

China official's mandatory 'two children' proposal draws rebuke

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China should roll back its one-child policy and instead mandate that all couples have two children, a family planning official has said, drawing criticism Friday from a ruling Communist Party newspaper.

Mei Zhiqiang, deputy director the Family Planning Commission of Shanxi province, offered the recommendation earlier this week as a way to solve the country's increasingly problematic gender imbalance.

"We should make sure our [policy](#) and system allows our children to give birth to two children," Mei said, according to a report by the government-run [sxb.com](#) news website.

"And they must have two children," he added.

The Global Times, a newspaper affiliated with the Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily, on Friday urged caution when proposing new initiatives, warning that a two-child policy "cannot be forced upon Chinese parents".

"Mei's intention to remodel China's demographic framework may be earnest, but calling for a direct administrative intervention to enforce a new policy over this delicate issue needs to be reconsidered," Global Times writer Liu Zhun wrote in an op-ed.

In an effort to rein in population growth, China in the late 1970s introduced its controversial [family planning](#) policies, which limit most

couples to only one child.

The regulations have led to sometimes brutal crackdowns on families with more than one child, including forced abortions and sterilisation as well as the levying of hefty fines.

The policy has also exacerbated an existing [gender imbalance](#) fed by a traditional desire to have a son.

The ruling Communist Party moved to relax the rules in late 2013 to allow couples to have two offspring so long as at least one of the parents is an only child. Yet far fewer couples have applied to have a second child than expected.

Liu noted that "an ageing—and increasingly male—populace is now starting to pose fundamental demographic challenges that officials have been trying to address."

But he added: "It is better to carry forward the new policy through encouragement and incentives, which will be more easily accepted by the people."

Nearly 116 boys were born for every 100 girls in China in 2014, while the sex ratio in the total population was 105 men to 100 women.

The stark imbalance threatens to create widespread social unrest as millions of men are unable to find wives. The problem has also led to an increase in human trafficking in recent years as women from neighbouring countries, especially Vietnam, are brought to China to marry single men.

Mainland China's total population stood at 1.37 billion at the end of 2014, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, an increase of 7.1

million over the end of 2013. It remains the world's largest, although India has been catching up in recent years.

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