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Demographic Policy Transformation in the Northeastern Provinces of China at the Present Stage



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Abstract. The Northeastern provinces of China are strategic territories from a geopolitical point of view; this fact determines the importance and relevance of studying their characteristic fertility trends and family planning directions. The demographic processes taking place here correspond to the general trends in China, but most indicators are lower than in other areas. The main objective of the study is to identify the features of demographic processes and directions of demographic policy implementation in the Northeastern provinces of China (Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang) in the 21st century. The study is based on the analysis of the results of the National Population Census of the People's Republic of China (2000, 2010 and 2020) and legal documents regulating the policy of fertility and family planning. We show that the Northeastern provinces have a maximum proportion of families with one child, and the proportion of families with two children is two times lower than the average in China. The number of women of fertile age has decreased by a third, and the average age of women who have entered into their first marriage is increasing. We reveal that after the liberalization of the two-child policy in China, the family planning system includes previously used measures to support the elderly and families with one child, as well as new methods of birth support. Despite the formation of a unified national model of fertility support, the differences at the provincial level primarily relate to the remuneration and social security system of the population. Longer periods of maternity leave have been defined for the Northeastern provinces, and additional payments for the birth of children in border regions have been introduced.

Key words: Northeast China, province, fertility, demographic policy, family policy, fertility support, family planning.

Introduction

At the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, President Xi Jinping noted that “people are the primary element of development. Development of a country is inseparable from its people”¹. A survey conducted by the National Health Commission of the PRC in 2021 indicates that the number of desired and expected children in China will continue to decline².

In Northeast China, demographic indicators were below the national average; negative birth rate trends were detected in the late 20th century. Since the implementation of the 2015 Program allowing families to have two children, birth rate in Northeast China has also been below the

national average. The aim of the policy was to limit population growth in the long term, which explains the minor effect observed after the adoption of the Program (Van, 2018).

Taking into account specialization of Northeast China in agricultural production, Chinese authors note the negative impact of demographic processes on the long-term economic and social development of the region, as well as on national food security (Zhou, Zhang, 2022). S.B. Makeeva (Makeeva, 2023) notes that a range of reasons, including natural and climate conditions, industrial change and historical development features, influenced the development of negative demographic processes in Heilongjiang province.

In addition to natural population decline, Jiang Yu (Jiang, 2016) notes the negative impact of migration. Study of population mobility in Northeastern provinces of China with 593.4 thousand respondents, revealed migration gain in

¹ The 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Available at: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/202210/t20221025_10791901.html (accessed: December 12, 2023).

² Write a new chapter in the work on population in the new era. Available at: http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2022-08/01/c_1128878530.htm (accessed: January 19, 2024).

Liaoning province together with migration outflow from Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces. Migration loss of working population leads to birth rate decrease in both provinces.

Hou Li identifies birth rate changes of ethnic minorities in this area as a reason for low birth rates. In 1989 the average birth rate of ethnic minorities in China was 2.88, in Northeast China – 1.93. According to family planning rules of Northeast China, only Jilin province permitted ethnic minorities to have two children, while Liaoning and Heilongjiang provinces did not have such exceptions (Hou Li, 2017).

Taking into account regional differences in demographic indicators in China, this research aims to identify the features of demographic processes and population policy directions in Northeastern provinces of China (Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang) in the 21st century.

The research is based on the analysis of 2000, 2010 and 2020 Chinese Censuses as well as on major regional legal and regulatory acts of Liaoning, Heilongjiang, and Jilin provinces, focused on improving birth rates and family planning. The novelty of this research lies in a comparative analysis of relevant regulatory acts at the national level and at the level of China's Northeastern provinces at the beginning of the 21st century.

Methodologically, the research is based on the diversity concept. Proponents of the concept (M. Klupt, B. Wittrock) deny existence of a single universal law, explaining demographic processes. We share the view of B. Wittrock (Wittrock, 2002) that global processes and national rules and regulations interact in society. This conclusion is supported by examination of the family institution transformation in China. In 2010, M. Klupt observed that the processes of family forming in China resembled Western European trends. However, the policy for controlling population

growth in China at that time was specific and did not consider the universality of demographic laws (Klupt, 2010). At the present stage, birth and marriage rates in China are in line with global trends. However, economic, social, and institutional features in a certain territory not only influence its demographic processes development but also determine a choice of measures for population policy.

