work and ditch rigid family norms. 21 March 2015 accessed via Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/21/france-population-europe-fertility-rate>

the costs of childbirth/raising. Through the policy of ‘allowing adults to work, while the state helps parents raise their children to the greatest extent’¹¹, it ensures that women can freely choose between work and family. In 2018, the labor force participation rate of women aged 15-64 in Sweden was as high as 81.1%. At the same time, the total fertility rate remained at 1.76 (ranked second in EU), which is a model country of work-family balance.

Second, gender equality. Sweden took the lead in establishing a parental leave system for fathers in 1974, encouraging men to share care responsibilities and promote gender equality in childcare. New parents are entitled to 240 days of paid parental leave respectively, while the father/mother has 90 days reserved exclusively for him/her, which can’t be transferred to the other.¹²

Germany: Empower women to relieve birth pressure, accept international immigrants to supplement the population of childbearing age

During 1991-2006, Germany’s total fertility rate has been at a low point (<1.4),

¹¹ Ketola, Outi and Kare Thomsen, Hanne Warming Nielsen. From Poor Relief to Social Rights and Social Care Services' Clienthood[A], in Sipilä, Jorma, (ed.). *Social Care Services: The Key to the Scandinavian Welfare Model*[C]. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997.

¹² Ann-Zofie Duvander and Niklas Löfgren. *Leave Policies and Research Country Report: Sweden*[R]. https://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/user_upload/k_leavenetwork/country_notes/2020/PMedited.Sweden.with_supplement.1sept2020.pdf. 6 March 2021 accessed.

but it has shown an upward trend after 2006. It reached 1.57 in 2018, which is higher than the EU average. Two policies were key to the success:

First, a policy to ease the pressure of raising children for women. The ‘Federal Parental Allowance and Parental Leave Act’ issued in 2007 stipulates working hours restrictions, allowance, leave and dismissal prohibitions for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and provides comprehensive protection for pregnant and nursing staff and the newborn family. It aims to ease the concern of women over giving birth and promote fertility levels.

Second, increase the population of childbearing age via international immigrants. From 2007 to 2017, Germany accepted 4,657,700 immigrants, many of whom came from countries where populations favor larger families, such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Immigrants have made an important contribution to the increase of Germany's fertility rate.

Russia: Extra-long parental leave and high maternity allowance boost the rapid increase in fertility rate in a short time

Russia’s total fertility rate rose sharply from 1.16 to 1.78 between 1999 and 2015,

mainly due to its long parental leave and high family/child allowances¹³.

First, the parental leave was extended to 4.5 years in 2014 from 3 years in 1991¹⁴.

The government social security fund pays an allowance to mothers during their maternity leave and parental leave, protecting women on leave from the employer's ability to pay salary and other unexpected factors and suffer losses. The extra-long parental leave has not led to a decline in the women labor force participation rate aged 15-64, which has been stable, at over 68%, over the past ten years. This is high above the average level of EU countries.

Second, a complete maternity allowance system. Each child under 1.5 years old is entitled to a monthly subsidy of 3,000-6,000 rubles, according to the family's income level. Mothers of two or more children are entitled to a 450,000-ruble 'Mother's Fund' after the child reaches the age of 3, which will be used to repay housing loans, pay education expenses, make pension savings¹⁵, etc.

¹³ Why Germany's birth rate is rising and Italy's isn't.

<https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/06/29/why-germanys-birth-rate-is-rising-and-italys-isnt> . 29 June 2019 accessed The Economist.

¹⁴ The minimum full-pay maternity leave (single birth) is 140 days, including 70 days before delivery and 70 days after delivery. Half-paid maternity leave is one and a half years, which receives a subsidy equivalent to 40% of the original salary. This subsidy is paid by the National Social Insurance Fund, and the maternity leave is counted into the length of service. After taking half-paid maternity leave for one and a half years, if a mother wants to continue to take care of her child at home, she can continue to take unpaid maternity leave until the child reaches 3 years old, although the leave during this period will be unpaid, but the employer has to keep her job. 3 March 2021 accessed.

¹⁵ Avdeyeva, O. A. (2011). Policy experiment in Russia: cash-for-babies and fertility change. *Social Politics*(3), 361.

South Korea: Intensive policies effectively control a rapid decline in fertility

South Korea canceled family planning and implemented the ‘New Population Policy’ in 1996, but due to the concept of ‘fewer births’, the fertility rate has not significantly improved. Since 2005, the South Korean government began to implement policies to encourage childbirth, formulated the ‘Basic Law on Low Fertility and Aging Society’, and established the Presidential ‘Low Fertility and Aging Society Committee’, which contained the decline in fertility rates for some time.

Since 2005, the South Korean government has spent over 150 trillion won in an attempt to increase the birth rate, mainly for building free nurseries, providing public daycare services, economic subsidies for families with many children and parental leave allowances²⁷. After 2010, the unemployment insurance system was supplemented and improved to protect the rights and interests of female employees. After 2016, the government expanded its focus to young people and newlyweds to help them solve issues relevant to employment, medical needs, loans and housing; it extended the age of children receiving subsidies from 14 to 18, and the monthly

²⁷ Charlotte Gifford. Baby boom or bust: why South Korea is desperately trying to boost its birth rate. <https://www.worldfinance.com/featured/baby-boom-or-bust-why-south-korea-is-desperately-trying-to-boost-its-birth-rate>, 2019-10-10/2021-3-4. 4 March 2021 accessed.

subsidy was also increased from 130,000 won to 170,000 won. In addition, in order to increase the fertility rate, the South Korean government finetuned its policies to respect all means of births and protect unmarried mothers from social discrimination.

