

# The Implementation Basis, Short-term Effects and Recommendations of the Comprehensive Two-child Policy

Taking Shaanxi Province as an Example\*

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**Abstract**—There are significant differences between the implementation of the family planning policy and the effects. According to a survey of Shaanxi Province, the number of families with two children has reached 62% in some cities, and only 37.8% in some cities. This laid a different foundation for the implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy. The implementation of the family planning policy is strong and the effect is good. The comprehensive benefit of the two-child policy is higher than that of the policy-relaxed areas. The urban beneficiaries are more than the rural beneficiaries. And the staffs within the system are the main beneficiaries of the comprehensive two-child policy. The implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy in the surveyed area has achieved initial results in two years: the birth rate has increased by about one thousand points, and the sex ratio of the birth population has increased overall. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of two children in newborns increased rapidly. In some areas, the proportion of two children exceeded one child. The phenomenon of childbirth is highlighted, and the normal work of the industry is affected, such as hospitals and schools, and the functions of the family planning department are not in place. Relevant departments need to make pre-judgments and adjust relevant policies.

**Keywords**—"comprehensive two-child policy"; policy basis; short term effect

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since January 1, 2016, China has implemented a comprehensive two-child policy and implemented a major adjustment to the 35-year family planning policy. This policy adjustment is a major strategic deployment in the context of the population of the new era. Through this policy, the author hopes that it can alleviate or change China's low birth rate, unreasonable sex ratio, labor shortage, rapid population aging and pension.

In fact, the comprehensive family planning policy, which was implemented from 1980 on the core of "a couple has

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only one child", is not a one-size-fits-all policy.<sup>1</sup> It varies between different regions, rural areas and towns, Han and ethnic minorities. The implementation of the early differential family planning policy laid a different foundation for the comprehensive two-child policy. The consensus in the theoretical circle is that the population that actually implements the one-child birth policy in the country is about 60% of the country's total population. Even in regions where the same policies are implemented, different policy effects may result from different policy implementations, birth culture, and traditional concepts.

The comprehensive two-child policy has been implemented for two years. Has there been a significant change in the regional fertility rate and the sex ratio of the birth population based on different policy foundations? What choices do people face in urban and rural areas, different employment groups, and different educational backgrounds? What problems have arisen after the implementation of the policy? This article takes Shaanxi Province as the research object and strives to answer the above questions.

## II. RESEARCH REVIEW

The family planning policy of New China began in 1955. In September of that year, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China approved the report of the Party Group of the Ministry of Health on the issue of birth control

<sup>1</sup> The comprehensive family planning policy is broadly divided into the following four categories: national urban residents and rural residents in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Sichuan implement a one-child policy; rural areas in 19 provinces (regions) such as Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Gansu Residents, if the first child is a girl, they can have another child, commonly known as one child and a half policy; in addition to the above-mentioned areas, the vast majority of rural areas can have two children, called the two-child policy; a small number of ethnic peasants and herdsmen in Qinghai, Ningxia, Xinjiang and other ethnic minority populations with minority populations can have three children. In addition, after entering the new century, due to changes in the fertility situation of the population, many regions have successively adjusted their fertility policies, and successively implemented the policy of "two-child policy for only-child couples" and the "selective two-child policy". In some areas, the couples who meet the two-child birth policy have been shortened or cancelled the restrictions on birth spacing.

to the central government, expressing that "Chinese party is in favor of appropriate birth control." This is the first document of family planning in China. In the 1950s and 1960s, some preparatory work was done on family planning work, and it was not really carried out nationwide. In December 1973, the State Council proposed a "late, rare, and less" family planning policy, and for the first time put forward specific requirements for the family planning policy. In September 1980, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued the "Open Letter on Controlling the Population Growth of China to All Communist Party Members of the Communist Youth League", clarifying the requirement of "promoting a couple to have only one child". Since then, this request has been pushed to the masses of all ages and it became the basic policy of family planning in China. This policy continued until the beginning of the new century, and the loosening of the policy of "two-child policy for only-child couples" and the "selective two-child policy" in 2013 (see the introduction to the specific policy on January 1, 1980-2016).

With the implementation of China's population background and family planning policy, scholars' research has also undergone a development process that keeps pace with the times.