Methods

The research is based on quantitative-statistical analysis and comparative analysis.

It consists of two parts. The first part considers main social and demographic indicators in Northeastern provinces of China at the beginning of the 21st century. The second one provides comparative analysis results of population policy in three provinces in question during 2020–2021. In contrast to other scientific studies that have focused on the analysis of demographic indicators within entire China (Bazhenova, 2019; Sivintseva, 2019; Babaev, 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Rusanova, Wang, 2023), this research examines regional nature of demographic situation and demographic policies specific to Northeastern provinces in comparison with all-China population indicators and policy measures. The distinctive feature of provinces in question can be attributed to their geopolitical significance, which provides cross-border collaboration with Russian territories. Demographic processes observed in Northeast China are different from the national average, a factor that has attracted the attention of researchers, including Chinese and Russian authors, who have focused on studying this region.

Demographic situation in Northeastern provinces of China at the beginning of the 21st century

Over the years, birth rate in Northeast China has been declining. This has resulted in a corresponding decline in the overall population.

Between 1990 and 2000, natural population growth rate in Northeast China decreased from 11.46 to 4.33%. Natural population growth in three Northeastern provinces was below the national average. This was attributed to birth planning policy and high migration loss. Migration loss was observed in Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces (Veremeichik, 2011).

The work (Zhang Liping, Wang Guangzhou, 2023) indicates that population of Northeast China is experiencing a period of continuous decline.

According to the Seventh National Population Census (2020)³, the total population of Northeast China in 2020 was 98.51 million, i.e. 11.01 million less than in 2010. Among three provinces in question, Heilongjiang province experienced the most significant population decline, with reduction of over 6 million people, or 16.33%, between 2000 and 2020. In Jilin province a decline over the period was less obvious and reached 10.18% or 2.8 million people. Population growth of 1.79% (equivalent to 0.71 million people) was observed in Liaoning province⁴.

Birth rate between 2000 and 2020 decreased in Heilongjiang province from 9.43% to 3.75%, in Jilin province from 9.53% to 4.84, and in Liaoning province from 8.46% to 5.2%⁵.

The proportion of population over the age of 65 in three Northeastern provinces is increasing, while the proportion of children aged 0–14 is decreasing. In 2020, Liaoning ranked first among other provinces in population over the age of 65 (17%),

³ Paper of the Seventh Census of the National Bureau of Statistics of China 2. Population of the country. Available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/202106/t20210628_1818821.html (accessed: December 29, 2023).

⁴ Paper of the Seventh National Population Census 3. Population of the regions. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-05/11/content_5605779.htm (accessed: December 29, 2023).

⁵ Ibidem.

while the proportion of children aged 0–14 was 11.12%. In Jilin province, the proportion of population belonging to these categories was approximately 15% and 11.96%; in Heilongjiang province – 15% and 11.71%⁶.

Imbalance in population age structure affects consumer needs. Wu Yixiao, Jiang Shubo, and Ye Xin (Wu Yixiao, Jiang Shubo, 2022; Ye Xin, 2023) have observed that in Northeast China this has resulted in investment decline, profit reduction and in industry structure transformation of this region's economy.

Average annual number of newborns in Northeast China between 2000 and 2020 decreased by 58% to an average of 441,000 in 2020. Among three Northeastern provinces, Heilongjiang province experienced the most dramatic decline in birth rate. The number of births in the province declined by 67.5%, from 359,000 to 116,500. In 2000, birth rate in Heilongjiang was 9.43%, in Jilin – 9.53%, and in Liaoning – 8.46%, compared to the national average of 14.03%⁷.

A slight increase in birth rate was observed during the twenty-year period under consideration in the late 2010s. In 2015, Northeast China experienced a rising birth rate after implementation of a two-child policy for certain couples in 2013⁸ and a policy allowing all couples to have two children in 2015⁹. After the two-child policy the

⁶ Ibidem (accessed: January 10, 2024).