According to the figures in Korea's fertility rate, since 2005 the trend of rapid decline in the total fertility rate has been reversed, and recorded increases in certain years. For instance, the TFR reached 1.25 and 1.30 in 2007 and 2012 respectively (Figure 5). At the same time, women's employment situation was improved, with the women's labor force participation rate aged 15-64 increasing from 54.7% in 2005 to 60.1% in 2019, and the proportion of women in the labor market also boosted.

In summary, South Korea's birth-friendly policy is quite effective. On one hand, it reversed the rapid decline in fertility rate and delayed the process of population reduction. On the other hand, it provided favorable social conditions for women's development and laid a good foundation for subsequent policies. However, South Korea's total fertility rate witnessed a significant decline after 2016, it reached 0.98 in 2018. The situation clearly demonstrated that the implementation of population

policy is a long term process, which needs to be continuously adjusted and improved, in order to raise the fertility rate to a stable level.

4. China's Low Fertility Rate Dilemma

China has entered a low-fertility society phase, with a below-replacement fertility rate and an increasingly aging population, although it remains a developing country – in the future, China will face many uncertain challenges related to the population's age structure. This chapter will analyze the history of China's population changes, the situation of low fertility rate and the cause of low fertility rate based on empirical data.

4.1. Chinese population's historical changes and status quo

In 2019, China's total population was 1.4 billion, 2.58 times that of 1949. However, the growth rate of the Chinese population has continued to slow down, and the annual growth rate has gradually decreased, lowering from more than 2% in the

1960s to 0.33% in 2019 (See Figure 5). China's population growth slowed in the early 1990s, and its total fertility rate also fell below 2.1 in 1992. Back then, politicians and academics were still focusing more on the huge population size and were less aware of how low fertility rates would quietly change China's demographic structure.

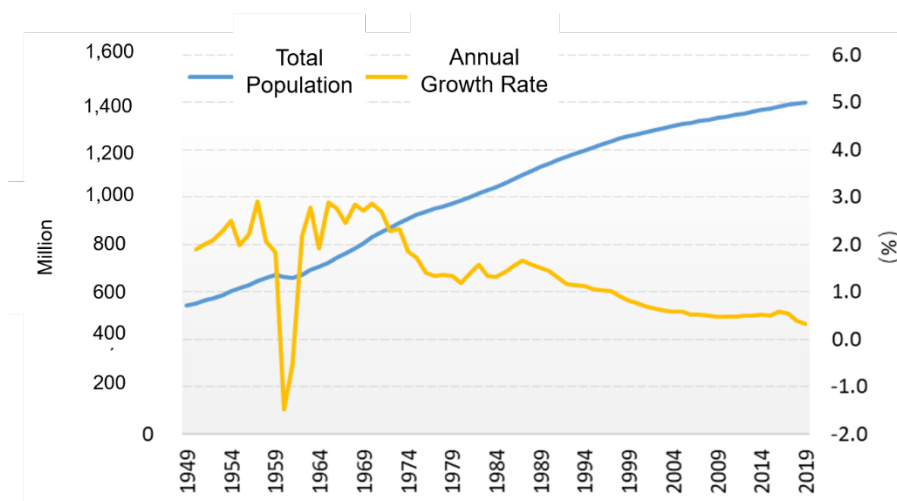


Figure 5: The total population in China and annual growth rate (1949—2019)

Data Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China

According to the age-gender pyramid of the Chinese population shown in Figure 6, as the life expectancy of the population increases, the pyramid moves towards the

top and the proportion of the elderly population increases. In 2015, the bottom of the pyramid became smaller. If the fertility rate doesn't increase, the bottom will become smaller in size, resulting in an extremely unstable, spindle-shaped demographic structure; and even if the Chinese population rises to the generational replacement level in the future, the total population will continue to shrink in the long term.

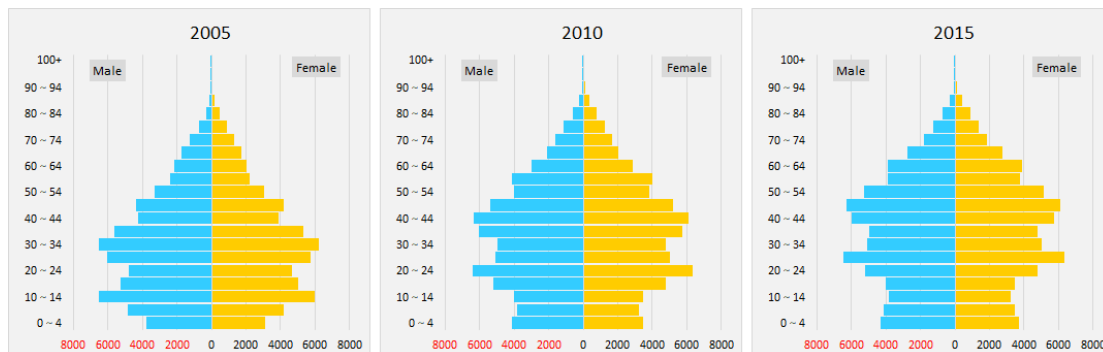


Figure 6: Changes in the Age-Gender Pyramid of the Chinese Population

Data Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2015 Sampling Survey

The change in the population's age structure has led to a decrease in the proportion of the labor force aged 15 to 64 in China, along with an increase in the population they have to support. Figure 7 shows that the total dependency ratio increased by 7.4 percentage points from 2010 to 2019, of which 5.9 percentage points were

contributed by aging.

