

Fertility Intention and Fertility Behavior: **Why Stop at One?**

-- Factors behind China's Below Replacement Fertility

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**“From Intentions to Behaviour: Reproductive Decision-making in a
Macro-micro Perspective”, Vienna, Austria, 2-3 December 2010**

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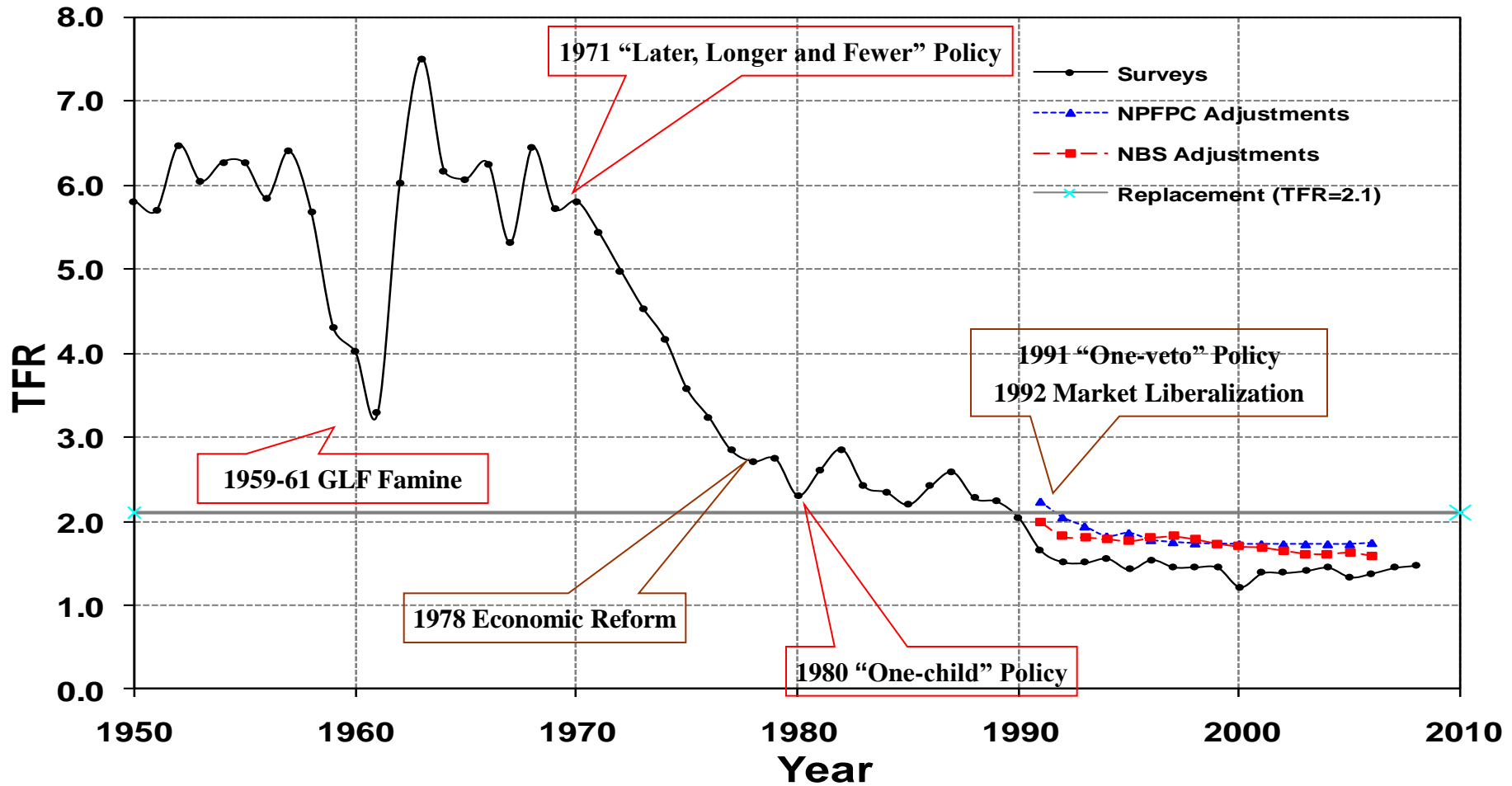
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Outline