In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic, with the recovery of the national economy, the birth rate of the population increased rapidly and the natural population growth rate increased rapidly. Constrained by the backward economic development level at that time, "people" were more regarded as consumers than creators of wealth. The total population was once considered to be the embarrassment of China's economic development. After the implementation of the comprehensive family planning policy in 1980, China's total fertility rate began to decline, and in 1992 it fell below the replacement level (2.1). What followed was the shortage of labor, the problem of "not getting rich first", and retirement care. In recent years, the focus of scholars' research has been on whether to let go of the two-child policy, what kind of policy effect will be produced after the policy is released, and what factors affect the childbearing couple's birth of two children. The details can be summarized as follows:

The necessity and urgency of the adjustment of family planning policy; Chen Youhua (2016) believes that the continued "low fertility rate means human suicide", "fertility is not only the personal right, but also the first responsibility of the individual." According to China's 2000-2010 census data and population sample survey data, Yin Wenyao calculated that the fertility rate in mainland China is generally stable below 1.5, and it is stable and decreasing. The fertility level of most provinces has dropped to moderate, depth and sub-polar low fertility levels (Yin Wenyao et al., 2016). Compared with western developed countries, China's fertility transformation has the role of social and economic factors, and the influence of birth policy is obvious (Wang Jun, Wang Guangzhou 2015). The fertility willingness of married couples has dropped, and more than 90% of couples have 2 or fewer children (Zhang Yuan Chen Jianqi 2015).

The fertility willingness and influencing factors of married couples of childbearing age in China; Shi Zhiyong et al. (2014) found that the ideal number of children in a two-child family is 1.70 through a survey of Hubei Province. The second child has a higher fertility willingness than the urban area. The weaker the willingness to bear, the higher the level of education, the weaker the willingness to bear, and the greater economic pressure is the main reason for not being willing to have two children. Zhang Yuan et al. used the panel data of the "Chinese Health and Nutrition Survey" from 1991 to 2011 to empirically analyze the determinants of Chinese family fertility willingness, including personal factors (age, ethnicity, marital status, education level, health, physiology, occupation, working hours, income), family factors (scale, membership, child care, living conditions), policy factors (medical insurance, education, family planning, household registration) (Zhang Yuan et al. 2015). Feng Xiaotian used the survey of 12 cities across the country in 2015 to analyze the fertility influencing factors of two different age groups of 22-34 and 35 years old. He believed that dissatisfaction with the status quo of a child is the main factor affecting the birth of two children. In addition, the support of the ancestors, the age of the woman, and the degree of husband's education will also affect the birth of the second child (Feng Xiaotian 2016). The higher the expected cost of childbirth, the higher the opportunity cost and the current concept of marriage and childbearing, the lower the possibility of determining the birth of the second child. The pursuit of spiritual comfort and family happiness brought about by children has a positive effect on the birth of two children (Jiang Quanbao 2017).

Based on the policy of "selective two-child policy", "two-child policy for only-child couples" and a comprehensive two-child policy, the impact on the economy is predicted. Li Xinyun et al., (2014) based on the data of 6th national population census, uses the results of the cohort prediction model to conclude that the adjustment of the birth policy can appropriately improve the low birth rate, deeper aging, and rapid labor reduction in China. Miao Hongjun et al. (2016) predicted by the China Population and Development Research Center's population prediction software PADIS-INT that the implementation of the comprehensive "two-child policy" will postpone the peak population of China from 2030 to 2038, and the population of 2100 will increase from 807 million to 1.315 billion. The proportion of the elderly aged 65 and over decreased by 9.6 percentage points, the old-age dependency ratio decreased by 23.23 percentage points, and the labor supply increased by 310 million. The implementation of the two-child policy will increase the peak population, help improve the population structure, and delay the decline of labor supply, but the effect is minimal (Yang Wei 2016).

The existing scholars' research is based on the original family planning policy, discussing its impact on China's economy and society, and the factors that currently restrict the fertility willingness of the population, and anticipating the effects of the adjustment of the family planning policy. There is no precedent for analyzing the implementation basis, affects and existing problems based on the comprehensive

two-child policy, and there is no precedent for supporting evidence with practical data.