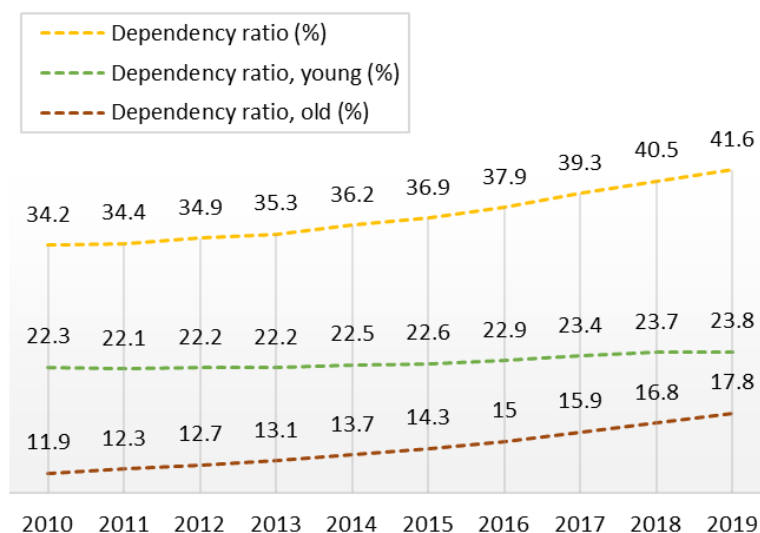


Figure 7: Changes in China’s Dependency Ratio (2010-2019)

Data Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China

4.2. Low fertility status and regional differences

China’s family planning policy has restrained the rapid growth of its population, effectively alleviated the population’s pressure on resources and the environment, and boosted China’s economic development – its positive implications can never be denied. As the historical mission of the family planning policy has been completed, China's population challenge is shifting from controlling the size to

adjusting the structure. According to National Bureau of Statistics of China, China's new-born population showed a downward trend in the past 30 years. (See Figure 8). However, according to the data of China's 1% population sample survey in 2015¹⁷, the country's total fertility rate was estimated to be only 1.047, which is a very low fertility rate.

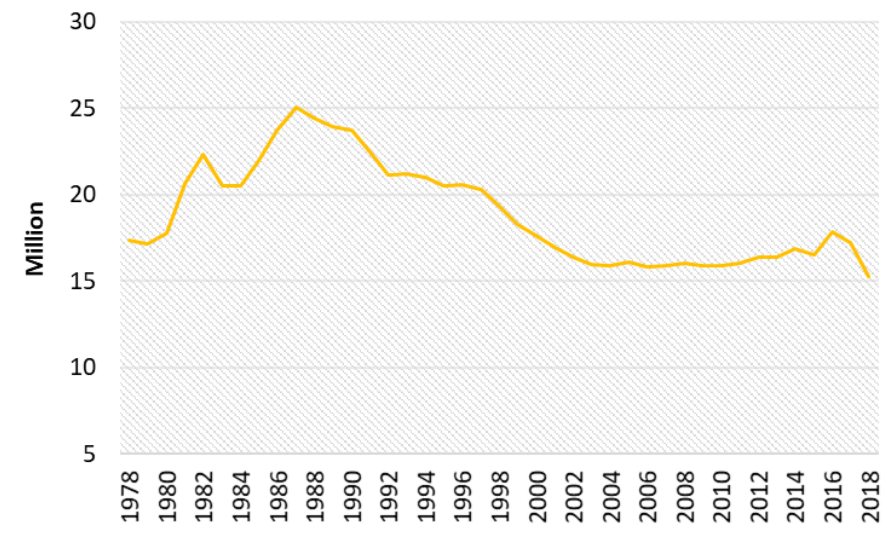


Figure 8: Changes in China's Annual New-Born Population and TFR (2010-2018)

Data Source: New-Born Population: National Bureau of Statistics of China

Since China boasts a vast territory, there are significant regional differences in

¹⁷ The survey includes data from the Chinese mainland only, and none from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

population status and fertility situation. It is necessary to consider local differences and adapt measures to local conditions. The child dependency ratio and the old-age dependency ratio can indicate the degree of declining fertility rate and raising of population aging rates in various regions. Based on the 2018 data, we can divide Chinese mainland into four types of regions, as shown in Figure 9. Provincial-level administrative divisions in Section A are youth-majority areas, with a high proportion of children and a small proportion of the elderly, most of which are underdeveloped areas; those in Section B are demographic-dividend areas, with a low proportion of children and the elderly and a high proportion of labor force; those in Section C are demographic-potential areas, with a relatively high proportion of children and the elderly, meaning the current pressure on elderly care is greater, but the labor force can be replenished in the future; and those in Section D are severely troubled with below-replacement fertility and aging. Provincial-level administrative divisions in each section should consider local realities when formulating population policies.

