

# Scientists study China's one-child policy

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U.S. scientists conducting the first systematic examination of China's fertility policy are warning of a possible demographics crisis in that nation.

The University of California-Irvine researchers found 63 percent of Chinese couples are strictly limited to one child.

The study, which involved researchers in the United States and China, is the first to use data on fertility policy and population growth collected from 420 Chinese prefectures.

"We want to clear up confusion about the one-child policy," said Wang Feng, a University of California-Irvine sociology professor and a lead author of the study. "Despite what some say, the policy has not been (relaxed) over the years."

China's average mandated fertility rate, accounting for the variety of exceptions across the country, is 1.47 children per couple. Wang and his colleagues found the actual fertility rate is about 1.5 children per couple.

"Such convergence between policy and reality is extraordinary, even for China," he said. "With the birth rate below replacement level, the country faces serious negative consequences in the long run if it fails to phase out the policy."

The study appears in the journal *Population and Development Review*.

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