### III. INFRASTRUCTURE DIFFERENCES IN THE COMPREHENSIVE TWO-CHILD POLICY

#### A. Survey Area Selection, and Data Source

From north to south, Shaanxi Province consists of three major regions with different geographical, historical, cultural, climatic, and economic developments, namely, northern Shaanxi, Guanzhong, and southern Shaanxi. In order to reflect the overall two-child policy of Shaanxi Province from a global perspective, this paper selects the representative City B (located in northern Shaanxi), City Z (located in Guanzhong), and City N (located in southern Shaanxi) as specific research objects. The data comes from official statistics, local government officials, urban street and village interviews and questionnaires, and the questionnaires are filled in using a random sampling model. On the basis of the selection of the above three cities, the selection of specific research sites and objects in each city, taking into account the higher level of economic development, average

development level, lower economic development level, and urban and rural areas, the questionnaire is evenly distributed in each city. A total of 1,000 questionnaires were distributed and 936 valid questionnaires were returned. The survey data is as of October 30, 2017. The respondents were married women aged 20-45.

#### B. Data Analysis

According to the statistics of the Shaanxi Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission, among the married women of childbearing age in the province at the end of 2017, there were 4.6% of zero-child women, 50.11% of one-child women, and 44.13% of two-child and multi-child women. This means that 44.13% of women of childbearing age in the province have been bred for two or more children, slightly higher than the national average of 40%. According to the actual survey data, women with zero children accounted for 4.86%, women with one child accounted for 50.89%, and women with two or more children accounted for 44.24%. The survey data shows a great fit with official statistics. (As shown in “Fig. 1”)

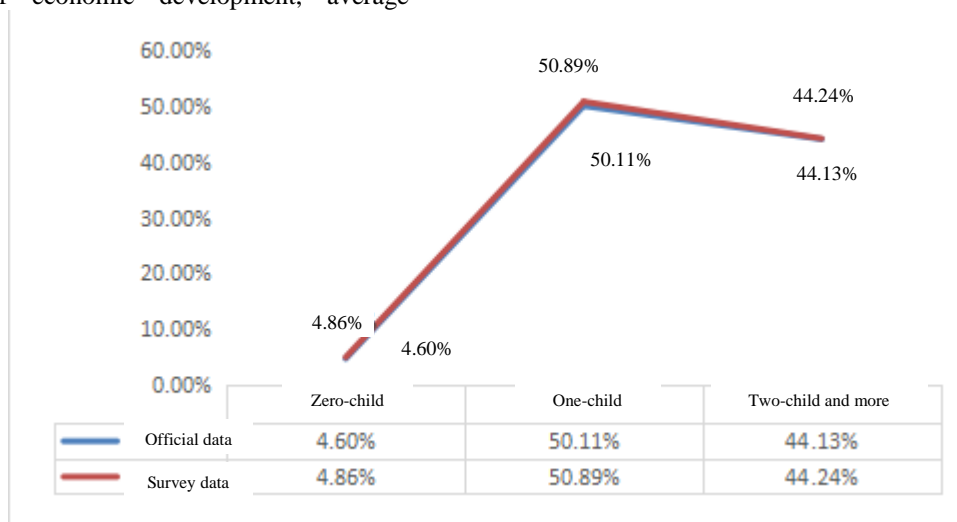


Fig. 1. The proportion of children in official data and survey data.

#### 1) The distribution of children in different regions (survey data):

- 8% of women in City B have zero child, 30% of women with one child, and 62% of women of childbearing age have two or more children.
- In the City Z, there is 0.46% of the zero-child women, 58.60% of the one-child women, and 40.94% of the women of childbearing age having had two children and many children.
- In the City N, 3.6% of women have zero children, 58.5% of women have one child, and 37.8% of women of childbearing age have had two children and many children.

#### 2) Comparison of the number of children in rural and urban areas (survey data): (see “Fig. 2”)

- In urban areas of City B, there are 11% of urban zero-child women, 47% of one-child women, 42% of second-child and multi-child women. And in rural areas, 3% of zero-child women, 23% of one-child women, and 74% of second-child and multi-child women.
- There are 5% of zero-child women in City Z, 66.3% of one-child women, 28.7% of two-child women in urban areas, 3.6% of zero-child women, 44.6% of one-child women, and 51.8% of two-child and multi-child women in rural areas.
- There are 9.9% of urban zero-child women in City N, 73.3% of urban one-child women, 16.8% of urban two-child and multi-child women, 1.6% of rural zero-

child women, 53.8% of rural one-child women, and

44.6% of rural two-child and multi-child women.