⁷ Paper of the Seventh National Population Census 3. Population of the regions. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-05/11/content_5605779.htm (accessed: January 10, 2024).

⁸ On November 15, 2013, the full text of the third plenum resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held on November 9–12, 2013, was published. It outlined a program to improve reform policy and stated that Chinese couples will be able to have two children if one of the partners was the only child.

⁹ In October 2015, China officially announced that the one-child policy will be ended and will be replaced by a policy allowing two children per family.

proportion of population with average incomes, that accounted for the majority of births, entered a state of waiting. This is largely attributed to a desire to assess annually increasing expenses on having and raising a child (Zhou Xiaoyan, Zhang Jianhua, 2022). In 2020, birth rate in Heilongjiang was 3.75% in comparison to 2015, while in Jilin it was 4.84% and in Liaoning – 5.2%¹⁰.

The data published in “Social Blue Book: 2022 China Social Situation Analysis and Prediction”¹¹ indicates that the ideal number of children in China is stable at 1.9–2.0. In 2021, the total birth rate per woman was 1.37 (Li Peilin et al., 2022). Female reproductive behavior is largely influenced by

attitude toward marriage, which is shaped by a number of structural factors, including changing traditional roles of women, increasing level of education among women, competition in the labor market (Qiao Shuangping, 2024).

The rate value shows territorial variations. Northeastern provinces had the highest proportion of one-child families, with proportion of two-child families twice less than national average (*Tab. 1*).

Despite the two-child policy in 2015, Northeast China demonstrated a significant decline of one-child families and a slight decline of two-child families by 2020 (*Tab. 2*).

Table 1. Number of children in Chinese families in 2020

Region	Average amount of children per woman	0 children	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children and more
China	1.37	22.46	28.19	40.28	7.8	1.27
North China	1.15	24.57	38.08	34.64	2.7	0
Northeast China	1.1	15.79	61.4	20.18	2.63	0
East China	1.29	24.56	28.21	41.04	5.64	0.55
South-central China	1.56	20.24	22.27	41.57	13.77	2.16
Southwest China	1.45	22.39	22.89	43.53	9.45	1.74
Northwest China	1.5	20.63	21.69	48.68	5.29	3.7

Source: Li Peilin, Chen Guangjin, Wang Chunguang et al. (2022). *Analysis and prediction of China's social situation in 2022*. Beijing: Social Sciences Literature Press.

Table 2. Distribution of families in Northeast China by number of children, %

Year	0 children	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children and more
2010	0.02	77.67	20.38	1.74	0.19
2020	15.79	61.4	20.18	2.63	0

Source: paper of the Seventh National Population Census. Heilongjiang Bureau of Statistics. Available at: <https://www.hongheiku.com/sjrk/1036.html> (accessed: December, 30, 2023).

¹⁰ The Seventh National Population Census. Available at: <https://www.maigoo.com/zhishi/236839.html> (accessed: January 10, 2024).

¹¹ Social Blue Book: 2022 China Social Situation Analysis and Prediction. Available at: <https://www.hrssit.cn/info/2522.html> (accessed: December 29, 2023).

One of the factors promoting birth rate decline is a reduction in the number of women of reproductive age. Between 2000 and 2020, the total number of women of reproductive age in Northeast China decreased by 31.3%. The majority of these women were born during the family planning policy, which led to a decline in the number of women of reproductive age at the beginning of the 21st century.

In terms of age structure, there was a decline in the proportion of women aged 15–24 and 25–39, while the number of women aged 40–49 increased. This resulted in an overall increase in the average age of women in the region (*Tab. 3*).

Sex structure of China's population is a crucial indicator reflecting the impact of the one-child policy. Earlier, due to absence of methods for

determining the sex of a future child, families with a girl as the first child were more likely to have subsequent children than families that already had sons. With moving to one-child families, birth of boys became a primary concern. Previously, the sex of a baby was important only at birth of the second child. During the one-child policy, birth of a boy was a priority. Changes in family planning policy between 2011 and 2016 have affected the sex ratio. Both in China and in its Northeastern provinces there was a decline in the proportion of boys. The decline rate in provinces under consideration exceeded the national one. While the number of boys per 100 girls in Northeast China was higher than the national rate in 2000, the number of newborn boys in Liaoning and Jilin provinces was less than 100 by 2020 (*Tab. 4*).