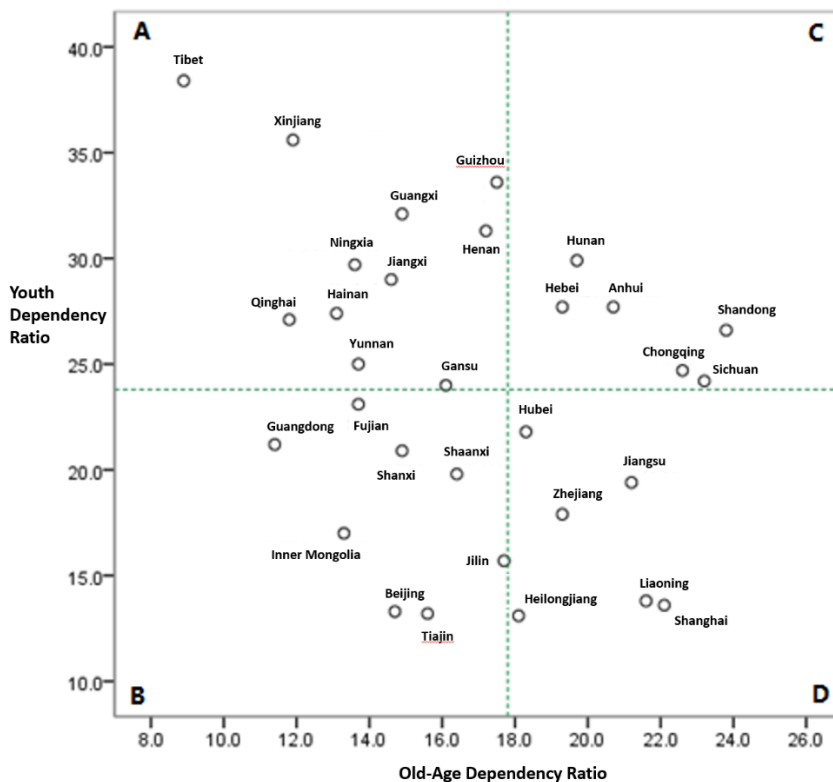


Figure 9: China's Provisional Situation of Below-Replacement Fertility and Population Aging - 2018

Data Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China

4.3. Main influencing factors of China's low fertility rate

The reasons behind China's low fertility rate are very complicated, but they mainly include the high costs of child-rearing, changes in marriage and childbirth, and evolving social norms and mentalities of marriage and childbirth.

First, the high costs for families to rear their children hinder their willingness to give birth.

The costs of raising children for Chinese families are relatively high. The first of such costs is the direct cost. According to estimates from the 2014 *China Family Panel Studies*, the direct cost for rearing a child from 0 to 17 years old was RMB 191,000 – the number for an urban child was RMB 273,200, while that for a rural child was RMB 143,400. And for lower-income families, the costs of child-rearing are higher. The second of such costs is the indirect cost. According to data from the *3rd China Survey on the Status of Women*, child-rearing will increase the time parents spend on housework and reduce their labor market gains. In the case of controlling other variables, for each new child born to a family, the mother faces an income penalty of 12.8%^{18/19}.

A survey in 2016 showed that, among women who were yet to have a second child, the proportion that did not want to have a second child was 58.7%; and among women who were yet to have a child, the proportion that did not want a child was 20.5%. Reasons for their low childbirth willingness were mostly focused on the

¹⁸ Ma Chunhua. Chinese Families' Cost of Child-rearing and Its Policy Implications [J]. Collection of Women's Studies, 2018(05).

¹⁹ Calculation method: If the salary income of non-mothers (women without children) is set as A, and the salary income of mothers (women with children) is set as B, then mothers' income penalty = (A-B)/B.

costs of childbirth – 56.8% of women said that "the cost of raising a child is too high", 53.6% cited "insufficient time and energy", and 41.9% chose the reason that they were "worried about having their job and career development affected."²⁰

Second, China's situation of marriage and childbirth has changed.

How China's situation of marriage and childbirth has impacted its fertility rate is mainly associated with the declining marriage rate and the delay in the first marriage and first childbirth. 1) The decline in the marriage rate has helped to reduce the number of births. Figure 10 shows that the marriage rate in China has been declining in recent years, and the divorce rate has continued to rise. From 1999 to 2013, the marriage rate showed an overall upward trend; but after 2013, the marriage rate began to decline. Despite the incentives of the universal second-child policy, the number of births decreased significantly after 2017. At the same time, China's divorce rate continues to rise, weakening the attractiveness of marriage to young people, and further contributing to the decline in the marriage rate. 2) The delay in the age of first marriage and first childbirth has led to a slowdown in population growth. From 1990 to 2017, the average age of first marriage for women

²⁰ Data Source: 2016 Investigation Report on Living Conditions of Working Mums by Zhaopin.com

of childbearing age in China has been postponed from 21.4 to 25.7 years old, and is continuing to rise; and the average age of first childbirth has also increased from 23.4 to 26.8 years old²¹. Late marriage and late childbirth will increase the age gap between the two generations and slow down the population growth.