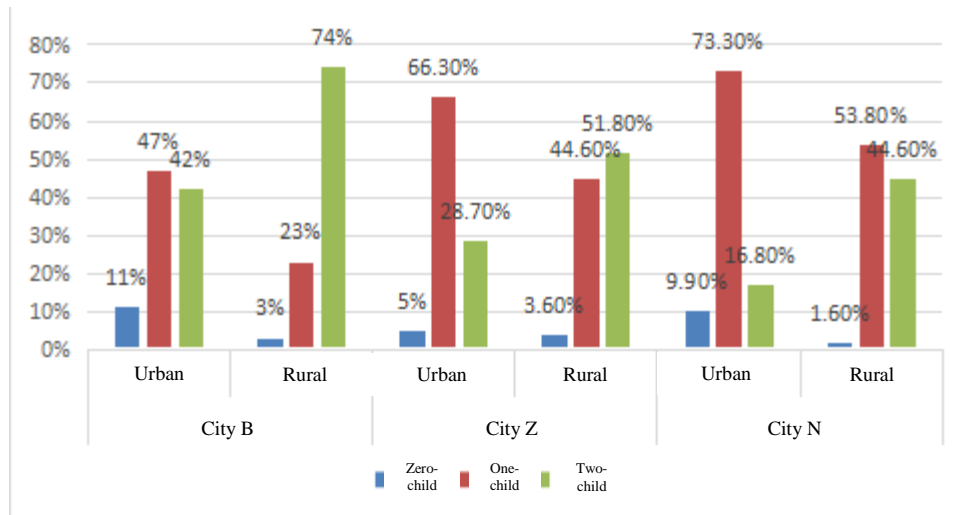


Fig. 2. The proportion of urban and rural children of the surveyed objects in the three cities.

3) Comparison of the employment nature of the respondents and the number of children (investigation data): The work units of the respondents are divided into the staff of the system (state organs, institutions, state-owned enterprises) and the units outside the system (collective enterprises, foreign-funded joint ventures, private enterprises, social organizations, grassroots autonomous units) and unemployed persons (housewives) (This analysis does not consider the nature of the spouse's work unit of the respondent). (See "Fig. 3")

- In the City B female staff in system, 10.81% of the women have no child, 52.70% of the women have one child, and 36.49% of the women have the children of 2 and more children; as for the female staff outside the system, 7.14% have no child, 33.93% have one child, and 58.93% have two or more children. As for the respondents were unemployed, 3.37% have no child, 23.60% are one-child women, and 73.03% are two-child and multi-child women.

- In the City Z female staff in system, 3.03% of the women have no child, 79.82% of the women have one child, and 18.18% of the women have the children of 2 and more children; as for the female staff outside the system, 5.88% have no child, 60.78% have one child, and 33.34% have two or more children. As for the respondents were unemployed, 4.23% have no child, 47.89% are one-child women, and 47.89% are two-child and multi-child women.
- In the City B female staff outside the system, 20.83% have no child, 41.66% have one child, and 37.50% have two or more children. As for the respondents were unemployed, 0.27% of the women have no child, 60.98% are one-child women, and 38.73% are two-child and multi-child women.

