

CHINA'S RECENT FERTILITY DECLINE: EVIDENCE FROM RECONSTRUCTED FERTILITY STATISTICS

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Table 3. Age-specific fertility rates (ASFR) and total fertility rates (TFR) recorded by recent fertility sample surveys, China, 1990-2005

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
ASFR								
15-19	0.026	0.019	0.015	0.022	0.010	0.010	0.011	0.008
20-24	0.207	0.181	0.167	0.161	0.143	0.142	0.145	0.128
25-29	0.156	0.111	0.091	0.089	0.082	0.090	0.088	0.085
30-34	0.057	0.028	0.031	0.031	0.028	0.024	0.026	0.027
35-39	0.010	0.009	0.007	0.005	0.006	0.004	0.006	0.005
40-44	–	–	0.003	0.003	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.001
45-49	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
TFR computed from ASFRs	2.280	1.740	1.570	1.555	1.355	1.360	1.385	1.270
Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
ASFR								
15-19	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.014	0.013	0.012	0.012	0.016
20-24	0.143	0.130	0.145	0.122	0.117	0.112	0.144	0.169
25-29	0.085	0.084	0.097	0.099	0.091	0.085	0.104	0.106
30-34	0.026	0.029	0.031	0.038	0.038	0.039	0.046	0.045
35-39	0.007	0.006	0.005	0.007	0.007	0.009	0.010	0.010
40-44	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.001
45-49	–	–	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
TFR computed from ASFRs	1.350	1.285	1.440	1.406	1.347	1.299	1.586	1.736

Note: For some age groups the ASFR cannot be computed due to the constraints imposed by data availability (“–”).

Sources: Authors’ calculations based on National Population and Reproductive Health Survey (NPFPC 1997) for 1990-1995; and the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Survey (NPFPC 2001) for 1996-2000; Zhang et al. (2008), for 2001-2005.

evidence. Because the statistical authority did not give a convincing explanation, this may be reasonably regarded as an over-adjustment, as has also been pointed out by Qiao, who suggested that China’s National Bureau of Statistics “artificially added almost 3 million births each year” to the total population over the period 1990-1999 (2005, p. 12). While China’s statistical authorities may have their own reasons for inflating numbers of births, CBRs and TFRs to a level beyond that made necessary by the under-reporting rates found in the post-enumeration surveys, practices of this kind inevitably create confusion, especially when no justification is given.⁽⁹⁾ Indeed, these officially adjusted and probably over-inflated

(9) It was suggested that the NBS decided to inflate its annual survey results in such a manner partly because of its past experience of underestimation. In addition, the practice was also a response to the strong suspicions of both policymakers and demographers who believed that the under-reporting was more severe than what they had found (Zhang, 1995; Yu and Xie, 2000). Qiao speculates that the NBS might have used the upper bound of the estimated reporting error interval