

Second-child policy increases births by 7.9%

The universal second-child policy implemented early last year was a major factor in raising the number of births in China to 17.86 million last year, an increase of 7.9 percent and the highest annual number since since 2000, according to the top health authority.

The number of newborns has increased by 1.31 million compared with 2015.

The portion of the births to couples who already had at least one child rose quickly to at least 45 percent last year, Yang Wenzhuang, a division director of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, said at a news conference on Sunday. The proportion was around 30 percent before 2013.

“It demonstrates that the universal second-child policy came in time and worked effectively,” Yang said.

“Some regions, mostly large cities in eastern areas, began recording second children as comprising more than half of local newborns,” he added.

Yang expected that by 2020, the number of new births each year would stand between 17 to 20 million in China, citing expert estimations.

Last week, Ma Xiaowei, deputy director of the commission, said a baby boom triggered largely by the new policy probably would come within the next two years.

For that, the commission plans to add 140,000 more maternity health workers in the coming years, he said.

The top decision-makers intensified efforts in late 2013 to adjust birth policies in place for three decades that limited most couples to just one child, aiming at addressing major demographic challenges such as an aging population and a looming labor shortage.

Starting in early 2014, couples in which one was an only child could have a second child. The universal second-child policy was implemented at the start of 2016.

“The long-term effect of the universal second-child policy is very helpful to China’s sustainable development,” said Yuan Xin, a professor of population studies at Nankai University in Tianjin.

By 2050, the policy is expected to bring about an extra 30 million working-age people and reduce the nation’s aging rate by 2 percent, commission projections show.

But matching policies have not yet been refined to provide good support for couples willing to have more than one child, particularly in terms of

maternity education and health services, Yang conceded.

A 2015 survey by the commission found nearly 75 percent of respondents were reluctant to have a second baby, largely due to economic burdens.

Other major concerns are age, parents' career development, and a lack of caregivers, it showed. Yuan suggested the government introduce support measures like favorable tax policies, prolonged maternity leave and education for families with two children.

As a byproduct of socioeconomic development, people tend to have smaller families, even with no birth limits, he said. "Now we might need to consider incentives for people to have more children."

In the mid-1950s, the average number of annual births was around 18 million, almost the same as in 2016. But the fertility rate (the average number of children a woman will have during her life) has dropped from more than six then to less than two.

[China schedules Chang'e-5 lunar probe launch](#)

China plans to launch the Chang'e-5 lunar probe at the end of November this year, from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in southern China's Hainan Province, aboard the heavy-lift carrier rocket Long March-5.

The mission will be China's first automated moon surface sampling, first moon take-off, first unmanned docking in a lunar orbit about 380,000 km from earth, and first return flight in a speed close to second cosmic velocity, according to the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC).

"With a weight of 8.2 tonnes, the lunar probe is comprised of four parts: an orbiter, a returner, an ascender and a lander," said Ye Peijian, one of China's leading aerospace experts and a consultant to the program.

The lander will put moon samples in a vessel in the ascender after the moon landing. Then the ascender will take off from the moon to dock with the orbiter and the returner orbiting the moon, and transfer the samples to the returner.

The orbiter and returner then head back to the earth, separating from each other when they are several thousands kilometers from earth. Finally, the returner will reenter the earth.

The development of Chang'e-5 has entered the end of its flight model phase, and relevant work is proceeding smoothly, according to CASC.

China plans to fulfill three strategic steps with the launch of Chang'e-5, "orbiting, landing and returning."

The country also plans to launch the Chang'e-4 lunar probe around 2018 to achieve mankind's first soft landing on the far side of the moon, and to conduct an in situ and roving detection and relay communications at earth-moon L2 point, according to the China National Space Administration.

"The country plans to send robots to explore both lunar poles," said the administration's vice director Wu Yanhua late last year, adding that plans to send astronauts to the moon were also being discussed.

[Press release: PM unveils plans for a Modern Industrial Strategy fit for Global Britain](#)

- New 'Sector deals' and investment in research and development will support the industries of the future where Britain has the potential to lead the world – from electric vehicles to biotech and quantum technologies.
- PM sets out plan to drive growth across the whole country and create more high skilled, high paid jobs and opportunities as part of government's Plan for Britain.

Prime Minister Theresa May will use her first regional Cabinet meeting this morning (23 January) to launch proposals for a modern Industrial Strategy to build on Britain's strengths and tackle its underlying weaknesses to secure a future as a competitive, global nation.

