

Conditions of Work and Employment Programme

*Reconciling work and family:
Issues and policies in China*

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Preface

The ILO's Conditions of Work and Employment Programme seeks to promote decent conditions of employment on the basis of international labour standards and the analysis of policy experience in its member States. One of the key aspects of working conditions that this Programme addresses is the reconciliation of work and family life. On the one hand, how can working conditions be adapted to facilitate workers' ability to fulfil their family responsibilities? And, on the other hand, how can the family responsibilities of men and women be lightened or made more compatible with employment so that they are not a source of discrimination and inequality in the labour market?

Based in part on the recognition that the problems of workers with family responsibilities are part of wider issues regarding family and society and that family responsibilities can be a source of discrimination and inequality in employment, the International Labour Conference adopted a Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities (No. 156) in 1981. The core of this Convention stipulates that the aim of national policies should be to enable persons with family responsibilities who are engaged or wish to engage in employment to exercise their right *without being subject to discrimination* and, to the extent possible, *without conflict between their employment and their family responsibilities*. The accompanying Recommendation on Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981 (No. 165), provides guidance on how work-family issues can be addressed. Yet, while this standard outlines many important factors and issues for consideration, it is also necessary to examine how workers with family responsibilities actually experience work-family conflicts and how the issues are being addressed in different countries. What are countries doing to reduce conflicts between work and family? How are these measures compatible with increasing productivity in the face of global competition? What are the factors that worsen or reduce this conflict?

Although there is a considerable and growing body of literature on the nature of work-family conflicts and how they are being addressed in many western and industrialized countries, less is available on how these issues are being addressed in other countries around the world. As valuable lessons can be learned by examining these different experiences, this paper presents the example of China. China has undergone tremendous changes, in terms of economic and labour market reforms, rural-urban migration, and demographic and family composition changes, notably the ageing of society and the decreasing size of nuclear families. At the same time, the extent and types of public services that support care and education have changed dramatically as well. On the basis of labour market, education, health and time-use data, secondary research, and interviews, this paper examines these trends and how they have affected men's and women's abilities to both earn a livelihood and meet their families' needs for care. The authors report that there considerable challenges in doing so, particularly for women. The paper reviews existing policies and measures and offers recommendations and priorities for addressing the current challenges and needs in meaningful ways.

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Executive summary

Research purposes

The ILO makes a clear statement in the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 165) on reconciling work and family and providing the social environment and conditions for equal employment opportunity and treatment for men and women workers with family responsibilities in order to eliminate discrimination in the labour market and enhance labourers' capability of work and quality of life. It is also a responsibility of the governments of ILO member States. This research aims to discuss the variations and implementation of relevant policies for coordinating work and family responsibilities in China when it is at a stage of social transformation and economic transition, the existing conflicts and the main reasons, the needs and desires of workers, and on this basis, explore the possibility of policy recommendations for reform and improvement.

Research methods

This research is primarily based on second-hand data available inside China, including national statistics and the population census released by the government, information on labour statistics, educational statistics, health statistics, the use of time, a small number of gender-based statistics, and the enforcement of relevant laws and policies conducted by related government agencies, as well as small sample surveys and data analysis conducted by related experts and researchers. Moreover, interviews were conducted with government officials, NGO staff, scholars and female workers in order to know their viewpoints.

The study's findings and recommendations were validated at a seminar on work and family balance, which brought together ILO constituents, the government's women's machinery and gender experts in May 2008 (see Annex 1).

Main findings

Economic-social development and employment development

Since the reform and opening-up policy started, the Chinese economy has been developing at a steady and fast pace. China has achieved fast growth in the Human Development Index (HDI), the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), fiscal income and per capita GDP, which lays down a materialistic foundation for promoting employment, developing social undertakings, eliminating poverty and increasing people's standard of living.

Population and family development

Along with social transformation and economic transition, the size and structure of families in China are becoming smaller, the modes of family are various, the stability of the family is decreasing, the modes of childbirth and the modes of providing for the aged are changing significantly, and the ratio of family upbringing has dropped. These factors, originally, reduced the burden of family care on workers with family responsibilities.

