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133 boulevard Davout 75020 Paris

contact: Isabelle Attané attane@ined.fr

Gender Imbalance Evolution in China: Social Change and Public Governance

Li Shuzhuo

Director of the Institute for Population and Development Studies

School of Public Policy and Administration

Xi'an Jiaotong University

Xi'an, China.

The gender imbalance problem emerged in China in the early 1980s, and became serious in the 1990s. Since 2000, the sex ratio at birth has been fluctuating around the very high level of 120. During the last three decades, China has experienced dramatic social change, including sustained low fertility, institutional reform, economic growth, technological progress and social structural change, all of which may have affected the evolution of gender imbalance. The government has also taken crucial policy measures to contain gender imbalance and address its consequences, such as national “Care for Girls” campaign. This talk will examine how the demographic transition, social change and public governance interact to drive the evolution of gender imbalance in China. I will first describe recent trends and patterns in gender imbalance in China and review the current discussion about causes of gender imbalance and its social consequences. I will then summarize China’s public policies and social responses to address these issues, focusing on the national “Care for Girls” campaign and its impact. I will also present a framework to analyze the social change, public governance and gender imbalance evolution, as well as empirical findings, and conclude with prospects for China’s gender imbalance in the future.