



# Rise of Women's Power from 2002 to 2017 in China

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**Abstract.** Nowadays, China is developing quickly. What is noteworthy during this historic growth is the prominent role of Chinese women. Both domestically and abroad, there are more and more Chinese women emerging in visible leadership positions. This paper demonstrates how this incredible story of the Chinese materialized. By analyzing the experiences and educational foundations of female college graduates, the changes in women's work status are revealed. It detects the changes in female educational attainment from the data about female populations who have college and higher education. Meanwhile, it illustrates the changes in women's work status which have exegesised women increased power and influence. and the third part on changes in the economy by female consumers. The significantly longer influence of the "her economy" can be recognized. From the above three points, it can be seen that the development of China and the prosperity of its economy have had a crucial impact on the changing social status of women. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the role of women in the country and further development of gender equality should be promoted.

**Keywords:** women's development, higher education, work status, economy

## 1 Introduction

For most of the long history of China, Chinese women operated primarily under the conditions of inequality. In a relatively brief timeframe, a notable shift towards gender equality has emerged. This transformation is particularly remarkable considering China's deep-rooted history of patriarchy, making it an intriguing facet of contemporary Chinese society [1]. However, it's important to note that these changes did not materialize suddenly and can be examined through four distinct phases.

During the late Qing Dynasty (1840-1912), at the outset of modern Chinese history, patriarchy was the foundation of society. In this first period of women's development, the notion that the "husband is supreme" was the mainstream ideology. At that time, women had no room for development. A case in point was the practice of foot binding which physically and metaphorically limited the movement of women. Women with small feet were the feminine ideal and consequently, women endured painful physical and intellectual damage to their bodies and mind. Towards the end of the Qing dynasty, this inhumane practice was coming under increased criticism [2].

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The second phase took place during the May 4th Movement of 1919, which marked a crucial point in national ideologies and cultures. In this time, Chinese women adopted a notion that everyone is equal regardless of his/her gender and were on a mission to erase patriarchy. Therefore, women embarked on the quest for education, away from marriage being their only purpose in life towards becoming intellectuals [3]. Women's schools with a broad curriculum emerged in response to the increasing demand for female education. At the same time, there was an unprecedented shift in cultural values as women expanded their aspirations to enter professions, and become engaged intellectuals and cultural actors that have helped them feel like they are on top. These schools were really important for women. They let women get an academic education, teach modern, progressive ideas, and offer women lessons that go beyond traditional content such as housework. Things like science, math, foreign languages, and social sciences were emphasized. The schools expected women to develop their minds and encouraged them to think independently and discuss new ideas freely. Many women were inspired to have careers and be leaders after graduating [4].

The third phase of women's development is the period after the establishment of the PRC (1949) which played a vital role in the rise of women's power. "Women can hold up half of the sky", was not an empty slogan but was implemented throughout the country. This rhetoric guided how equality became a policy.

The fourth stage is the reform and the opening up of China from 1978 until the present day. More and more women have the opportunity to enter schools and gain employment. Although there are still lingering historical problems, gender discrimination and inequality have been weakening. At present, China encourages the family to have their second child [5]. Clearly, these changes set the stage for future female power development. By delving into the data representing the years 2002 to 2017, it can be analyzed the concrete trends that underscore the journey towards gender equality in China [6]. These data can provide a quantifiable perspective on the advancements made and the potential for demographic balance and equal opportunities in the years ahead. More women can go to school and have jobs. There is still no total equality, but things are way better than before. China also changed the one-child policy to let families have two kids. This shows China is changing with the times, and women are gaining more equal rights as time goes on.

## **2 Changes in female educational attainment**

China's growing economy has led to an increased need for well-educated and skilled employees, especially in urban centers. Therefore, this facilitated women's access to education so that they could have better employment prospects and economic advantages. In the last ten years, there have been great strides toward increasing educational opportunities for the Chinese female gender [7]. The availability of more schools and teachers across different parts, as well as infrastructure improvement and essential resource enhancements, have greatly contributed to the progress of Chinese women between 2002 and 2017. This has boosted education opportunities for women nation-

ally. Changes are observed in numerical data during these fifteen years. In the beginning, there was an imbalance of sexes with respect to participation in higher education, as more men than women joined college [8]. But when viewed in the context of time, such a gap has been decreasing over time. The number of women in universities grew considerably with time as more educational opportunities were opened up while the government focused on equalizing education for both sexes. This signifies efforts made by the government to improve women’s status through education which also forms part of the larger issue of attaining gender equity in different facets of society including economy, politics, social life, etc.