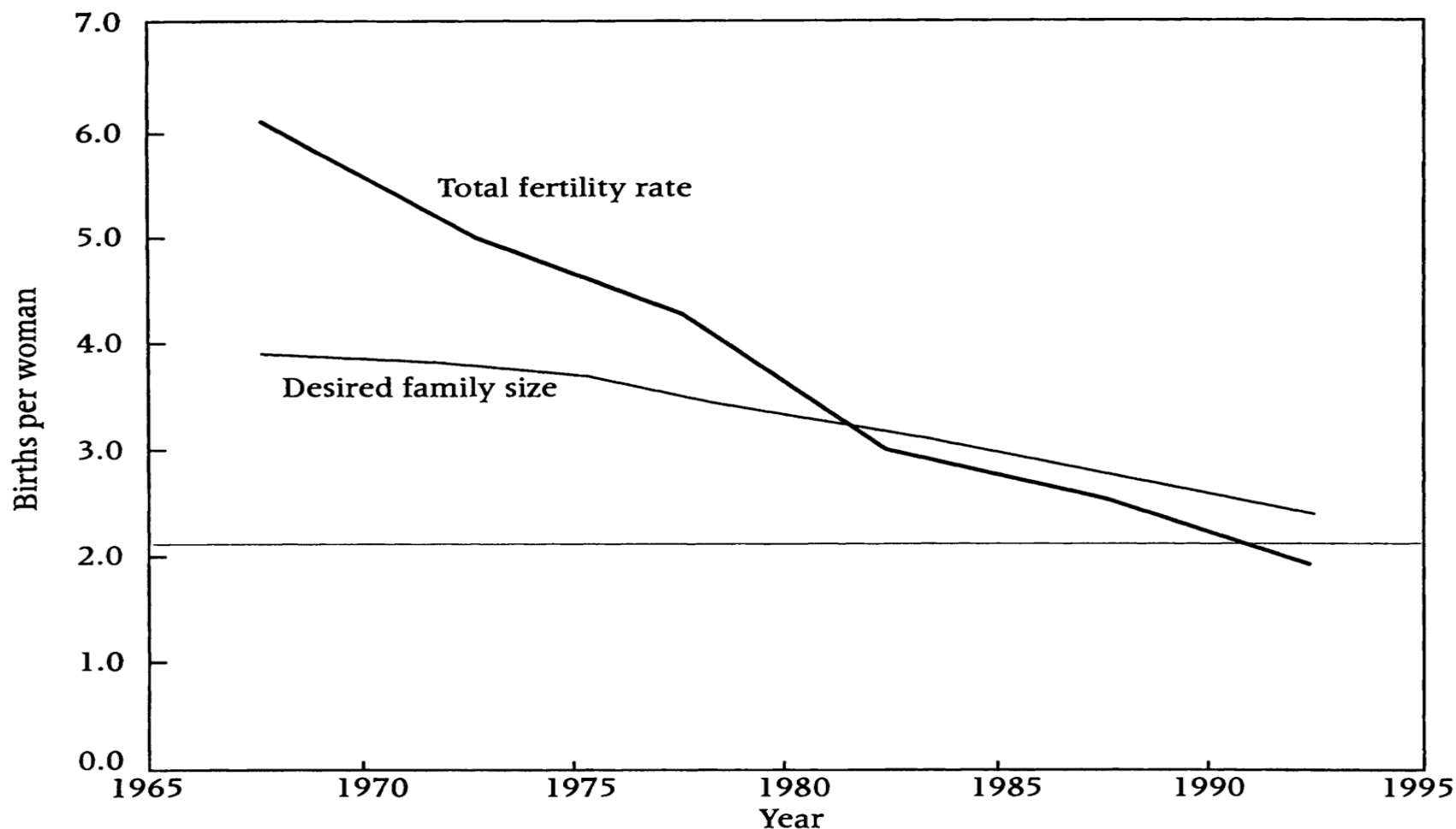
- ▶ **Background: China's below replacement fertility**
- ▶ **Fertility desire, intention, and behavior**
- ▶ **Jiangsu fertility intention and behavior study**
- ▶ **How many moved on to have a second child?**
- ▶ **Prevailing norms of low fertility**
- ▶ **Conclusion and discussion**