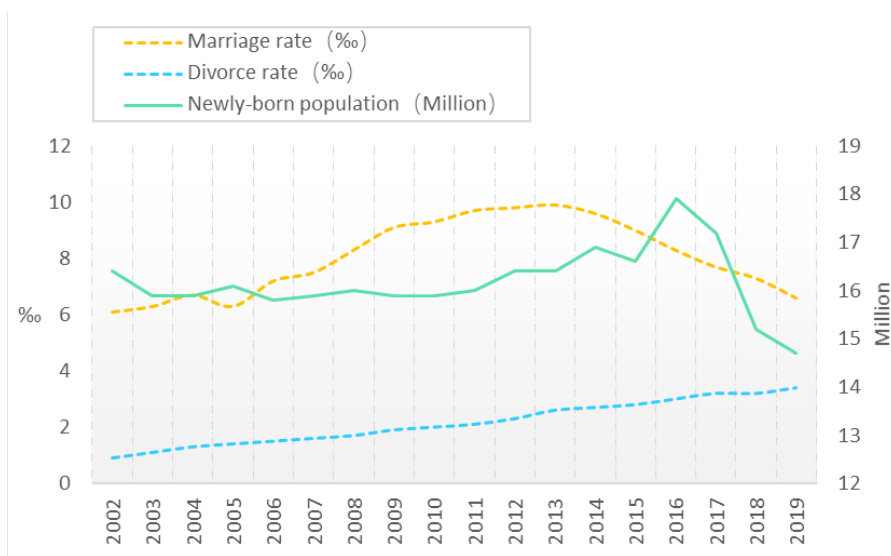


Figure 10: Changes in China’s Marriage Rate, Divorce Rate and New-Born Population

Data Source: New-Born Population: National Bureau of Statistics of China;
 Marriage Rate & Divorce Rate: Social Development Statistical Bulletins by
 Ministry of Civil Affairs

²¹ Data Source: Official website of National Bureau of Statistics of China http://www.stats.gov.cn/zljczlfx/ggk40n/201809/t20180918_1623598.html

Third, China's social norms and mentalities of marriage and childbirth have been evolving.

Changes in social norms and young people's mentalities around marriage and childbirth have led to insufficient motivation for marriage and childbirth. These changes are not difficult to identify: 1) The social norms of gender equality have made women's roles change. With women's rising status, they are increasingly pursuing independence and self-reliance, trying to realize their value in the labor market, rather than being confined to childbirth and housework. To reduce the loss of professional opportunities due to childbirth, they will choose not to marry, not to have children, or to control the number of births. 2) Changes in childbirth mentalities have made the decision less utilitarian. The traditional mentalities of 'family succession', 'more children for greater blessings', and 'raising children to ensure old-age support' are no longer recognized by young people. They choose to have children more out of emotional needs and to freely choose whether to have children and/or how many children to have.

5. Danone's Opinion and Suggestion: Building a Birth-Friendly Society in an

All-Round Manner

In November 2020, the Chinese government issued the ‘CPC Central Committee’s Proposal on Formulating The 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and The Long-term Goals for 2035’. The document points out the need to “Formulate a long-term development strategy on population, optimize fertility policies, increase the inclusiveness of fertility policies, raise the level of services for better natal and prenatal care, develop an inclusive child care services system; reduce the cost of childbirth, child care and education; promote balanced long-term demographic development, and raise the quality of the population. ”

The Chinese government has raised the issue of coping with low fertility and aging to the level of national strategy, and all parties in society are obliged to contribute opinions and suggestions. Given the complexity of factors that influence fertility, it is necessary to carry out a top-level design based on a systematic analysis and strive to build a birth-friendly society, to effectively deal with the risks of low fertility rate. Therefore, Danone proposes the following recommendations for Chinese government to consider:

5.1. Review the fertility policy and make it more inclusive

More inclusive population policies can better serve social and economic development. The original intention of China's family planning policy was to relieve the pressure on society, environment and resources incurred by excessive population growth. With China's falling birth rate, the social basis of birth restrictions no longer exists. Over the past almost 10 years, the Chinese government has successively implemented the 'second-child policy for parents both being a single child', 'second-child policy for either parent being a single child' and the 'universal second-child policy'. At present, the country should take a further step – completely abolish all the fertility restrictions and make it more inclusive.

A more inclusive approach does not mean the end of China's population policy. On the contrary, it will provide an opportunity for the country to build a more inclusive population policy system. Confronted with the dilemma of the low fertility rate, the momentum of fertility level will largely determine China's future population size and structure. Therefore, the government should continue to take fertility policy as the core component of China's population policy and move from a 'birth-restrictive' to a 'birth-friendly' orientation. At the same time, it is necessary to not over-implement such a 'birth-friendly' policy, and fully respect people's rights of choices and equalities in fertility.

Instead, the country should fully respect its citizens' rights of building inclusive population policies in China needs to pay attention to the temporal dimension of the family life cycle²² and the spatial dimension of adult social activities. In terms of temporal dimension, social protection policies should cover a family's whole life cycle, including housing benefits in the family formation period, child/parent benefits in the family expansion and stabilization period, employment benefits for grown-up children in the family downsizing period, elderly medical benefits in the live-alone elderly period, etc. In terms of the spatial dimension of social activities, benefits policies should not only protect individual rights and interests in family living space and workspace but also provide support to avoid the 'work-family' conflict.

5.2. Improving Fertility Support Policies to Build a Birth-Friendly Institutional Environment

First, having the state share parenting costs and relieve the economic pressure of child-rearing families.

²² Paul Glick divided the family life cycle into six classic stages. 1) formation stage: from the beginning of the marriage of two young people to the birth of the first child; (2) development stage: from the birth of the first child to the birth of the last child; (3) stability stage: from the birth of the last child to when the first child leaves the parents; (4) contraction stage: from when the first child leaves the parents to when the last child leaves the parents; (5) empty nest stage: from when the last child leaves the parents to the death of one of the spouses; (6) disintegration stage: when both spouses are dead The author declares: This classification does not cover family forms such as DINK and divorce, but we respect any family form that the law permits.