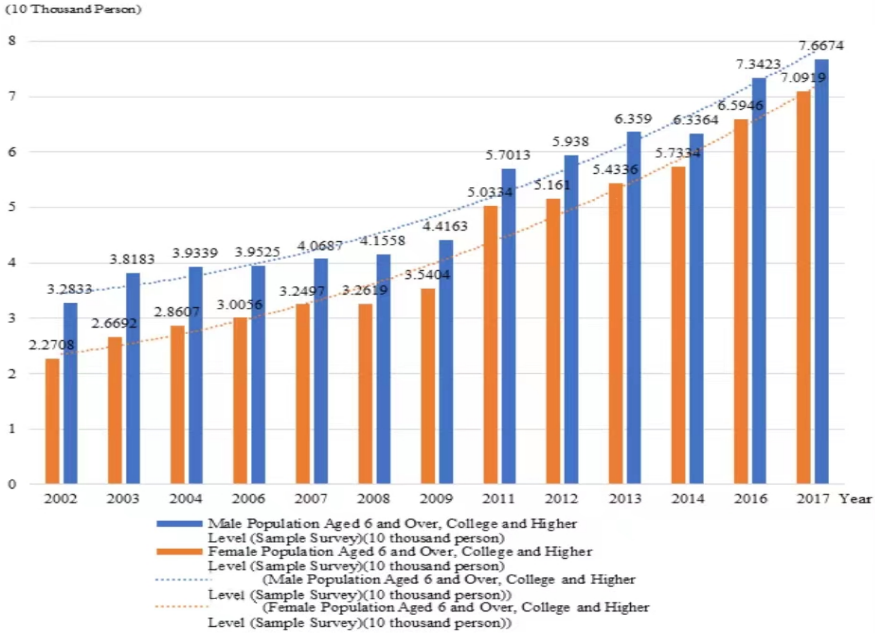
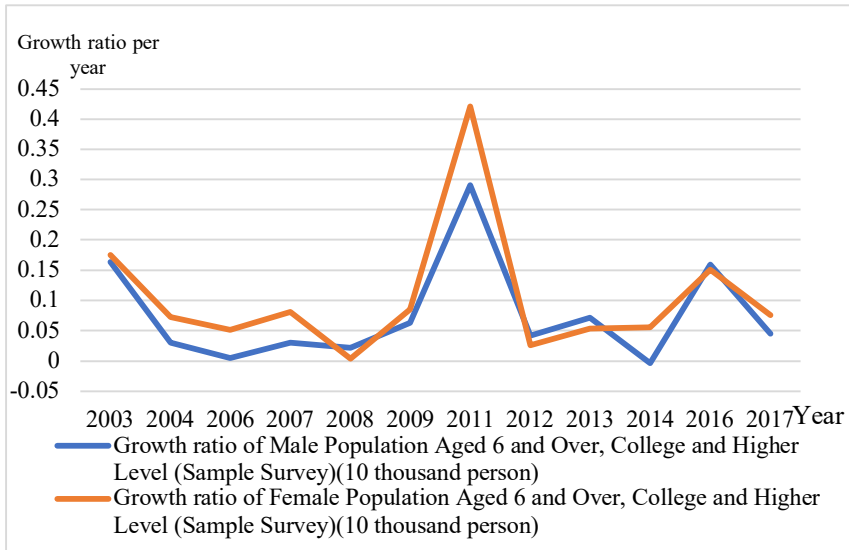


Fig. 1. Ration of Higher Education in 2002-2017

Figure 1 shows a quantity comparison between women’s educational attainment (i.e., college or higher education) and that of men in different periods. The x-axis represents the years from 2002 to 2017, while the y-axis represents the quantity of women’s educational attainment and men’s.

From 2002 to 2017, the number of individuals receiving higher education has consistently increased for both males and females. However, the proportion of educated males has consistently surpassed that of females. In 2002, only 22,708 females had received higher education, compared to 32,833 males. By 2017, although males still held a higher proportion, with 76,674 for males and 70,919 for females, but the gender gap had narrowed.

This chart provides insights into how women's educational attainment has changed over time and highlights the ongoing challenges faced by women in terms of equal access to higher education [9].



**Fig. 2.** Higher Education Growth Rate in 2003-2017

According to Figure 2, female growth rate is more compared to male than their college and higher education population is as low as female are less. These phenomena are because of China's equality policy, which has been contributing to these change factors that make female growth more than male growth [9]. In 1995, the growth of women going to college was around 0.17 per year. This number went up and down a bit after that. But overall, it kept getting higher. By 2011, it reached around 0.43 per year [10].

With a significant increase in female enrollment in colleges and universities., the growth started around 0.17 and eventually went up to 0.43. That's more than twice as high. This shows China's policies to improve women's rights had big impacts over time. More opportunities were opened up for women to go to universities [11]. In a span of five years after this, the number of women who were enrolled in tertiary education increased from 19.1% to 26.3% which signifies improved chances for education as seen hereafter [12]. The female labor-force ratio increased from 65.4% to 69.7% and clearly showed strong initiatives toward women's economic engagement.