China's Route to Low Fertility



Fertility Transition: from unmet need to unmet demand

FIGURE 4 Total fertility rate and desired family size, Thailand 1968–93

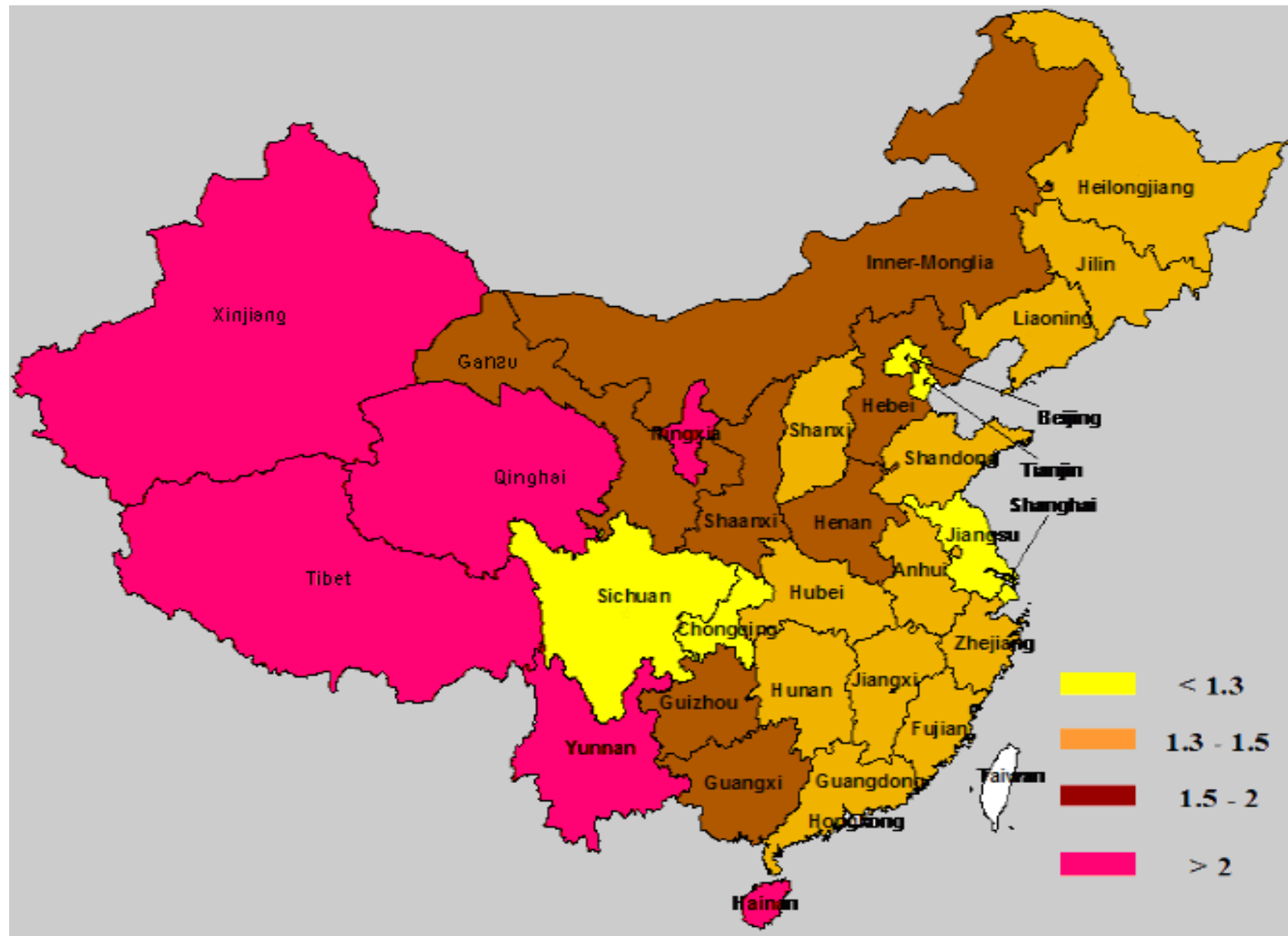


SOURCES: United Nations 1996; Knodel et al. 1996.