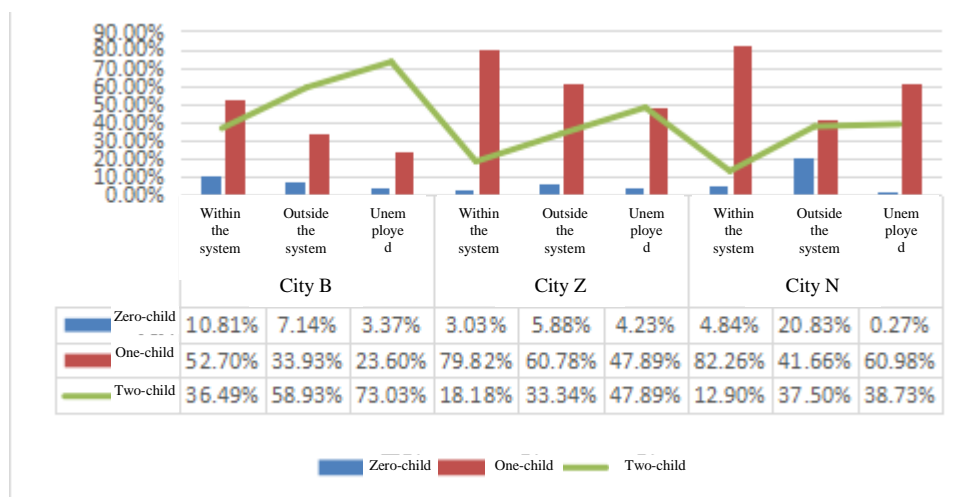


Fig. 3. The proportion of children of the surveyed objects with different employment characteristics.

4) Comparison of educational level and number of children (investigation data): (see "Fig. 4")

- The proportion of the children surveyed in the City B was 80%, 73.70%, 63.78%, and 32.26%, respectively, whose educational degree is no-school, primary school, middle school, or university.
- The proportion of the objects surveyed in the City Z was 66.7%, 54.2%, 27.6%, and 5.6%, respectively,

whose educational degree is no-school, primary school, middle school, or university.

- The proportion of the objects surveyed in the City N was 0%, 37.04%, 42.49%, and 19.74%, respectively, whose educational degree is no-school, primary school, middle school, or university.

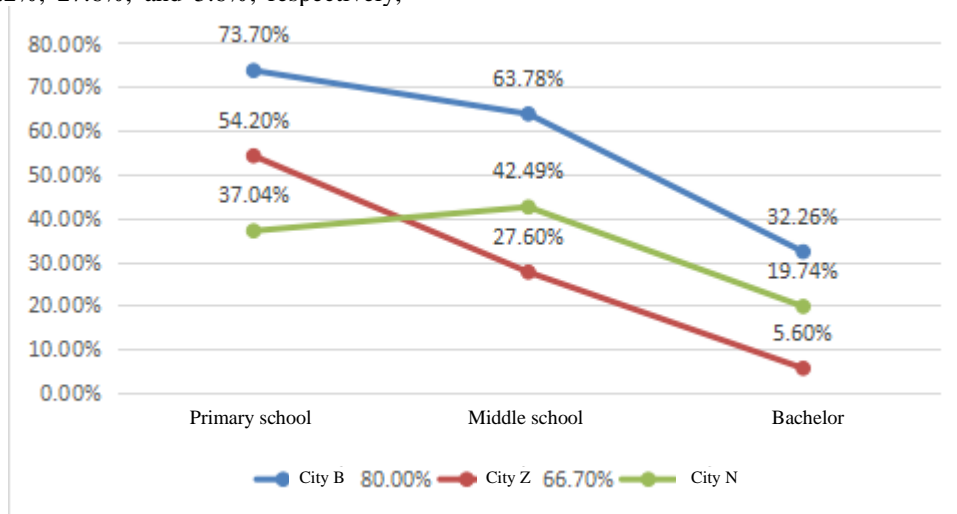


Fig. 4. The proportion of subjects of different education levels have been bred for two children.

C. Analysis of the Differences in Infrastructure of the Comprehensive Two-child Policy

From the above statistics, the same provinces and the same family planning policy, but different regions, towns and villages, people of different natures of work, different educational backgrounds, there are significant differences in policy effects. This laid a different foundation for the implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy. (The proportion of zero-child families is relatively low, mainly affected by the younger or very few physiological and fertility factors of the respondents, and will not be discussed here)

1) From the perspective of different surveyed areas: City B has resource advantages, the overall economy is more developed, and the social security systems such as medical care, education, and pension are relatively sound. The citizens are simple and unrestrained, and the historical traditional willing of fertility is higher than other regions. Before the policy was liberalized, couples with two children's willingness basically have had two children. This is the common view of government workers and ordinary people during the investigation. They believe that the implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy for the population of the region will not have a significant impact. In rural areas, 74% of the respondents have already had two children, and 42% of the respondents in the urban areas have already had two children.