Table 3. Age structure and average age of women in Northeast China

Year	Total, ten thousand	Age structure, %			Average age, years
		15–24	25–39	40–49	
2000	3186.63	24.48	48.14	27.39	32.88
2010	3147.9	24.95	41.47	33.58	33.99
2015	2866.81	19.16	44.8	36.04	34.15
2020	2188.4	18.49	44.41	37.08	34.73

Source: report on sample survey of data from the National Bureau of Statistics. Available at: <https://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm?cn=E0103&zb=A0N09@-230000&sj=2021> (accessed: December 30, 2023).

Table 4. Sex ratio of newborn children in Northeast China, boys per 100 girls

Territory	2000	2010	2020
China	106.74	105.2	105.07
Liaoning	112.17	112.91	99.7
Jilin	109.87	115.67	99.69
Heilongjiang	107.52	115.1	100.35

Source: announcement of the Fifth Census in Northeast China of the National Bureau of Statistics. Available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/tjgb/rkpcgb/dfrkpcgb/200203/t20020331_30357.html (accessed: December 29, 2023); announcement of the Sixths Census in Northeast China of the National Bureau of Statistics. Available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/tjgb/rkpcgb/dfrkpcgb/201202/t20120228_30390.html (accessed December 29, 2023); press release of the Seventh National Population Census 4. Sex ratio. Available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202105/t20210510_1817189.html (accessed: December 28, 2023).

Currently, China is developing a new attitude toward women, their rights and opportunities for their participation in public life, education, entrepreneurship, sharing of housework with men (Wang et al., 2023). The role of women considers family maintaining and family education. Women's Development in China (2021–2030) outlines the main areas of female participation in society¹².

More active participation in social and economic life is reflected in increase in the age of first marriage. Currently the number of marriages in China has decreased and the age at which women marry and the age at which they give first birth both being postponed to later dates. By early 2020, the number of marriages in China decreased by 48.5% in comparison to the rate observed in 2013. The National Birth Rate Survey¹³ indicates that the average age of the

first marriage for women in China has increased from 23.6 years in 2006 to 26.5 years in 2016. Similarly, the age of first birth has risen from 24.3 to 26.9 years. By 2020 the average age of the first marriage for women was 28 years old. In Northeastern provinces it was lower than the national average. The minimum age in 2020 was recorded in Jilin Province (*Tab. 5*).

Despite the fact, China permitted families to have two children from 2016 until 2021, the total population of three Northeastern provinces declined. Birth rates continued to decline; marriage behavior has changed.

In 2021, China announced a policy to encourage families to have three children. This article presents a more detailed analysis of proposed measures of the new family planning policy in comparison with Northeastern provinces in its next part.

Table 5. Average age of women during first marriage, years

Region	2000	2010	2020
China	23.22	23.8	27.95
Liaoning	22.6	23.6	27.6
Jilin	22.3	23.3	25.5
Heilongjiang	22.3	22.5	26.9

Source: China marriage and family report, 2022. Available at: <http://yuwa.org.cn/> (accessed: January 31, 2024).

¹² Women's Development in China (2021–2030). Available at: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1712130632257540644&wfr=spider&for=pc> (accessed: January 19, 2024).

¹³ The National Birth Rate Survey, 2017. Available at: https://xueshu.baidu.com/usercenter/paper/show?paperid=1k5a0eq0hv6v0ju0kv6e0e90sj172741&site=xueshu_se (accessed: December 29, 2023).

Overview of family planning policy in China in 2021–2022

The 2000 Fifth National Census revealed a relatively low birth rate of 1.22¹⁴. Despite this, China maintained a policy of limiting birth rate without adjusting it according to the current situation. Only in 2010, when the Sixth National Census indicated a further decline in the total birth rate to 1.18, Chinese government recognized a necessity to modify the family planning policy¹⁵.

Over the past decade, China's family planning policy developed several stages:

1) November 15, 2013, the full text of the third plenum resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held November 9–12, 2013, was published. It outlined a program to improve reform policy and stated that Chinese couples will be able to have two children if one of the partners was the only child;

2) October 2015, China officially announced that the one-child policy will be ended and will be replaced by a policy allowing any family to have two children;

3) May 31, 2021, the Central Committee permitted residents to have three children.