Factors behind China's Low Fertility

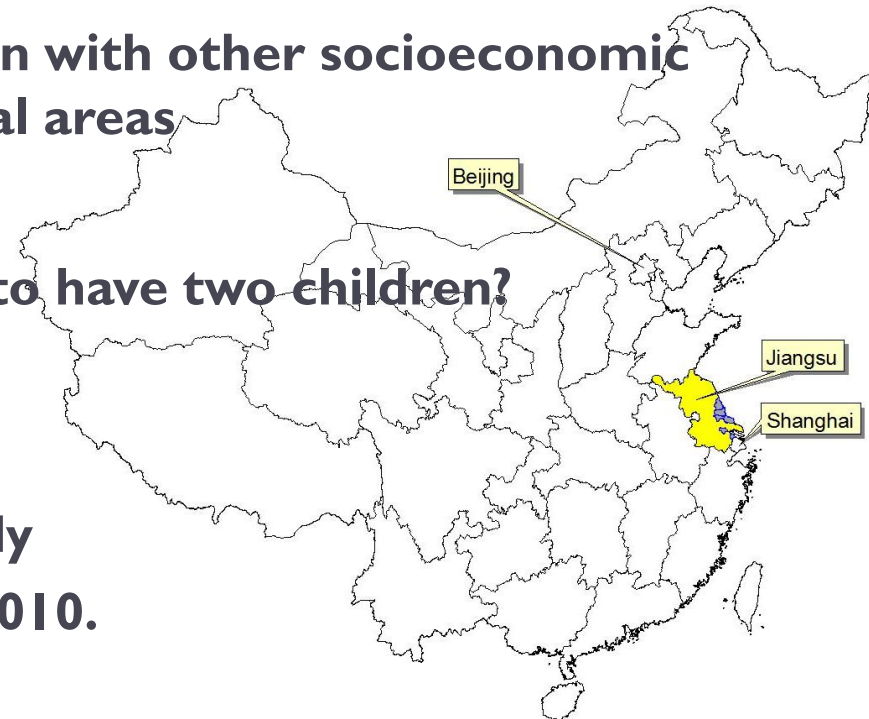
- ▶ **Government policy has played an important role in accelerating China's demographic transition.**
- ▶ **In parallel to the rapid socioeconomic changes over the last several decades, there was a quiet revolution inside China family on reproduction.**
- ▶ **Chinese family under pressure: education, health care, competition.....**
- ▶ **Globalization and western cultural influence**
- ▶ **“It is the Chinese population, not the Chinese state, who are the main motors behind China's fertility transition.”**