However, the high expectations from only children, the mobility of the labour force, the ageing of the population, the pursuit of family happiness, the market-orientation and privatization of family care, as well as the reduced accessibility to support from the traditional extended family, have aggravated the responsibilities of family care-givers, especially for women.

Working conditions

The transition toward a market economy has lowered the enterprise's guarantee for labourers and labour conditions related to family care. First, the obvious existence of differences between urban and rural areas, regional differences, industrial or occupational differences, and gender differences in salary income and social security increases the burden on families to buy services, especially for low-income families. Second, overtime work and reduced holidays and vacations have actually led to a consequence of more attention to work and less attention to family. Third, informal employment has reduced labour rights and social security for labourers, which affects family income and care, and subjugates more women to the role of family care-givers.

Policies and facilities for family care

The Chinese educational system for young children has also witnessed the challenge from the market economy and has undergone different stages of development in the past, such as the dwindling of government-run kindergartens, the recession of community-run kindergartens, the sharp drop in enterprise-run kindergartens and the uneven development of privately-run kindergartens. In 2003, in view of the above problems, the Ministry of Education put forward the overall goal of reforming education for young children, enabling 55 per cent of children to receive education during three years of the pre-school and 80 per cent of children to receive education during one year of pre-school. However, in present-day China, the educational system for young children is oriented towards early education, rather than family care and baby nursing. Care for children, especially care for children aged 0 to 3 years, does not receive policy support and public service support.

Since the reform and opening-up policy started, China has developed institutional and community care provided to the aged, and has set up old-age service institutions, which reduce the burden on family members of looking after the aged. However, considering the 140 million people above age 60, the service still falls far behind the demand. Therefore, families still provide the main care at the present time.

Conclusion

China has made outstanding achievements in economic development in recent years. The Chinese government has unswervingly adhered to the principle and policy of active employment to create more jobs; it has set up a social security system that covers both urban and rural people to ensure a basic living standard; it has established a tripartite mechanism to regulate and coordinate labour relations and protect labourers' rights; it has provided public service and care facilities to alleviate the burden of family responsibilities, thus providing a major guarantee for employment of workers with family responsibilities.

However, our research shows that the government does not fully realize the importance of providing equal employment opportunities and treatment for men and women workers with family responsibilities: basic public services do not include the level of family care; the government does not shoulder the responsibility of resolving work-family conflicts; and the traditional idea of gender has affected the design of related government institutions. In comparison to its' economic development, China's social development, especially the development of public services, is obviously inadequate.

Policy recommendations

- (a) The government should bear the responsibilities of alleviating the work-family conflicts for men and women workers who have family responsibilities, trying to ratify and implement ILO Convention No. 156 as early as possible.
- (b) The government should mainstream the awareness of gender equality into economic and social policy design and implementation, and ensure that women's rights to equality of opportunity and treatment in employment and social security are respected.
- (c) Bring baby nursing, providing care for the aged and family services into the category of the government's public services as early as possible, and make vigorous efforts to develop different forms of service for family care.
- (d) Through legislation, eliminate discrimination against workers with family responsibilities, and ensure that both men and women workers have the basic rights to pursue equal employment opportunities and equal treatment. Priorities are prohibition of discriminatory recruitment practices and dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity in labour legislation; elimination of differences in the obligatory retirement ages of men and women; and improvements in the maternity protection system.
- (e) Establish and improve the family policy of "caring for family" and "focusing on people first".
- (f) Enterprises and work units should try to provide better means of reconciling work and family care for men and women workers.
- (g) Build up good social order of "caring for family", "being good to men and women workers who have family responsibilities", "gender equality", and "men and women sharing social responsibilities and family responsibilities together".
- (h) Strengthen statistics and studies in relevant fields.

Part 1: Introduction and context

Since the reform and opening-up policy was adopted in 1979, China has witnessed a steady and fast economic growth; a considerable enhancement in economic strength; a significant progress in the reform of the economic system; a visible progress in democratic and legal construction; human rights; public service and social construction; and an obvious improvement in people's livelihood.