China should establish a sound welfare allowance and tax reduction system to share families' parenting costs. Relevant policies should be carried out gradually, before eventually covering all families' direct costs of birth-giving and child-rearing, to reduce the pressure of child-rearing families. Cost-sharing mechanisms can include:

1) Cash allowances, which can include child allowance, mother allowance, caregiver allowance, family allowance, etc. Cash allowances should be able to meet the needs of children at different growth stages and be inclined towards families with more children and vulnerable families. 2) Tax reductions. The expenses paid for childbearing, childcare services, and education and training can be deducted from the tax base of parents, and a tiered tax reduction system can be established according to the number of children, family income, regional development level and other factors; families with more children and vulnerable families can enjoy tax relief when they purchase a first home or home of improved housing conditions; enterprises can access tax rebate when they set up nurseries for the children of their employees.

Second, formulating work-family balance policies and respecting the dual roles of individuals as both 'employee' and 'parent'.

Developed countries generally take ‘work-family’ balance as an important goal to build a policy system to encourage fertility. With the economic globalization, rapid technological progress and increasingly fierce competition in the labor market, it is more and more difficult for people who play the dual roles of ‘employee’ and ‘parent’ to find a work-life balance, which troubles parents who take care of their children. They will need institutional support to alleviate the ‘work-family’ conflict.

The main focuses of ‘work-family’ policies should include but are not limited to 1) Setting up maternity/parental leaves to protect parents' fertility rights and infants' rights of being taken care of; 2) Allowing parents to cut working hours or adopt a flexible working system; 3) Allowing parents to work remotely or provide more flexible workplace arrangements; 4) Implementing social support measures at workplaces, such as breastfeeding room, office-building embedded nurseries and so on; (5) and implementing educational counseling to improve parents' ability to deal with the ‘work-family’ conflict.

Third, building a full-coverage nursery institution to provide parents with alternative public care resources

According to Figure 11, the labor force participation rate of Chinese women aged

15-64 has been declining since 1990, with the decline happening faster than the world average. However, the labor force participation rate of women in several developed countries mentioned earlier in the report has been rising otherwise. Moreover, the proportion of Chinese women in the labor force has dropped from 45.2% in 1990 to 43.6% in 2019, which indicates Chinese women's falling socio-economic status to some extent. There are many reasons for such a situation, with the lack of alternative childcare resources being an unneglectable factor. Since China's economic transformation in the 1980s, a large number of kindergartens/nurseries run by urban business units and rural communes have disappeared, which forces the focus of childcare responsibility to go down to individual families, and more women are forced to return to the family to take care of their children²³.

²³ Hu Zhan, Peng Xizhe. China's Family Policy in the Context of Family Changes [J]. Population Research, 2012(2).

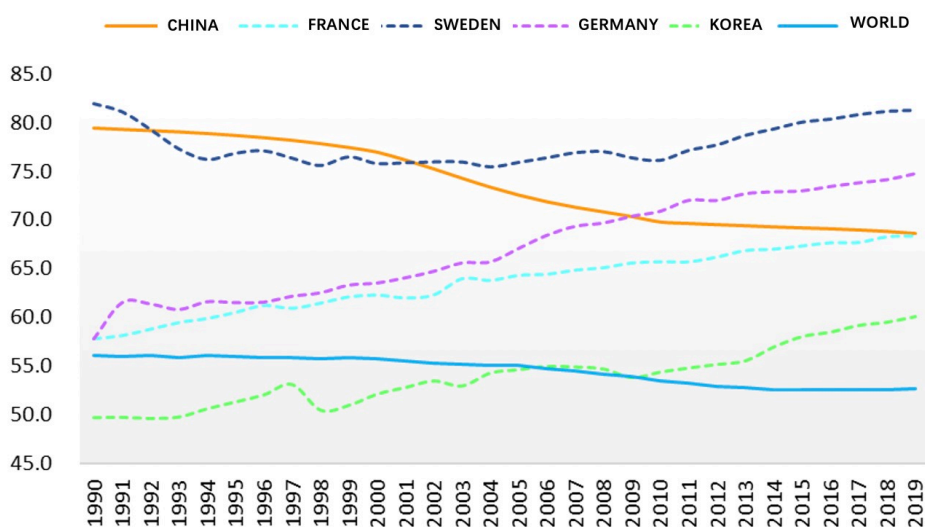


Figure 11: Changes in labor force participation rate of women aged 15-64 in the world and some countries (1990-2019)

Source: World Bank Database (<https://data.worldbank.org.cn>)

Even now, China's preschool nursery/education resources are still in short supply. There are few social institutions in China that can provide infant care services. Infant aged 0-3 are mainly taken care of by their mothers or grandparents. In 2019, the nursery enrollment rate of children aged 0 to 3 years old was only 4.3%²⁴, while the kindergarten enrollment rate of children aged 3 to 6 years old was 83.4%²⁵, still

²⁴ 2019-2020 White Paper on Development of China's Childcare Industry by iiMedia.cn

²⁵ 2019 National Educational Development Statistical Bulletin by the Ministry of Education of China

unable to fully meet the needs of all Chinese families. From the perspective of fertility policy, China should continue to increase the supply of nurseries, kindergartens and multiple pre-school childcare institutions, such as family childcare and mutual childcare to provide parents with diversified alternative childcare resources and provide women with employment support.

