

China performed 330 mn abortions since 1971: data

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Nearly 330 million abortions have been performed in China in the 40 years since it first implemented measures to limit population growth in the world's most populous nation, official data showed.

China has announced structural changes to its family [planning system](#) which oversees the controversial one-child policy during the ongoing annual meeting of the national legislature in Beijing.

Data posted on the [health ministry](#) website earlier this year shows that from 1971—shortly before China started encouraging people to have fewer children—through 2010 a total of 328.9 million abortions were carried out in the country, which has a population of 1.35 billion.

China says that its one-child policy introduced in the early 1980s has prevented [overpopulation](#) and boosted economic development. The policy exempts some rural families, ethnic minorities and couples who are both only children.

Calls have increased, however, for the restriction to be phased out as the country's labour pool shrinks and the ranks of the elderly swell. [Human rights groups](#) have criticised what they say are harsh enforcement methods.

Under the policy, urban families are generally allowed to have just one child, while rural families may have a second if the first is a girl. Those who contravene the rules must pay a fine.

Last Sunday, the government announced the merger of the National Population and Family Planning Commission, which oversees the policy, with the health ministry in a move state media said was meant to improve, not abandon the one-child policy.

"After the reform, China will adhere to and improve the family planning policy," Ma Kai, secretary general of the State Council, China's cabinet, said when the move was announced, according to the official [Xinhua news agency](#).

The move was included in a report on governmental restructuring submitted to the National People's Congress, the country's legislature, which ends its annual session on Sunday.

China's latest census in 2010 showed that the population could have been 400 million larger if the one-child policy had not been implemented, according to Xinhua.

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