Before analyzing measures to support birth rate in Northeastern provinces, it is necessary to examine the driver measures implemented in China between 2020 and 2022.

1. Many cities reduce requirements for maternity insurance, waiting time for receiving maternity benefits.

¹⁴ The Fifth National Census. Available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj./tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/200203/t20020331_30315.html (accessed: December 29, 2023).

¹⁵ The Sixth National Census. Available at: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj./tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/201104/t20110429_30328.html (accessed: December 30, 2023).

2. The procedure for applying for maternity benefits was changed. The benefit can now be received on a monthly basis.

3. Amount of maternity benefit increased. It is calculated from average industry pay for a previous year and duration of a leave. Currently, maternity leave for women is 98 days plus 15 days for those after caesarean section. In addition, for each subsequent child, the leave is increased by 15 days.

4. Incentive payment for parents with the only child is five yuan per month until the age of 18.

5. Childcare allowance for children born between September 1, 2013 and enrolled in elementary school is 25 yuan. This childcare allowance is also applicable to children born after 2014 until the age of six.

6. For parents with the only child, incentive payments are provided from birth and childcare allowance is paid from the seventh month of the child's birth. In case of a second birth, incentive payments for parents with the only child are not provided.

7. In 2022, the responsibility for paying daycare fees was transferred to employers, if parents live in this area and their children attend daycare. The average fee paid by employers is 130 yuan. It should be noted that this payment is non-obligatory, which may result in instances of non-payment¹⁶.

This list is not full and mainly concerns childcare payments. However, China's birth rate maintenance and family policy consist of various aspects, including government financial support of daycares, compensation of school fees, social

¹⁶ New rules for issuing childcare. Available at: <https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/1869370841556041467.html> (accessed: February 2, 2024).

assistance for poor families with children, etc. After two-child policy implementation, the existing support measures for the elderly and one-child families are preserved and new methods to maintain birth rate are introduced¹⁷.

Birth rate support policy in Northeast China

N.K. Semenova, studying historical stages in the family planning policy in China, indicates ten periods and two stages. The period from 2013 to 2021 is determined as “new normal”. During this period the birth limiting policy was ended (Semenova, 2022).

National regulatory acts serve as a basis for family planning measures within the whole country. Regulatory acts in each province serve as practical steps of its implementation, which is reflected in territorial features of birth rate improvement measures.

Regulatory acts of provinces in question meet Population and Family Planning Law of the People’s Republic of China, dated August 20, 2021¹⁸, in structure and ideological orientation, laws and administrative regulations, taking into account current situation in provinces.

To illustrate the structure and content of territorial regulatory acts, let us examine the Heilongjiang Province Population and Family Planning Regulations¹⁹.

¹⁷ National rules for paying back childcare, 2022. Available at: https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/1765007956975547108.html?qbl=relate_question_6 (accessed: February 2, 2024).

¹⁸ Population and family planning law of the People’s Republic of China, dated August 20, 2021. Available at: <https://m.baike.so.com/doc/5570371-5785579.html> (accessed: January 15, 2024).

¹⁹ Heilongjiang province population and family planning regulations. Available at: https://wenku.baidu.com/view/a56cf067322b3169a45177232f60ddccda38e6a2.html?_wks_1672410746319 (accessed: December 29, 2023).

The act consists of five chapters: 1) general provisions; 2) population control; 3) technical family planning services; 4) organization and management; 5) benefits, support and social security.

General provisions indicate that family planning is a basis of country’s national policy (Article 3). The second chapter on population control summarizes the necessity of introducing a birth registration system, promoting marriage and encouraging families to have three children.

Chapter “Technical family planning services” provides information on population access to family planning services and the necessity for the provision of quality birth control methods. It notes the necessity for development of a free premarital and maternity care system as a means of preventing or reducing birth defects and improving newborns health.

The mandatory system of premarital medical examination was declared invalid in October 1, 2003 with new “Regulations on Marriage Registration”. This act emphasizes voluntary examination of future married couples²⁰.