When the Chinese government increases the supply of preschool institutions, two points deserve special attention. First of all, the regional imbalance of China's pre-school education resources is very serious²⁶. Therefore, in the process of planning pre-school education resources and allocating financial expenditures, such regional differences should be taken into full consideration, with policies tilting towards underdeveloped regions. Second, the planning and building of nurseries and kindergartens should be pegged with the local population's age structure and fertility level to meet the potential needs of pre-school population growth of the infant population after the birth policy changes.

Fourth, providing institutional guarantees of workplace security for women of childbearing age, and reducing the ‘motherhood penalty’

²⁶ Huo Liting, Wang Guixin. A Study on the Changes in the Spatial Equilibrium of Chinese Preschool Education Resources — Also on the Implementation Effects of Two Rounds of “Three-year Action Plan for Preschool Education” [J]. *Modern Education Management*, 2019(10):14-20.

One of the most important reasons why a considerable proportion of women in China ‘don't have children, have children at a late age, or have fewer children’ is that they are worried that having babies will affect their career development. This worry also happens to be rooted in truth. Studies have shown that, after giving birth, women will often encounter the so-called ‘motherhood penalty’²⁷ such as employment difficulties, reduced promotion opportunities, slashed wages, and loss of work experiences in their subsequent career development. Take salary income as an example. For every child in China, the mother faces an income penalty of at least 7%^{28/29}, while some scholars put the figure at 12.8%³⁰. No matter what the real situation is, providing mothers with guarantees of workplace security is an inevitable choice to safeguard women's rights and build a birth-friendly society.

Concrete measures include: 1) Offering wage subsidies during maternity/parental leave. For example, Russia has 140 days of full-paid maternity leave and 1.5 years of half-paid parental leave. 2) Counting maternity leave into ‘length of service’ to avoid reduction of women’s pensions; 3) Having employers reserve jobs for child-

²⁷ Domestic researchers have many translations of the term ‘motherhood penalty’, such as ‘motherhood penalty’, ‘birth cost’, ‘motherhood penalty’, ‘motherhood penalty’ and so on. In foreign literature, ‘motherhood penalty’ is used to describe the negative effects of job hunting, job evaluation, salary, and promotion opportunities that employed women suffer because of the role of mother. The author believes that it is more accurate to use the term ‘mother's job’ to express ‘mother's role’, so this article adopts the term ‘mother's job punishment’.

²⁸ Yu Jia, Xie Yu. The Impact of Childbirth on Women's Wage Rates in China [J]. Population Research, 2014(1).

²⁹ Calculation method: If the salary income of non-mothers (women without children) is set as A, and the salary income of mothers (women with children) is set as B, then mothers’ income penalty = (A-B)/B.

³⁰ Ma Chunhua. Chinese Families’ Cost of Child-rearing and Its Policy Implications [J]. Collection of Women's Studies, 2018(05)

bearing women, except under special conditions; 4) Having employers meet specific conditions allowing women returning from maternity leave to make flexible work arrangements, such as flexible working hours or remote working.

5.3. Emphasizing guidance of public opinions and advocating modern mentalities of marriage and childbirth.

Building a birth-friendly society must take ‘changing people’s mindset’ as the priority. It is necessary to guide and correct misconceptions through public opinions.

First, advocating changes in marriage customs to denounce the abnormal marriage concept that ‘prioritizes financial requirements but neglects spiritual needs.’

There is now a widespread abnormal marriage concept in Chinese society that "prioritizes financial requirements but neglects spiritual needs". A series of high spending items such as housing, car, wedding expenses have become important factors when considering marriage, which has undoubtedly lengthened the time for young people to choose their partners, thereby postponing the age of marriage and childbirth. It is recommended that the government and all sectors of society should work together to guide public opinions to gradually change the abnormal marriage

concept, so that marriage and family can return to their original roles in the society and take on more emotional functions.

Second, changing the childbirth mentality of ‘preferring boys over girls’, and say no to ‘missing women’³¹

The restriction on the number of children in China's family planning policy cannot satisfy some population group's ‘preference of boys over girls.’ Therefore, there are more or less social phenomena such as gender-selective abortion and abandonment of female infants, leading to the so-called situation of ‘missing women.’ According to Figure 12, China's sex ratio at birth in the 1960s and 1970s was around 107, which was within the normal range³² (The UN sets the normal range of the sex ratio at birth at 103-107). However, the ratio began to rise rapidly in the 1980s, and although it began to slowly decline after 2008, it still deviates from the normal range. This has led to a decrease in the number of future mothers, as well as challenges for males to get married. Therefore, through the guidance of public opinions and the provision of equal childcare benefits, China should change the traditional mentality of ‘preferring boys over girls’, and further advocate the modern mentality that ‘boys

³¹ Missing women was a term first proposed by Nobel laureate in economics, Amartya Sen, in the 1990s. It was used to refer to the female population who failed to be born to this world due to human intervention or died earlier because of gender preference. According to Amartya Sen's estimates, there are more than 100 million women in the world who have disappeared due to gender selection. Among them, China and India are the hardest hit areas. These women could have become future mothers.