Fertility Policy by Province, China 2000



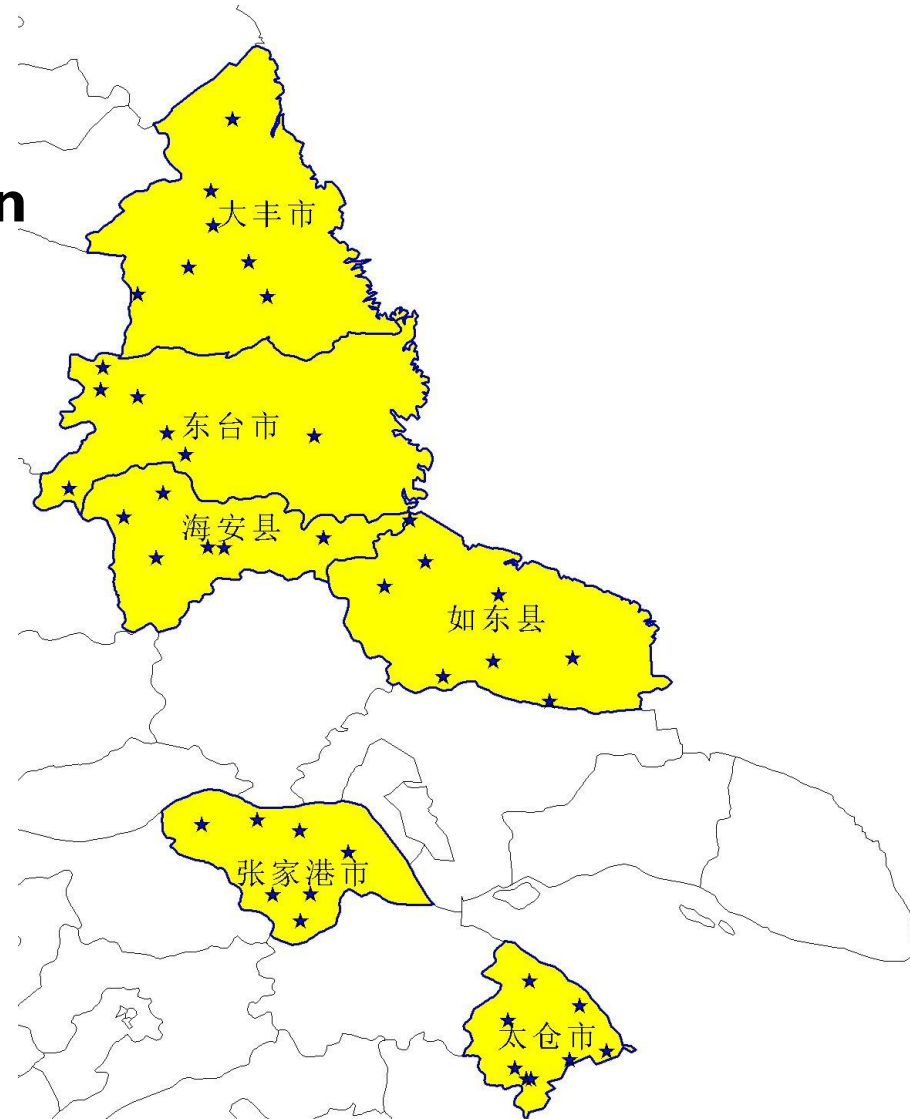
Jiangsu Study, A Quasi Experiment

- ▶ **Jiangsu: GDP per capita #4 in China, Population 75 million.**
- ▶ **Provincial-wide one child policy even in rural areas**
- ▶ **Exemptions in one-child policy**
 - ▶ Both sides are one-child in urban areas
 - ▶ **One side is a one-child in rural areas**
 - ▶ First child is a girl in combination with other socioeconomic and demographic criteria in rural areas
- ▶ **Research questions:**
 - ▶ **Would people use the privilege to have two children?**
 - ▶ **Why or why not?**
- ▶ **Research design**
 - ▶ **Multi-methods, longitudinal study**
 - ▶ **First wave: 2007; Second wave: 2010.**