1.1: The ranking of HDI in the United Nations is increasing

The Human Development Index (HDI) is an important index for measuring the progress of a society. It is made up of three indicators (life expectancy, educational level and economic development level), and emphasizes that all members of society participate in the development and share the outcomes of development. In the past ten years, China's HDI ranking in the United Nations has been rising from 106 in 1995 to 81 in 2005 (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Human Development Index of China

Indicators	1995	1998	2000	2002	2004	2005
Human Development Index	0.685	0.706	0.726	0.745	0.768	0.777
Life Expectancy Index	0.736	0.750	0.760	0.760	0.780	0.792
Education Index	0.757	0.790	0.800	0.830	0.840	0.837
GDP Index	0.456	0.570	0.640	0.640	0.680	0.703
China's world HDI ranking	106	99	96	94	81	81

Source: United Nations: *Human Development Report*.

However, on the other hand, China's Gender-related Development Index (GDI)¹ does not rise synchronously with its' Human Development Index (HDI). In the UN *Human Development Report 1995*, China was taken as a model whose level of gender equality exceeded the level of economic development.² However, in the past ten years, though China's HDI has gone up by 30 places, its GDI and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) have been making slow progress, and have even slipped (see Table 1.2).

¹ Gender-related Development Index (GDI) means the development index related to gender for measuring the same basic abilities and achievements as the Human Development Index, but focusing on the inequality of achievements between men and women. The bigger the gender differences in basic abilities, the lower the gender-related development index a country has in comparison to its Human Development Index.

² In the *Human Development Report 1995* (Chinese version: page 81), China's places in the three indexes were 111, 71 and 23 respectively, and was commended by the United Nations Development Programme: "Equality between men and women is not completely determined by a society's income level", and "Though China's per capita income is only one-fifth that of Saudi Arabia, its' ranking of GDI is ten places higher than that of Saudi Arabia".

Table 1.2: A comparison of China's HDI and GDI rankings

	1992-1994	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
China's HDI ranking	111	87	96	104	94	85	81	81
China's GDI ranking	71	76	77	83	71	64	64	73
China's GEM ranking	23	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	57

Source: United Nations: *Human Development Report 1995*.

1.2: Recent tendency of economic growth

1.2.1: Economic development maintains a steady and continued growth

Over the past 30 years, China's economic development has maintained a steady and continued growth. In 2005, China's GDP amounted to RMB 18308.5 billion yuan, ranking in fourth place in the world, increasing by 57.3 per cent from 2000, with an average annual growth rate of 9.5 per cent (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: GDP and growth rate

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
GDP (billion yuan)	9921.46	10965.52	12033.27	13582.28	15987.83	18308.48
Actual growth over previous year (%)	8.4	8.3	9.1	10.0	10.1	10.2

Source: *China Statistical Yearbook 2006*.

In 2005, the national revenue was 3164.9 billion yuan, a 1.36-fold increase over 2000, with an average annual increase of 365.1 billion yuan (see Table 1.4).

Table 1.4: Financial income and growth

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Financial income (billion yuan)	1339.20	1638.60	1890.36	2171.53	2639.65	3164.93
Actual growth over previous year (%)	17.0	22.3	15.4	14.9	21.6	19.9

Source: *China Statistical Yearbook 2006*.

While the economy was growing rapidly, the per capita GDP was also rising significantly. In 2005, the per capita GDP amounted to 14,040 yuan, increasing by 79 per cent from 2000 (see Table 1.5). While per capita GDP as a whole was growing, there was still a big regional difference. In 2005, there was more than a ten-fold difference between the lowest level and the highest level of per capita income (Department of Social, Science and Technology Department of the National Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

Table 1.5: Per capita Gross Domestic Product

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Per capita GDP (yuan)	7858	8622	9398	10,452	12,336	14,040

Source: *China Statistical Yearbook 2006*.