Another chapter defines requirements for shaping a population policy, meeting national targets. Family planning and birth rates issues are included in tasks of all levels of government.

Article 29 indicates the necessity of directing the entire socio-economic system toward “developing a new reproductive culture” and “creating a scientific, civilized, and progressive concept of marriage and childbirth”. Furthermore, mass media

²⁰ Ministry of Civil Affairs: New “Regulations on Marriage Registration” further protect the freedom of marriage and do not include mandatory provisions for premarital examinations, August 20, 2003. Available at: https://zqb.cyol.com/content/2003-08/20/content_718407.htm (accessed: January 30, 2024).

Table 6. Comparison of birth improvement measures in Northeastern provinces of China, 2021–2022

Heilongjiang	Liaoning	Jilin
Financial		
<p>1. For families with two or more children registered and working in city, a monthly payment of one thousand yuan per child up to the age of three is paid after the second birth. In case of the third birth a one-time payment of twenty thousand yuan and a monthly payment of one thousand yuan shall be paid for children below three years.</p> <p>2. Incentive payment of three thousand yuan is paid to families with a newborn child within three kilometers of the border line*.</p> <p>3. Childcare allowance in border and old industrial districts may be higher than the provincial average.</p>	<p>1. A one-time payment of twenty thousand yuan is paid in case of the second birth.</p> <p>2. Incentive payment of three thousand yuan is paid to families with a newborn child within three kilometers of the border line*.</p> <p>3. Families with minor children have benefits when renting and purchasing accommodation.</p>	<p>1. Incentive payment of three thousand yuan is paid to families with a newborn child within 3 kilometers of the border line**.</p> <p>2. For families with two or more children below three and six years, a subsidy system has been developed for children below.</p>
Social		
<p>1. Maternity leave for female workers is 180 days***, parental leave for men is 15 days.</p> <p>2. Leave for married couples is 25 days (without a medical examination – 15 days).</p> <p>3. Parents with children aged below three years can have a childcare leave of 10 days. Public holidays are paid.</p>	<p>1. Maternity leave is 158 days, parental leave for men is 20 days.</p> <p>2. Couples with children aged below three years can have an annual childcare leave of 10 days.</p> <p>3. Female workers with gestational period of less than four months can have 15 days of maternity leave. Those with gestational period of more than four months can have 42 days of leave.</p> <p>4. In case of hospitalization of a couple who received “One-Child Glory (Honorary) Certificate” (population control measure during the one-child policy), their only child may take an annual family leave of 15 days.</p>	<p>1. Maternity leave is increased to 180 days and paternity leave is increased to 25 days.</p> <p>2. Parents with a child aged below three years can take 30 days ah childcare leave.</p> <p>3. Leave for married couples is 10 days more that the national average.</p> <p>4. Women can have from three to six months of breastfeeding leave.</p>
Institutional		
<p>1. Governments at municipal and county levels form a subsidy system for families with two or more children.</p> <p>2. Free premarital health examinations, checkups for pregnant women, newborn disease screening and other projects are available to the entire population.</p> <p>3. Assisting women with children who in finding employment or learning a new profession.</p> <p>4. Expanding the number of school places****.</p>	<p>1. Improvement of maternal and child healthcare system, prevention and control of diseases affecting women and children*****.</p>	<p>1. Prefecture governments are responsible for creating a childcare system.</p> <p>2. Medical examination before marriage.</p> <p>3. Discrimination against women, who gave birth to a girl, is prohibited.</p> <p>4. Discrimination against women without children is prohibited.</p>
<p>* Policy of supporting newborn in border areas. Available at: http://xxgk.jl.gov.cn/zcbm/fgw_98077/xxgkmlqy/202202/t20220221_8398447.html. (accessed: January 19, 2024).</p> <p>** Population and family planning in Jilin. Available at: http://www.jl.gov.cn/zw/yw/jlyw/202110/t20211030_8264419.html (accessed: January 19, 2024).</p> <p>*** Duration of maternity leave in China is 98 days. According to the relevant policy, maternity leave for women is 98 days plus 15 days in the case of caesarean section; 15 days are added for each mew child.</p> <p>**** Heilongjiang province population and family planning regulations. Available at: https://wenku.baidu.com/view/a56cf067322b3169a45177232f60ddccda38e6a2.html?_wks_=1672410746319 (accessed: December 29, 2023).</p> <p>***** Population and family planning in Liaoning. Available at: https://wsjsw.dandong.gov.cn/html/DDWJW/202112/0163918551872743.html (accessed: January 19, 2024).</p>		

should disseminate information on population and family planning. There is a strong emphasis on establishing “a reliable system of statistics on population, birth rate and family planning”²¹.