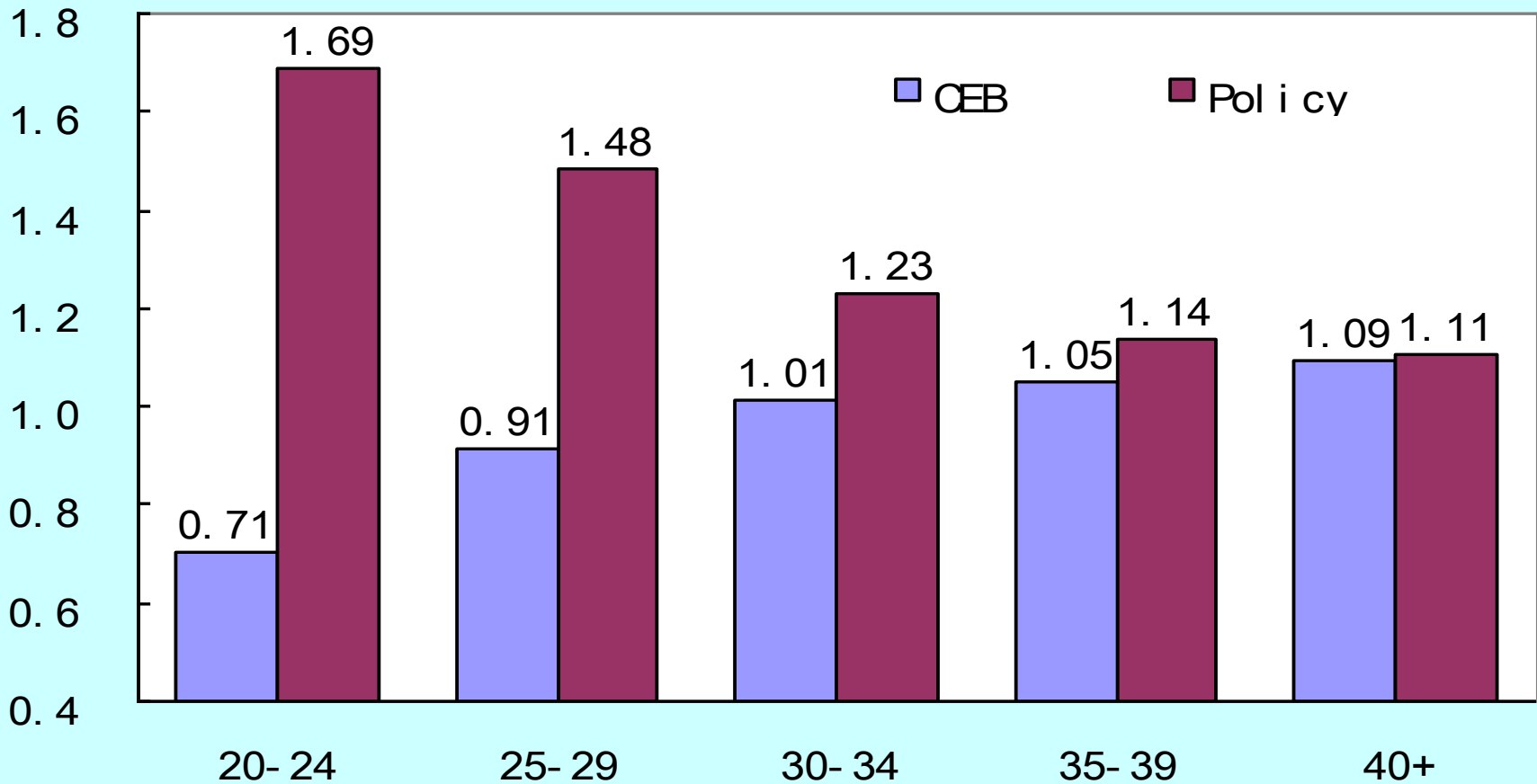
Study Settings

- ▶ **6 counties in east Jiangsu**
- ▶ **Total population: 5.3 million**
- ▶ **47 communities**
- ▶ **Longitudinal design:**
 - ▶ **1st wave 2007**
 - ▶ **2nd wave 2010**
- ▶ **Mixed method:**
 - ▶ **Survey: sample size: 18,000**
 - ▶ **In-depth interview: 200+**