1.2.2: The living standard for both the urban and rural population has increased

Along with economic development, the living standard for both the urban and rural population has increased, and their quality of living has improved. In 2005, the per capita disposable income for urban households broke the 10,000 yuan mark, amounting to 10,493 yuan, and the per capita net income for rural households was 3,255 yuan, increasing by 67.09 per cent and 44.47 per cent respectively from 2000. The Engel Coefficient for urban households was 36.7 per cent and was 45.5 per cent for rural households, decreasing by 2.7 per cent and 3.6 per cent respectively from 2000 (see Table 1.6). The economic growth in China has improved people's actual living standard. However, it must be noted that the income of urban people is far above that of rural people, and the income of the developed areas is obviously higher than that of the less developed areas.

Table 1.6: Per capita income (yuan) and Engel Coefficient for urban and rural households

Year	Per capita disposable income of urban households	Per capita net income of rural households	Engel Coefficient of urban households (%)	Engel Coefficient of rural households (%)
2000	6280.0	2253.4	39.4	49.1
2001	6859.6	2366.4	38.2	47.7
2002	7702.8	2475.6	37.7	46.2
2003	8472.2	2622.2	37.1	45.6
2004	9421.6	2936.4	37.7	47.2
2005	10,493.0	3254.9	36.7	45.5

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

1.2.3: Put more financial inputs into social development

With its fast economic growth and the significant increase in national financial strength, the Chinese government began to put more financial inputs into social development and construction.

Educational fund increased rapidly. In 2005, the national educational fund was 841.884 billion yuan, increasing by 118.73 per cent from 2000, with an average annual growth of 91.395 billion yuan, in which the state budgetary educational fund was 516.108 billion yuan, increasing by 101.40 per cent from 2000, with an average annual growth of 51.97 billion yuan. However, judging from the proportion of the state budgetary educational fund in GDP, it was rather low, only 2.82 per cent in 2005 (see Table 1.7).

Table 1.7: State budgetary educational fund and its proportion of GDP

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
State budgetary educational fund (billion yuan)	256.26	305.70	349.14	385.06	446.59	516.11
Proportion of GDP (%)	2.58	2.79	2.90	2.84	2.79	2.82

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

Health fund increased. During the tenth Five-year Plan (2001-2005), China carried on with its reform of the medical health system and provided more inputs into public health undertakings. In 2004, the total national health fund was 759.03 billion yuan, increasing by 65.49 per cent from 2000 and accounting for 4.75 per cent of GDP; the per capita health fund was 583.9 yuan, increasing by 61.34 per cent from 2000; the per capita health fund for the urban and rural populations increased from 812.9 yuan and 214.9 yuan in 2000 to 1261.9 yuan and 301.6 yuan in 2004 respectively (see Table 1.8 and Table 1.9).

Table 1.8: Total health fund and its proportion of GDP

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total health fund (billion yuan)	458.66	502.59	579.00	658.41	759.03
Proportion of GDP (%)	4.62	4.58	4.81	4.85	4.75

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

Table 1.9: Per capita health fund (unit: yuan)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Urban	812.9	841.2	987.1	1108.9	1261.9
Rural	214.9	244.9	259.3	274.7	301.6
Total	361.9	393.8	450.7	509.5	583.9

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

More inputs for social security. The national financial expenditure on employment and social security increased from 59.6 billion yuan in 1998 to 369.9 billion yuan in 2005, a 6.21-fold increase (Jin Renqing, 2006). Meanwhile, the absolute amount of expenditures on social relief and social welfare increased significantly, and their percentage in the total financial expenditure was also increasing (Table 1.10).