³² The UN sets the normal range of the sex ratio at birth at 103-107.

and girls are equal' so that it can be deeply rooted in the minds of the Chinese people.

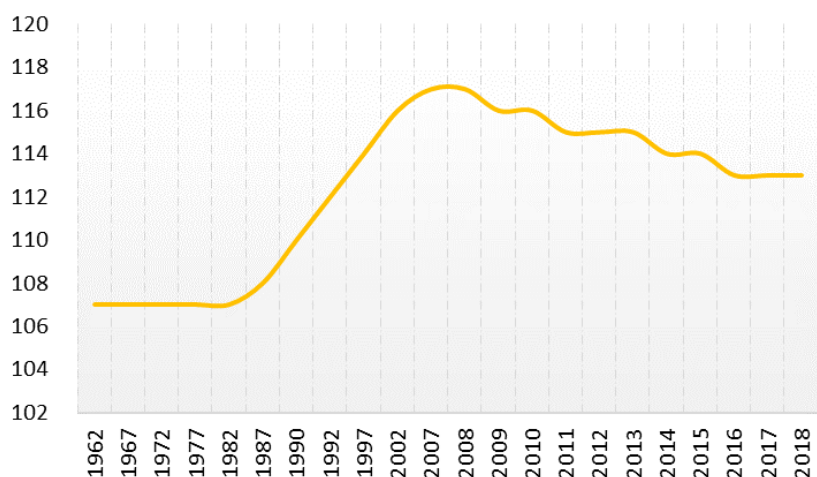


Figure 12: Changes in China's sex ratio at birth (Female=100)

Data Source: China Population & Employment Statistics Yearbook

Third, creating a social atmosphere of gender equality and improve women's socio-economic status

The journey of promoting gender equality in China still needs to be advanced. First, there is an unequal division of housework in Chinese families. Data from China Family Panel Studies show that the average daily housework hours of mothers and fathers in families with children aged 0 to 6 were 2.71 hours and 1.36 hours respectively, with the former almost doubling that of the latter. Second, there are

also significant gender differences in the labor market. In 2018, males accounted for 56.3% of the labor force in China, while females accounted for only 43.7%³³, and the average female salary was only 84%³⁴ of that of males. Therefore, in the future, on one hand, men should be encouraged to share housework and childcare duties; and on the other, measures should be taken to achieve equal pay for women and men for the same job in the labor market.

Changing the abovementioned mentalities requires the joint efforts of the whole society. It is necessary to not only provide support at the policy level but also to guide public opinions, replacing unreasonable traditional mentalities with modern ones when it comes to marriage and childbirth. China should let the family play its due emotional function and child-raising function, so that young parents (especially mothers) are no longer troubled by the ‘work-family’ conflict, and strengthen young people's confidence in starting a family and raising children.

5.4. Encouraging enterprises to assume social responsibilities and forming a birth-friendly labor market

In reference to the experience of developed countries, it is no longer sufficient to

³³ Data Source: World Bank Database

³⁴ Data Source: 2018 Insights to Gender Pay Gap in China by Career Science Lab

effectively stimulate an increase in fertility rate by only relying on government subsidies and the provision of childcare services. That's because the formation of a birth-friendly and family-friendly labor market can also have positive impacts on a population's fertility level.

Enterprises should respect the role of employees as family members and create a family-friendly corporate culture. They can set flexible working hours for employees; oppose a corporate culture of workaholic nature; say no to long working hours and overtime; drive the career promotion of female employees; and encourage fathers to use fully paid parental leave, etc. In addition, qualified enterprises should also provide employees with childcare services, arrange parent-child activities etc. Helping employees achieve work-life balance will also bring 'corporate benefits', such as higher productivity, lower employee turnover rate, lower absenteeism rate and so on.

As a French company, Danone has made efforts to build a family-friendly corporate culture. In 2017, Danone released the Danone Global Parental Policy, which applies to long-term employees around the world. It aims to help parents of newborn babies perform their parental duties and support them in successfully returning to the

workplace after their babies are born. The policy mainly involves three aspects: 1) advocating gender equality and preventing discrimination; 2) providing benefits like up to 18 weeks of paid maternity leave and unpaid leave; 3) offering a number of support and protection measures during pre-natal, mid-natal, post-natal and return-to-job stages, such as nutrition advice, protection of working conditions, flexible working hours, workplace breastfeeding support, and support in postpartum work resumption. These ‘parent-friendly’ measures are generally welcomed by employees and may provide some references to Chinese companies.

Ending

In the face of emerging low fertility risks, the Chinese government has proposed solutions such as ‘enhancing the inclusiveness of birth policies’, ‘promoting the integration of birth policies and related economic and social policies’, and ‘strengthening research on population development strategies. It shows the Chinese government’s accurate judgment on population issues and reflects its concept of systematic governance. The relaxation of China's population policies has created the conditions for building a birth-friendly society. Danone believes that the goal of

building a birth-friendly society should be to adopt measures such as institutional guarantees, resource provisions, extensive mobilization and changing societal mindsets to form a ‘state-society-family’ institutional framework for joint child-rearing, to build a ‘diversified, fully-covered’ childcare resource supply system, to create a ‘government-community-enterprise’ coordinated birth/care social support system, and to foster a ‘family-friendly and birth-friendly’ environment of social values and public opinions. We believe that by respecting the laws of population development and taking precautions, China will be able to successfully cope with the risks of low fertility and achieve sustainable economic and social development.