### 3 Changes in women's work status

China's government has adopted certain measures that strive to raise awareness regarding gender equity and enhance the status of female employees. For instance, initiatives have aimed to improve the availability of training and educational opportunities for women, motivate employers to take on female staff members as well and legislate laws that offer protection against gender discrimination in the working environments. Also, there has been a significant focus on the place of women in modern societies with regard to boosting their employment level and career growth [13]. The women are now

participating in the workplace which makes them more financially independent away from depending on men. ILO reported that the women's labor participation level grew from 50.2% in 2002 to 53.4% by 2017. The National Bureau of Statistics recorded a rise in female labor force participation from 73.2 % to 77.5% between 2002 and 2017. For the period between 2002-2017, it looks like China's female labor force rate (LFPR) is growing faster as compared to the worldwide rate. At the global level, the rate rose by 3.2% to reach a total of 53.4%. As for China's case, it rose by 4.3% and reached 77.5%. Female labor force progress in China continues to be quite remarkable.

China enacted the Maternity Protection Law in 2005, requiring women at least 98 days off work on maternity leave and forbidding employer's discrimination toward pregnant or lactating workers. The Two-Child Policy was implemented in 2016 with a view of dealing with China's aging people by offering everyone with at least two children. The action plan of the Women's Federation, Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (2016-2020) of China was enacted in 2015 that entailed measures like advancing women in educational settings, it was observed that there is a 23.3% hike in the count of women working as managers/professionals from 37.7 million in 2002 to 46.7million in

China has many outstanding female leaders. Feng Li was the first Chinese woman who receive the Royal Society-Wolfson Medal in 2016. She is among the top researchers in superconductivities, with more than 200 journal articles. In 2014, Yin Zhang was appointed the CEO of the most popular parenting site in China, Babytree. Her leadership style is quite unique, as well as her focus on enhancing the leadership abilities of young women. Liu Yang rose into the ranks and served as the first female president at Tsinghua University which is one of China's leading institutes in 2015. Liu Yang is well-known for her efforts towards advancing gender equity and diversity in schools [2].

Poverty levels have reduced while a better life is experienced among many women and their families as well. Modern women are now able to engage in socio-economic activities with other members of the community thereby dismantling typical gender patterns and cultural norms. Women's work status has undergone certain transformations that prove the significance of governments' policies which promote gender equality and female economic strength. Therefore, further actions should be taken to bridge the existing gaps in access to employment and occupational terms between men and women.

#### **4 Changes in the economy by female consumers**

The "HER economy" emerged as a result of an increase in the economic and social status of women. Through highlighting the needs and value attached to "her economy," policymakers and advocacy groups are promoting equity in economics, especially for women, children, and women's families. Such measures include, for instance, trying to enhance the access of women to education, health infrastructure, and banking services that support their integration into employment and hence improvement in economic stability. As a result, most Chinese women have been able to access more disposable

income than before hence spending a lot on diverse products and services [4]. Sixty-two percent of women in mainland China claimed that they participate equally in providing for families' needs. Contributions of Chinese women's average household income have jumped up to fifty percent from twenty percent in the year 1980. Nowadays, most Chinese women generate equal home earnings to men. Moreover, many are educated and earn a living from various professions. Such households are classified among the upper classes of people's class system. Hence, they possess high levels of consumption.

With the increase in e-commerce platforms and mobile, Chinese women have shifted focus toward health, causing an upsurge in demand for fitness classes, healthy foods, and female-oriented makeup. New opportunities have been opened up for business, leading to economic development [4]. China's rejuvenation and subsequent opening up have greatly enhanced its heritage involving gender equality, leading to the impressive growth of the Chinese economy. Such an element serves as a window into China's advancements. Because women's power continues to rise, society becomes more stable without more patterns of gender oppression and exploitation.

Women's power rise contributes to national development. With increased opportunities for participation by women from different walks of life, they could bring a special touch to social life. This consequently promotes and sparks development within fields like business, sciences, and technology [5]. Promoting gender equality does not benefit only women but men too. Such a society will be harmonious and prosperous where the contribution from both genders is valued and respected. Finally, without question, it can be stated that the heritage and the custom of gender equality in China is one of the reasons for such great success. Enhanced women's power and greater gender equality mean a more stable and affluent society and better chances for everyone.

## 5 Conclusion

This study is based on the backdrop of understanding the development history of Chinese women, demonstrating the rise of female power in China through three key observations: a significant increase in the rate of women obtaining higher education diplomas between 2002 and 2017; an increasing number of important job positions being held by women; and a comparison revealing that women have become the primary consumer group in contemporary China. With the development of the self-media area, there are more and more female anchors and they generate a huge revenue. However, the data in this essay is not sufficient. In the following research, the rise of female power in the self-media area can be considered. China's success in attaining gender equality will further lead to a holistic and equitable society where every member has the opportunity to contribute according to their capacities.

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