Table 1.10: Financial expenditures on social security 2001-2005

Item/Year		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Amount of expenditure (billion yuan)	Total financial expenditure	1810.361	2137.460	2368.608	2774.552	3289.351
	Total expenditure on social security	198.740	263.622	265.591	311.606	369.886
	1. Pension and social welfare relief fund	26.668	37.297	49.882	56.345	71.639
	2. Retirement fund for government departments and public institutions	62.472	78.883	89.497	102.811	116.483
	3. Subsidiary expenditure on social security	109.600	147.442	126.212	152.450	181.764
Proportion in financial expenditure (%)	Total expenditure on social security	10.98	12.33	11.21	11.23	11.24
	1. Pension and social welfare relief fund	1.47	1.74	2.11	2.03	2.18
	2. Retirement fund for government departments and public institutions	3.45	3.69	3.78	3.71	3.54
	3. Subsidiary expenditure on social security	6.05	6.90	5.33	5.49	5.53
	Total financial expenditure	19.45	18.07	10.81	17.14	18.55
Increase over the previous year (%)	Total expenditure on social security	30.96	32.65	0.75	17.33	18.70
	1. Pension and social welfare relief fund	25.18	39.86	33.74	12.96	27.14
	2. Retirement fund for government departments and public institutions	30.54	26.27	13.46	14.88	13.30
	3. Subsidiary expenditure on social security	32.69	34.53	-14.40	20.79	19.23
	Supplementary fund on social security	-36.19	47.59	-83.25	99.52	19.53
	Total financial expenditure	19.45	18.07	10.81	17.14	18.55

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

Investment on environmental pollution control increased. During the tenth Five-year Plan, the Chinese government focused on overall environmental control. In 2005, the total investment on environmental pollution control was 238.8 billion yuan, which was 2.35 times that of 2000, and the proportion of total investment in GDP was 1.3 per cent, increasing by 0.3 per cent from 2000 (see Table 1.11).

Table 1.11: Total investment on environmental pollution control and its proportion of GDP

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total investment on control of environmental pollution (billion yuan)	1014.9	1106.7	1367.2	1627.7	1909.8	2388.0
Proportion of GDP (%)	1.02	1.01	1.14	1.20	1.19	1.30

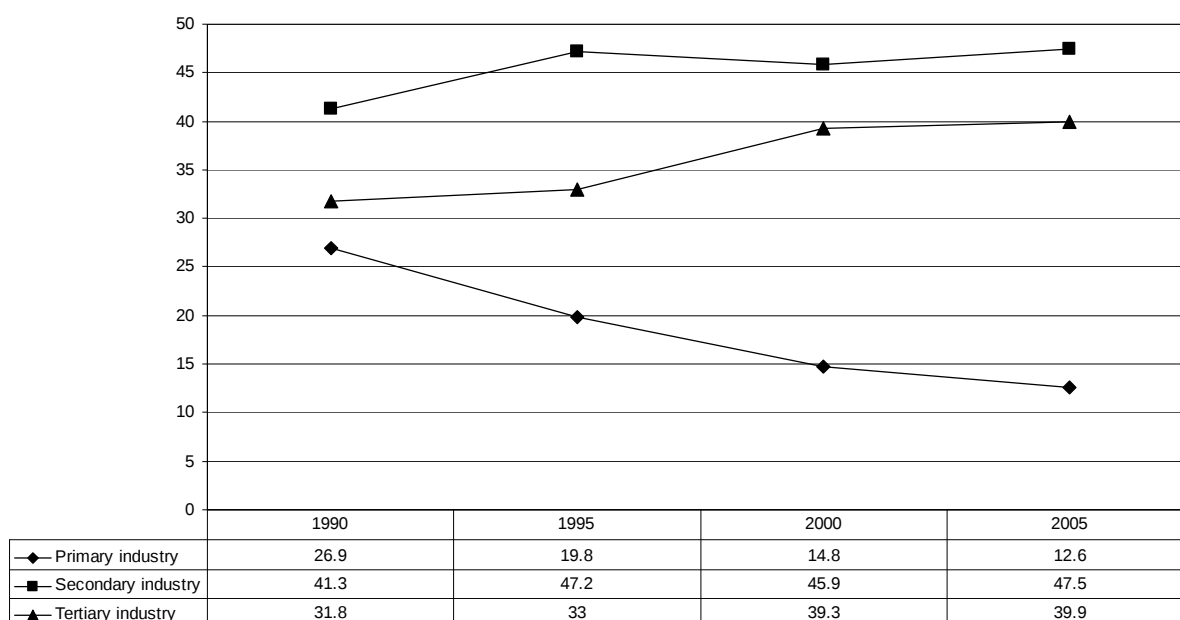
Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

The continued economic growth and the significant increase of financial income have laid down a materialistic foundation for male and female workers with family responsibilities to obtain job opportunities and income equally. However, we can see clearly that the government's financial expenditures on social undertakings do not include family care.