In stark contrast to City B is the City N, which is located in the mountainous area. It is constrained and restricted by

the natural environment, and the economy is relatively underdeveloped. The administrative style of the region is solid and rigorous. It has always been a national demonstration zone for family planning policies, and both the urban and rural areas have strictly implemented the national family planning policy. If it can be said that it has evaluated the previous family planning policy from negative consequences, City N is undoubtedly the hardest hit. Only 16.8% of the respondents in the urban areas have two children, and the data is only 44.6% in the rural areas. Whether in urban or rural areas, there are more families with one child than with two children.

Overall, 62% of women of childbearing age in City B have had two children and more children, compared with 37.8% in City N.

The situation in City Z is close to that of N City. 66.30% of the respondents in the town are single-child families, and the two-child family in rural areas (51.8%) is slightly higher than the one-child family.

2) In terms of urban and rural areas, the three cities surveyed showed almost the same pattern: There were more single-child families in the urban areas than two-child families, and the proportion of two-child families in rural areas were more than single-child families (except City N). The proportion of urban one-child households in the three cities and towns was respectively 47%, 66.3%, and 73.3%. And the proportion of rural one-child households was respectively 23%, 44.6%, and 53.8%. The proportion of urban two-child households was respectively 42%, 28.7%

and 15.8%. And the proportion of rural two-child households was respectively 74%, 51.8%, and 44.6%. This shows that the two-child policy benefits more urban areas than rural areas.

3) *From the perspective of the nature of employment:* The one-child family whose respondents are staff members within the system has an absolute advantage (the data of three cities are respectively 52.7%, 79.82%, and 82.26%). The two-child households who were unemployed (mainly work as household labor) were dominant (73.03%, 47.89%, and 38.73% in the three cities respectively), and the proportion of the two-child households and one-child households with no employment outside the system was not obvious in the law of change. But the two-child family as a whole is higher than the respondents in the system. The staff within the system of the beneficiary of the comprehensive

two-child policy is significantly higher than the staff outside the system.

4) *From the perspective of the education level of the respondents:* The trend is that the higher the level of education, the lower the proportion of children born to two children.

The researchers also performed a correlation analysis between income and number of children and found no significant correlation between income and number of children.

#### IV. THE RECENT IMPLEMENTATION EFFECT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE TWO-CHILD POLICY

“Table I” and “Fig. 5” show the birth rate and its changing trend of the province and the surveyed areas in Shaanxi Province from 2007 to 2017.

TABLE I. CHANGES IN BIRTH RATE IN THE SURVEYED AREAS IN 2007-2017 (UNIT: ‰)

Birth Rate	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
The whole province	8.99	8.88	9.34	9.38	9.41	9.54	9.43	9.74	9.40	10.05	10.95
City B	9.13	9.77	9.07	11.09	11.68	12.49	12.99	13.49	13.66	15.27	15.37
City Z	9.71	9.73	9.74	9.85	9.81	9.85	9.51	9.57	9.25	10.01	9.57
City N	9.33	9.17	9.18	10.55	10.56	10.84	10.45	10.48	9.15	10.85	11.01

<sup>a</sup>. Data source: Shaanxi Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission.

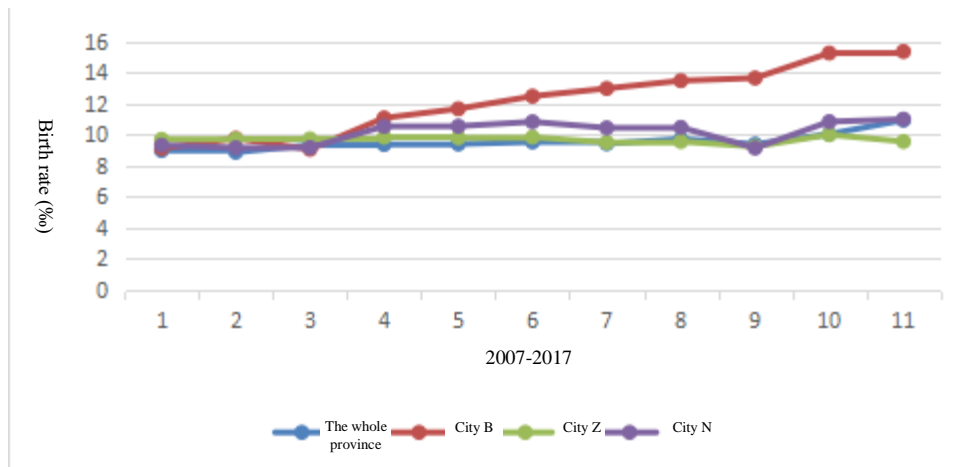


Fig. 5. Trend of birth rate in Shaanxi Province and the surveyed areas from 2007 to 2017.