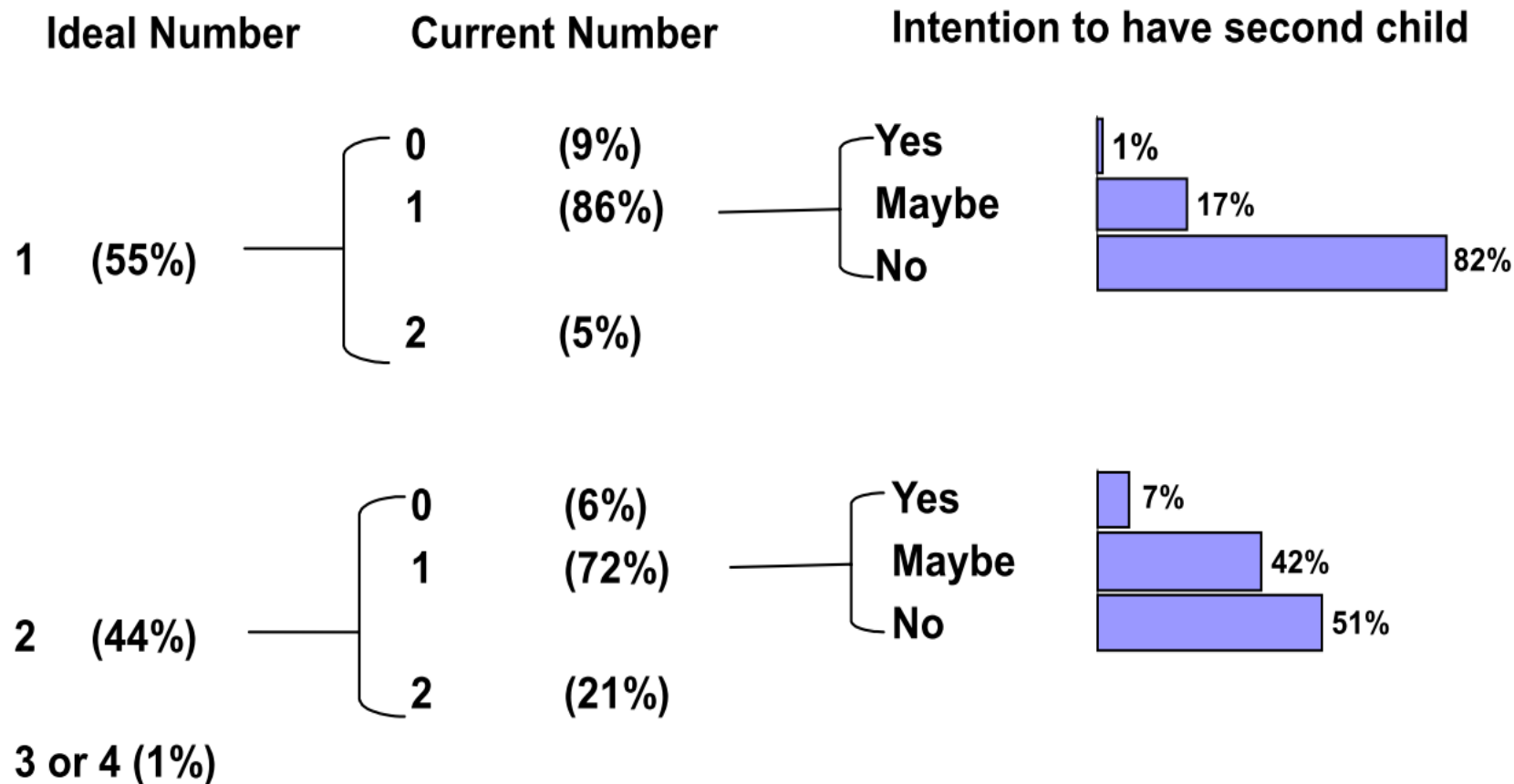
Jiangsu Study, 2007 Findings

► Increasing number of couples qualified for two



Jiangsu Study, 2007 Findings

▶ Low fertility desire, low fertility intention



Jiangsu Study, 2007 Findings

- ▶ **Reasons for staying at one child: economic concerns and low fertility culture**

Reason	Agricultural <i>hukou</i>	Non-agricultural <i>hukou</i>
Costs too much to raise a child	74.1	65.4
One child is enough	74.0	72.5
Following government's call	32.1	33.3
Current economic status not good	34.2	26.4
Not enough energy	20.1	31.6
Too old	11.0	7.6
Health concerns	4.5	0.5
Everyone else has just one child	1.2	2.6

Second Wave, 2010

▶ **Desire, intention, and behavior**

- ▶ **Three-year follow up of those who were qualified to have two children under the current policy**
- ▶ **Follow-up rate close to 90%**
- ▶ **Reconfirm policy qualification**

▶ **Restricted sample**

- ▶ **Had one and only one child in 2007**
- ▶ **Qualified to have a second child**
- ▶ **Stayed in their first marriage in the three year.**
- ▶ **Subjects of this study: N=2,465**

Ideal Number of Children: Cultural Norm and Personal Preference

- ▶ **Cultural norm:** what is considered as the ideal number of children *for a general family, not considering the government's birth control policy?*
- ▶ **Personal preference:** how many children would you like to have?