At the heart of the Strategy green paper published today is an offer to businesses to strike new 'Sector Deals', driven by the interests of firms and the people they employ, to address sector-specific challenges and opportunities. As part of the deals government will be prepared to offer a range of support, including addressing regulatory barriers to innovation and growth, looking at how we can use trade and investment deals to increase exports, or supporting the creation of new institutions to provide leadership, support innovation or boost skills.

The Industrial Strategy is a vital part of the Plan for Britain set out by the Prime Minister last week. It will drive growth right across the United Kingdom, using major new investments in infrastructure and research to drive prosperity – creating more high-skilled, high paid jobs and opportunities. The green paper also sets out plans to strengthen institutions in each part of the country to support their specific strengths – whether it's building up

local trade bodies, or creating new educational institutions, making it easier for business to access finance outside London or getting a stronger business voice into local government.

The Prime Minister will tell a Cabinet meeting in the North West this morning that a truly modern British Industrial Strategy must make Britain a hive of new industries which will challenge the companies and industries of today.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

The Modern Industrial Strategy will back Britain for the long term: creating the conditions where successful businesses can emerge and grow, and backing them to invest in the long-term future of our country.

It will be underpinned by a new approach to government, not just stepping back but stepping up to a new, active role that backs business and ensures more people in all corners of the country share in the benefits of its success.

Business & Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

This is an important step in building a modern, dynamic industrial strategy that will improve living standards and drive economic growth across the whole country. A modern British Industrial Strategy must – build on the UK's strengths and extend excellence into the future; close the gap between the the UK's most productive companies, industries, places and people and the rest; and ensure we are one of the most competitive places in the world to start and grow a business.

We are inviting businesses and workers to contribute to this vision to help us create a high-skilled economy where every place can meet its potential.

The green paper also sets out technologies where Britain has strengths in research and development which could be supported through the government's new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, including: smart energy technologies; robotics and artificial intelligence and 5G mobile network technology. This fund is part of £4.7 billion of additional R&D funding announced by the Prime Minister in November, a bigger increase than in any parliament since 1979.

The approach outlined today builds on what exists already in sectors like automotive and aerospace – with individual firms taking the initiative to organise their sectors, backed by institutions or organisations which enable vital partnership on research and development throughout the supply chain.

In aerospace, close collaboration between government and industry including through the Aerospace Growth Partnership has been instrumental in creating

one of the world's best business environments for advanced engineering, design and manufacture – with thousands of people employed in high-skilled jobs.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), said:

FSB has appreciated being part of the discussions with the Business Secretary since last year to help shape the Industrial Strategy. We are proud to be influencing a major government economic blueprint and particularly pleased with the push on skills, infrastructure and connectivity as important drivers of productivity and industry.

In addition, the moves towards a place-based strategy fit well with the UK small business community. Small firms are often the anchors in our local economies – in cities, towns and villages – right across the country. Finally, we want to continue to see an emphasis on supply chain respect, which underpins the Industrial Strategy announced today but also the Corporate Governance Green Paper.

Adam Marshall, Director General, British Chambers of Commerce said:

The developing Industrial Strategy represents a crucial first milestone in a renewed partnership between business and government, working together to create the conditions for future growth.

Business communities across the UK will be pleased to see that harnessing the potential of our cities, towns and counties lies at the heart of the government's approach to Industrial Strategy. There are dynamic business communities in every corner of the UK – and it is their future success that will make our country more competitive and more prosperous.

A deliberate and steady approach that leads to long-term change is the right way to go.

Terry Scuoler, CEO of EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, said:

This is an important first step towards creating a comprehensive, consistent and long-term industrial strategy that will help Britain adjust to a more globally-focused, post-Brexit economy. Manufacturing has a key role to play and we look forward to working with the government on crystallising this into a strategic framework that will work and deliver for industry.

The end result of this process must be an industrial strategy that lives up to the promise of driving different behaviours and

outcomes for the British economy. This requires the whole of government working together to support it, with clear leadership from the Prime Minister and her whole Cabinet.

The government welcomes work on early sector deals, including from:

- Sir John Bell: on life sciences
- Richard Parry-Jones: on the transition to ultra low emission vehicles
- Juergen Maier: on industrial digitalisation
- Lord Hutton: on improving UK competitiveness and skills in the nuclear industry
- Sir Peter Bazalgette: on the creative industries

This is not an exclusive list and the government is prepared to work with any sector which can organise behind strong leadership to address shared challenges and opportunities.

The Modern Industrial Strategy green paper sets out a plan to improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country. To achieve that goal, the green paper sets out ten strategic pillars to underpin a new government approach:

1. Investing in science, research and innovation

We must become a more innovative economy and do more to commercialise our world leading science base to drive growth across the UK.