In the two years of the implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy, the birth rates of the province and the three surveyed areas have seen a significant increase. The rise in the birth rate is not necessarily related to the birth rate before the implementation of the policy, and the effect of the policy has initially appeared. Among them, City Z is worthy of attention. The city's birth rate has been slightly lower than that of the other two cities. After the population birth rate increased significantly in 2016, it returned to the original level in 2017, showing insufficient policy stamina and short-term effects.

“Table II” and “Fig. 6” compare the proportion of one-child, two-child and multi-child in the newborns in 2016 and

2017 after 2015 and the implementation of the policy. In 2015, one-child has an absolute advantage, accounting for more than 60%, and two-child are around 30%. In 2016, the proportion of two-child increased significantly, reaching or even exceeding 40%. In 2017, two-child and one-child each accounted for half of the data. The proportion of two-child in City B and City N have exceeded that of one-child. There are still two obvious trends after the policy is liberalized. The birth rate of many children has increased significantly compared with the policy before the implementation of the policy, and the proportion of the two-child and multi-child who have been suppressed by the policy has increased rapidly.

<sup>a</sup>. Data source: Shaanxi Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission.

TABLE II. RATIO OF NEWBORN ONE-CHILD AND TWO-CHILD IN THE SURVEYED AREAS (UNIT: %)

Ratio	2015			2016			2017		
	one-child	two-child	multi-child	one-child	two-child	multi-child	one-child	two-child	multi-child
The whole province	68.51	31.26	0.23	59.08	40.18	0.74	49.55	49.11	1.34
City B	64.68	35.17	0.15	53.85	45.63	0.48	40.45	58.73	0.81
City Z	69.33	30.53	0.13	60.36	39.13	0.51	51.01	47.88	1.11
City N	60.63	38.85	0.51	54.06	44.72	1.21	43.69	53.61	2.70

<sup>a</sup>. Data source: Shaanxi Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission.

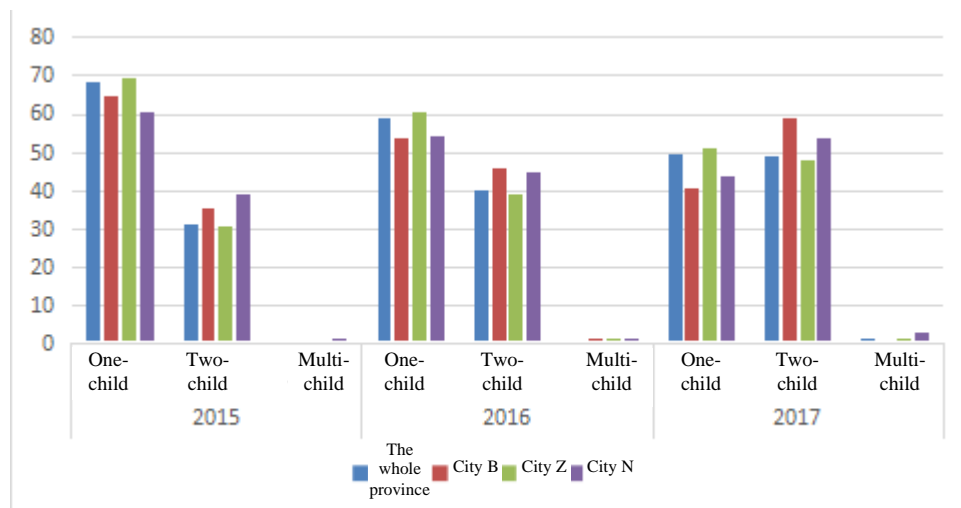


Fig. 6. The proportion of newborn children in Shaanxi Province and the surveyed areas.

<sup>a</sup>. Data source: Shaanxi Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission.

“Table III” shows the change in the sex ratio of the new population before and after the implementation of the comprehensive two-child policy. The province of Shaanxi Province has shown an increasing trend year by year. The City B is basically stable, the City Z is declining year by year, and the City N has increased significantly. It can attribute the trend of the province and City N mainly to the restrictions of the family planning policy, so that a child-friendly as a girl and boy-oriented family chooses to have a boy in a short period of time, and there is no obvious change in the area where the policy implementation is not strict enough.

