

To Chinese, end of 1-child policy welcome, not game-changer

October 30 2015, by Christopher Bodeen And Paul Traynor



Stay-at-home mother Shao Jiao holds her 6-week-old daughter Sheng Xia at her home in Shanghai on Friday, Oct. 30, 2015. Chinese like Shao, who were born in the 1980s and 1990s, when the one-child policy was most strictly enforced, say

they were lonely growing up without siblings. (AP Photo/Paul Traynor)

Everyone should have the chance to have more than one child, say Chinese parents who welcome the government's loosening of its population policy. But just because all couples can now have two children, that doesn't mean all want to take advantage.

Many already had that option because the [one-child policy](#) had been significantly relaxed in previous years. Some see a second [child](#) as too expensive, especially given the current level of [government support](#) for child care and [medical care](#). Others say it's already too late, and reflect on the siblings they might have had if the policy had not been in place for the past three decades.

Parents in Beijing and Shanghai spoke to The Associated Press on Friday about the historic change:

LONELY GENERATION

Chinese born in the 1980s and 1990s, when the one-child policy was most strictly enforced, say they were lonely growing up without siblings. That increased perceptions that the policy was unjust, said Shanghai stay-at-home mother Shao Jiao.

"We lack brothers and sisters, accompaniment. That experience and that life, we do not have them," said Shao, 31, the mother of a 7-year-old boy and 6-week-old girl. "I think it is true that the only-child generation is lonely. So we have to turn to friends more for that. We are the lonely generation," Shao said.

SEEKING HEALTH-CARE HELP

China has changed its one-child policy to a two-child policy to help mitigate an expected shortage of workers that will be needed to support an aging population. But a Beijing resident said the government will need to increase child-care and health-care support to give families incentives to have more kids.



A Beijing resident who would only give his surname, He poses with his two-year-old son He Zhiling for a photo at a park in Beijing, China, Friday, Oct. 30, 2015. He, whose son requires substantial medical care, said the government will need to increase child-care and health-care support to give families incentives to have more kids. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

Like many Chinese interviewed by media, the man gave only give his surname, He. His 2-year-old needs substantial medical care, but government support varies widely, depending on where families live and their legal residency status. People who live in rural areas, or migrate from the country to big cities to find work, get less help than native urban-dwellers.

"People won't have a second child if the burden is too great, so there really needs to be more state help," He said as he strolled with his child outside Beijing's Capital Institute of Pediatrics.

COUNTING THE COSTS

Wang Huiying, who works for Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, said [child care](#) is a major concern when considering whether to have a second child. Wang, 34, employs a nanny to care for her 3-year-old daughter, Pipi, but said many families are forced to put their children in the care of grandparents who might not always be available.

Child care adds to the costs of clothing, food and outside tutoring, while housing costs in major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai are already major burdens.

Wang already had the option of having a second child. A major change to the policy in 2013 allowed people who were only children, including Wang's husband, to have a second child of their own. Still, the official end of the one-child policy has renewed her interest having another. "There are a lot of factors to consider, so we're going to think very hard about this," she said.



Wang Huiying poses with her daughter Pipi, 3, at a park in Beijing, China,

Friday, Oct. 30, 2015. Wang, who works for Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, said child care is a major concern when considering whether to have a second child. Wang, 34, employs a nanny to care for her daughter but said many families are forced to put their children in the care of grandparents who might not always be available. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

PAYING THE PRICE

Chen Xiaoling from Hebei province outside Beijing wasn't eligible for more than one child, but had a second, anyway. She had to pay a 40,000-yuan (\$6,325) fine, which she and her husband were able to absorb. It helped that the couple are self-employed; had they worked for a state company or office, they could have been fired.

"Having another child isn't really a major issue if you can afford it, so I don't really think the change in rules will have a very big effect," Chan said while taking a walk in eastern Beijing's scenic Ritan Park.



Chen Xiaoling poses with her son Xu Zhisheng at a park in Beijing, China, Friday, Oct. 30, 2015. Chen, from Hebei province outside Beijing, wasn't eligible for more than one child, but had a second, anyway. She had to pay a 40,000-yuan (\$6,325) fine. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

AGING FUTURE

Boxing coach Chen Qiang in Shanghai says he's greatly concerned about the inverted-pyramid family structure the old [policy](#) has resulted in: four grandparents, two parents and just one child. The plunging birthrate

stands to increase the burden on the working-age population and create a labor shortage, said Chen, 34.

"So nationwide, we will have very few young people decades later," he said. While Chen himself hopes for a daughter to accompany his 6-year-old son, he says Thursday's announcement was not a factor in his planning and questions whether it will motivate many couples to change their thinking. "Those who want two kids already have them," he said.

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