		Personal Preference			
		% of Full Sample (N=15,535)		% of Restricted Sample (N=2465)	
		1	2	1	2
Cultural Norm	1	34.0	0.8	34.0	1.1
	2	23.4	40.9	20.1	44.3
Total		57.7	42.1	54.3	45.5

Intention to Have a Second Child and Fertility Outcomes in a Three-Year Period

Fertility Intention: Plan to have a second child			Fertility Behavior: Had a 2nd child in 3 years	
	Freq	% of Total	Freq	% of Category
No	1682	68.15	40	2.38
Likely No	135	5.47	12	8.89
Not Sure	360	14.59	27	7.50
Likely Yes	192	7.78	30	15.63
Yes	99	4.01	51	51.52
Total	2468	100	160	6.48

Unadjusted and Regression Adjusted Probability of Having a Second Child in a Three-Year Period

Variable	N	Unadj. Pro.	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Adj. Pro.		N	Unadj. Pro.	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Adj. Pro.
Mother's Age (Jan. 2007)						Intention					
20-25	224	3.1			3.9	No	1682	2.4			2.4
26-30	1178	6.8	2.1	0.096	7.0	Likely No	135	8.9	4.2	0.000	9.2
31-34	673	7.6	1.9	0.207	6.5	Not Sure	360	7.5	3.3	0.000	7.4
35-39	310	5.2	1.5	0.546	5.4	Likely Yes	192	15.6	7.1	0.000	14.4
40+	83	6.0	2.4	0.297	7.6	Yes	99	51.5	41.2	0.000	47.2
Mother's Education						Social Class					
Primary or less	192	7.8			7.9	Rich	447	7.6			6.4
Middle School	1575	6.7	0.8	0.537	6.8	Average	1862	6.1	1.0	0.924	6.5
High School +	701	5.6	0.6	0.193	5.4	Poor	159	6.9	1.1	0.883	6.7
Sex of First Child						Ideal Number of Children					
Male	998	4.1			4.6	One	1404	3.4			5.5
Female	1470	8.1	1.9	0.003	7.5	Two	1064	10.4	1.4	0.106	7.1
Age of the First Child						Community Type					
0-2	829	4.6			5.1	Rural	1871	6.2			6.6
3-5	690	8.1	1.6	0.089	6.2	Urban	597	7.4	0.9	0.618	6.1
6-9	507	8.1	1.6	0.162	6.3						
10+	442	5.4	1.4	0.527	6.6	Total	2468	6.5			6.5

Who Had a Second Child?

- ▶ **Intention is still a powerful predictor after controlling for socioeconomic and demographic variables.**
- ▶ **Sex preference still influences people's fertility behavior.**
- ▶ **No other clear social patterns emerged from the analysis.**
- ▶ **Stated fertility intention falls below ideal family size, with over half of respondents intend to have only one child.**
- ▶ **Intention does predict behavior, though only for a very small share of all couples.**

New Prevailing Low Fertility Norm

- ▶ **There is an unmistakable prevalence of a very low fertility norm in this part of China, with virtually no individuals wanting to have more than two children, and with an average ideal number of children as low as only 1.4.**
- ▶ **Such a preferred number is reported by women who are allowed to have two children by the current birth control policy.**
- ▶ **Even among individuals who expressed an interest in having a second child, in reality most of them stayed with only one child.**
- ▶ **While a longer observation period may well allow more second parity births in our study population, it is hard to imagine that the share of women who will have two children will be more than 30%.**

Conclusion and Discussion

- ▶ **A new norm of one-child culture has emerged.**
- ▶ **Fertility intention is a much more useful indicator than fertility desire in predicting individuals' fertility behavior.**
- ▶ **Economic concerns and a prevailing one-child norm, not policy, are key factors in affecting intention.**
- ▶ **Even if China's one-child policy is relaxed or lifted, it will be unlikely to change the low fertility pattern.**

Acknowledgements

- ▶ **Jiangsu Population and Family Planning Commission**
- ▶ **Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)**
- ▶ **FORD Foundation Beijing Office**
- ▶ **John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation**
- ▶ **CASS, Renmin University, Peking University.**

Thank you!