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China census shows population ageing and urban

[COMMENTS \(15\)](#)

China's census shows its population grew to 1.34 billion people by 2010, with a sharp rise in those over 60.

Nearly half of all Chinese now live in cities and people over the age of 60 now account for 13.3% of the population, up nearly 3% since 2000.

But the figures reveal that China's population is growing more slowly than in the past.

That could affect the economy, as the number of potential workers, especially from rural areas, could shrink.

The proportion of mainland Chinese people aged 14 or younger was 16.6%, down by 6.29 percentage points from the last census, a decade earlier.

Chinese snapshot

The number aged 60 or older grew to 13.26%, up 2.93 percentage points.

The census results also revealed that almost half of all Chinese - 49.7% of the population - now live in cities, up from about 36 percent 10 years ago.

The government's strict controls on family size, including its one-child policy for most urban families, have reduced annual population growth to below 1% percent. The rate is projected to turn negative in coming decades.

There has been growing speculation in the country's media about the possibility that the government will ease the policy - introduced in 1980 as a temporary measure to curb surging population growth - and allow more people to have two children.

As it currently stands, most urban couples are limited to one child and rural families to two. The average household now numbers 3.1 people, down from 3.44 a decade ago.

Some demographers have said that the limits on family size may now threaten China's economic future, with fewer people left to pay and care for an older population, as well as to work in the factories that have transformed the country into the world's second largest economy.

When China carried out its first census in 1953, it had a population of 594 million, less than half the current figure.