TABLE III. SEX RATIO AT BIRTH OF NEWBORN POPULATION IN THE SURVEYED AREAS (UNIT: NUMBER OF BOYS / NUMBER OF GIRLS GIRL = 100)

Sex Ratio	2015	2016	2017
The whole province	105.95	106.30	107.70
City B	107.41	108.62	107.24
City Z	106.50	105.47	104.76
City N	104.31	106.50	108.99

<sup>a</sup>. Data source: Shaanxi Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission.

## V. SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

First, the different implementation of the previous policies laid a different foundation for the follow-up policy implementation. In the context of implementing the same family planning policy, there are significant differences in the number of family children. In the areas where the early family planning policies were strong, whether in urban or rural areas, the birth rate of children with two or more children was low. After the implementation of the policy, the birth rate increased significantly. In areas where the previous family planning policy was relatively loose, couples with two children’s willingness to give birth were comprehensive. The birth process has been completed before the implementation of the two-child policy. After the policy is liberalized, the birth rate has increased but the magnitude is slightly smaller.

Second, the staffs within the system are the biggest beneficiaries of the comprehensive two-child policy; the comprehensive two-child policy basis for urban and rural

areas varies widely, and the urban population is the main beneficiary of the two-child policy; the number of children with different educational levels of the parents is quite different. The higher is the level of education of parents, the fewer the number of children they will have. This is the result of many factors (opportunity cost, unattended, education cost, etc.); there is a close relationship between the level of regional economic development and the number of children. The result in the surveyed area is where the economic conditions are better the number of children is large.

Third, in 2016 and 2017 after the implementation of the policy, the birth rate has been greatly improved, and the two-child policy has achieved initial results. The birth rate of the surveyed areas has increased by about 1 percentage point. The surveyed areas did not have the problem of fertility accumulation before the policy was released.

Forth, the sex ratio of the newborn population has an overall upward trend. In some areas, especially those where the implementation of the previous family planning policy is more stringent, the upward trend is more obvious.

Fifth, women of post-70s and post-80s generation of childbearing age, due to physical limitations, have been or may have a phenomenon of giving birth together. It has become increasingly prominent on increasing contradiction between public health service needs and existing maternal and child health care resources. And it has become more and more serious of the shortage of pediatricians, obstetricians and beds. The increasing number of elderly women requires more professional and high-level medical treatment techniques. In the next 3-5 years, the demand for kindergartens, primary schools and degrees will increase, and relevant departments need to do dynamic monitoring and make judgments in advance. There is a lack of child care institutions. In the primary and secondary schools, hospitals and other units with more female staff, there has been a phenomenon in which employees concentrate on producing the second child. There is a lack of nurses in the hospital and school teachers can't attend classes normally, which affects the normal work order. The relevant departments need to arrange in advance.

Sixth, it will be necessary to accelerate the transformation of the functions of the family planning department and clarify the job responsibilities. After the two-child policy was liberalized, the functions of the family planning department had a major impact, and the diversion of personnel was from top to down. Judging from the investigation, the adjustment of personnel at the city and county levels has been basically in place. The division of functions is being transformed and enriched. However, the adjustment of township and village levels needs to be further strengthened. The grassroots family planning work teams in some areas are scattered, and basic data such as normal data cannot be completed.

Seventh, it will also be very important to combine health check, birth check and other related policies. The relevant policies implemented at the national and provincial levels have made the people get benefits, but the division of labor

in the grassroots implementation process is often not clear enough. Especially for the floating population, the inspection site at the input site and the output site also have inspection tasks; the same inspection is required at the same time in different functional departments. Some grassroots units complained that the tasks assigned by the superiors were not completed, and some women complained that the community often notified them to participate in various repeated inspections causing the people and the wealth were exhausted and damaged.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In the two years after the implementation of "Comprehensive Two-child Policy", the effect in the surveyed areas has begun to appear, although there has been a large difference between the regions with different policy bases, rural areas and towns, different educated people, and different working people, the overall effect is good. The follow-up effect of the policy, the relevant government departments, especially the medical, health, education and other relevant departments need to make good judgments at the right time to escort the evidence.

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