

**Did the One-Child Policy Generate Excessive Boys in China?
A Community-level Analysis**

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Abstract

High sex ratio at birth in China has been observed since the mid-1980s, and the one-child policy has been suggested as a cause. Using CHNS data (1989-2000) and highlighting local variations in policy rules and enforcement I find that (1) a strict policy (both policy rule and enforcement) reduces sex ratio of children, while a girl-exception policy contributes to excessive boys, and (2) shifting from a strict policy into a girl-exception policy exacerbates, while shifting into a stronger enforcement alleviates, sex ratio. Thus, more balanced sex ratio of children is achieved in places where and at times when the policy is enforced more strictly. However, policy effect is contingent on parity, and it is the gendered nature of the policy that generates excessive boys. Findings suggest that in settings where couple's ability to control the sex composition of offspring is greater than their ability to control the ideal number of children, external pressures should be adopted to reduce son proclivity and sex ratio of children.