The primary measures and directives of population policy to improve birth rate in Northeastern provinces of China are presented in *Table 6*. They are divided into three groups (financial, social, and institutional) to provide a more comprehensive representation of existing approaches in provinces.

Territorial features of family planning in provinces are more closely related to volume of financial resources for incentives and social security programs. Family planning and population regulations in provinces under consideration are focused on bearing three children per family. Under specific circumstances (such as disability of a child or living in border areas), the fourth child may be permitted.

Stabilizing the demographic situation in Northeastern provinces of China is important for their economic, innovative, social, and geopolitical position. For the border region under consideration, the link between population size and issues of security and stability is of a vital importance (Zaleskaya, 2021).

The authors (Yu Qiang, 2022) note that a narrow approach to solving the problem related only to population recovery is not sufficient. Instead, a set of measures must be developed to plan long-term and medium-term tasks in areas of innovations, logistics, and population settlement, including construction of four megalopolises (Dalian, Shenyang, Changchun, Harbin), etc.

Stabilization of the demographic situation will be a response to structural transformations in the region’s economic and social spheres (Turbanov et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Stabilizing population and birth rate, family planning policies are national tasks. Development of specific measures to improve birth rate is the responsibility of governments at municipal and county levels.

Over the past 60 years, data from 2023 first revealed a decline in China’s population. However, demographic issues, including overall population reduction, low birth rate, transformation of the age structure of the population, increase in families without children were observed in Northeastern provinces of China (Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning) at an earlier stage.

Comparative analysis of demographic data from 2010 to 2020 revealed the following regional features among the provinces under consideration.

From 2010 to 2020, Heilongjiang experienced the largest population decline in the region, including the highest rate of decline in birth rate compared to other provinces in Northeast China. Furthermore, the proportion of male births in Heilongjiang is below the national average but greater than in Liaoning and Jilin. Jilin also registered a population decline. Additionally, the province has the minimum marriage age for women and the lowest number of boys born per 100 girls. In contrast, Liaoning demonstrates population growth from 2010 to 2020. This province is distinguished by a high proportion of population over the age of 65.

Current family planning and birth rate policies in China were introduced in 2021, this is why the implementation of the planned activities and birth rate improvement is at its early stage.

²¹ Heilongjiang province population and family planning regulations. Available at: https://wenku.baidu.com/view/a56cf067322b3169a45177232f60ddccda38e6a2.html?_wktks_=1672410746319 (accessed: December 29, 2023).

Support measures at the level of provinces are designed to assist pregnant women and families with children. They are compatible with the proposed system of birth rate support at the national level and include medical care, subsidies and other forms of financial support, accommodation provision, institutional support measures (simplification of applying for maternity benefits, extended period of marriage and maternity leave, provision of preferential conditions for employment of women with children. A brief examination of birth rate support regulations in the Northeastern provinces revealed territorial features of support for families with children and women, both between and within the provinces.

Implementation of planned support measures represents only a part of family and birth rate support system. This system includes not only financial support but also ideological work with young people, organization of necessary social infrastructure aimed at providing care and medical

services for families with children, and changing the attitude toward women.

Taking into account the development of a single model for birth rate support as outlined in the Population and family planning law of the People's Republic of China, let us note that at the provincial level primary differences are observed in benefits and social security systems for the population. The Northeastern provinces of China have longer periods of maternity leave and additional payments for births in border regions.

Assessment of birth rate factors and implementation of family planning policy require a comprehensive approach that includes not only the current system of support measures, but also takes into account historical and socio-economic development features of territories, availability and level of childcare system that allows women and families with children not to experience any limiting circumstances.

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