2. Developing skills

We must help people and businesses to thrive by: ensuring everyone has the basic skills needed in a modern economy; building a new system of technical education to benefit the half of young people who do not go to university; boosting STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) skills, digital skills and numeracy; and by raising skill levels in lagging areas.

3. Upgrading infrastructure

We must upgrade our standards of performance on digital, energy, transport, water and flood defence infrastructure, and better align central government infrastructure investment with local growth priorities.

4. Supporting businesses to start and grow

We must ensure that businesses across the UK can access the finance and management skills they need to grow; and we must create the right conditions for companies to invest for the long term.

5. Improving procurement

We must use strategic government procurement to drive innovation and enable the development of UK supply chains;

6. Encouraging trade and inward investment policy

Government policy can help boost productivity and growth across our economy, including by increasing competition and helping to bring new ways of doing things to the UK.

7. Delivering affordable energy and clean growth

We need to keep costs down for businesses, and secure the economic benefits of the transition to a low-carbon economy.

8. Cultivating world-leading sectors

We must build on our areas of competitive advantage, and help new sectors to flourish, in many cases challenging existing institutions and incumbents;

9. Driving growth across the whole country

We will create a framework to build on the particular strengths of different places and address factors that hold places back – whether it is investing in key infrastructure projects to encourage growth, increasing skill levels, or backing local innovation strengths.

10. Creating the right institutions to bring together sectors and places

We will consider the best structures to support people, industries and places. In some places and sectors there may be missing institutions which we could create, or existing ones we could strengthen, be they local civic or educational institutions, trade associations or financial networks.

As part of the visit to the North West, the government is also announcing a cash boost of £556 million for the Northern Powerhouse to help create jobs, support businesses and encourage growth.

Goole Intermodal Terminal linking rail, sea and road, a 21st century conference centre in Blackpool, and a new innovation fund for Manchester and Cheshire businesses are just some of the locally-chosen projects set to benefit over the next few years. These are alongside many others which improve educational attainment, create jobs, build homes or improve infrastructure.

This latest award of local growth funding is on top of £2.9 billion of Growth Deal funding already awarded to the 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships in the region – an investment which provides targeted financial support to locally-determined projects in order to unlock growth.

Notes to editors:

The £556m will help do even more to benefit the lives of local people across the north. New projects include:

- Goole Intermodal Terminal which will mean the town's existing rail, sea, motorway and inland waterway links into one site, providing an integrated transport facility for business
- A 21st century conference centre and hotel in Blackpool at the Winter Gardens – helping the town re-establish its presence as a leading conference destination.
- £10 million for the Greater Manchester and Cheshire Life Sciences Fund to provide capital to local small and medium businesses to drive the growth of innovative young life sciences businesses
- Flood resilience measures in Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Kirklees and Leeds. These will complement existing government investment and help safeguard over 11,000 jobs and 1,300 businesses
- Building the International Advanced Manufacturing Park in Sunderland and South Tyneside – helping to creating an estimated 5,200 jobs.

The 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships in the Northern Powerhouse have been awarded:

- North Eastern £49.7m
- Cumbria £12.7m
- Tees Valley £21.8m
- York, North Yorkshire, East Riding £23.7m
- Lancashire £69.8m
- Humber £27.9m
- Leeds City Region £67.5m
- Liverpool City Region £72.0m
- Greater Manchester £130.1m
- Sheffield City Region £37.8m
- Cheshire and Warrington £43.3m

[Press release: PM call with President Anastasiades of Cyprus: 22 January 2017](#)

From:
First published:
22 January 2017
Part of:

Prime Minister Theresa May spoke to President Nicos Anastasiades and discussed the latest developments in the Cyprus Settlement talks.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke to President Nicos Anastasiades this afternoon. They discussed the latest developments in the ongoing Cyprus Settlement talks and the historic opportunity to resolve this long running dispute.

They discussed the need for leadership and flexibility on all sides, and the Prime Minister made clear that the UK would continue to do all we could to help achieve a successful settlement.

Press release: PM call with NATO Secretary General: 22 January 2017

From:
First published:
22 January 2017
Part of:

Prime Minister Theresa May spoke to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and discussed the continued importance of the Alliance.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg this afternoon.

They discussed the continued importance of the Alliance as the bulwark of our defence, and agreed on the need for the Alliance to continue to evolve to be able to effectively counter the biggest threats of the day, in particular terrorism and cyber attacks.

The Prime Minister said she would be taking these messages to Washington later this week where she is expected to discuss NATO with President Trump.