1.3: The changing tendency of the industrial structure

China's economic development promotes the optimization and upgrading of the industrial structure. In terms of the composition of GDP: the proportion of the primary industry dropped from 14.8 per cent in 2000 to 12.6 per cent in 2005; the proportion of the secondary industry rose from 45.9 per cent to 47.5 per cent; and that of the tertiary industry rose from 39.3 per cent to 39.9 per cent (see Figure 1.1). China is adjusting its industrial structure and moving forward toward "an industrial pattern which is based on agriculture, led by the hi-tech industry, supported by the basic industry and the manufacturing industry, and targeted at a full development of the service industry" (State Council, 2005).

Figure 1.1: Composition of GDP (unit: %)



Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

1.4: The development of private economy in China

China's private economy continues to develop at a faster speed than the national economic growth. By the end of 2006,

- the number of registered privately-run enterprises had amounted to 4,947,000, increasing by 15 per cent from the previous year;
- the total registered fund was 7.5 trillion yuan, increasing by 22 per cent;
- the number of employees was 63,955,000, increasing by 9.81 per cent;
- the number of investors was 12,249,000, increasing by 10.36 per cent;

- the total fixed investment of all the private economies in urban areas amounted to 4.83 trillion yuan, increasing by 37.7 per cent over the previous year, exceeding 50 per cent for the first time in the total investment on fixed assets, which was 51.6 per cent;
- the total import and export volume of the privately-run enterprises was 243.6 billion US dollars, increasing by 46.5 per cent from the same period of the previous year;
- the total tax paid by privately-run enterprises was 349.52 billion yuan, increasing by 28.6 per cent over the previous year and accounting for 9.28 per cent of the national total tax revenue, increasing by 0.48 per cent over the previous year;
- the non-state economy, which accounted for about 65 per cent of GDP and accounted for 70 to 80 per cent of economic growth, has become an important drive that promotes China's economic development and employment. (Huang Mengfu, 2007).

1.5: The tendency of employment in different sectors

Along with the natural growth of Chinese population and the faster pace of economic development, the number of employed people is on the rise. At the end of 2006, the number of employed people was 764 million, an increase of 5.75 million from 2005. The number of people employed in the primary, secondary and tertiary industries was 325.61 million, 192.25 million and 246.14 million respectively, accounting for 42.6 per cent, 25.2 per cent and 32.2 per cent of the total employed people. In 2006, the number of employed people in urban areas was 283.10 million, with a net increase of 9.79 million over the previous year; at the end of the year, the number of registered unemployed people in urban areas was 8.47 million and the registered unemployment rate was 4.1 per cent, continuing on a downward trend (Ministry of Labour and Social Security and National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). According to labour statistics in China between 1990 and 2006, the number of employed people in urban areas increased by 66 per cent, and the absolute number exceeded 100 million (see Table 1.12).

Table 1.12: Number of urban registered unemployed people and rate of unemployment

Year	Number of urban employed people (million)	Number of urban unemployed people (million)	Registered rate of unemployment (%)
1990	170.41	3.832	2.5
1991	174.65	3.522	2.3
1992	178.61	3.639	2.3
1993	182.62	4.201	2.6
1994	186.53	4.764	2.8
1995	190.40	5.196	2.9
1996	199.22	5.528	3.0
1997	207.81	5.768	3.1
1998	216.16	5.710	3.1
1999	224.12	5.750	3.1
2000	231.51	5.950	3.1
2001	239.40	6.810	3.6
2002	247.80	7.700	4.0
2003	256.39	8.000	4.3
2004	264.76	8.270	4.2
2005	273.31	8.390	4.2
2006	283.10	8.470	4.1

Source: *China Statistical Yearbook 2006*.

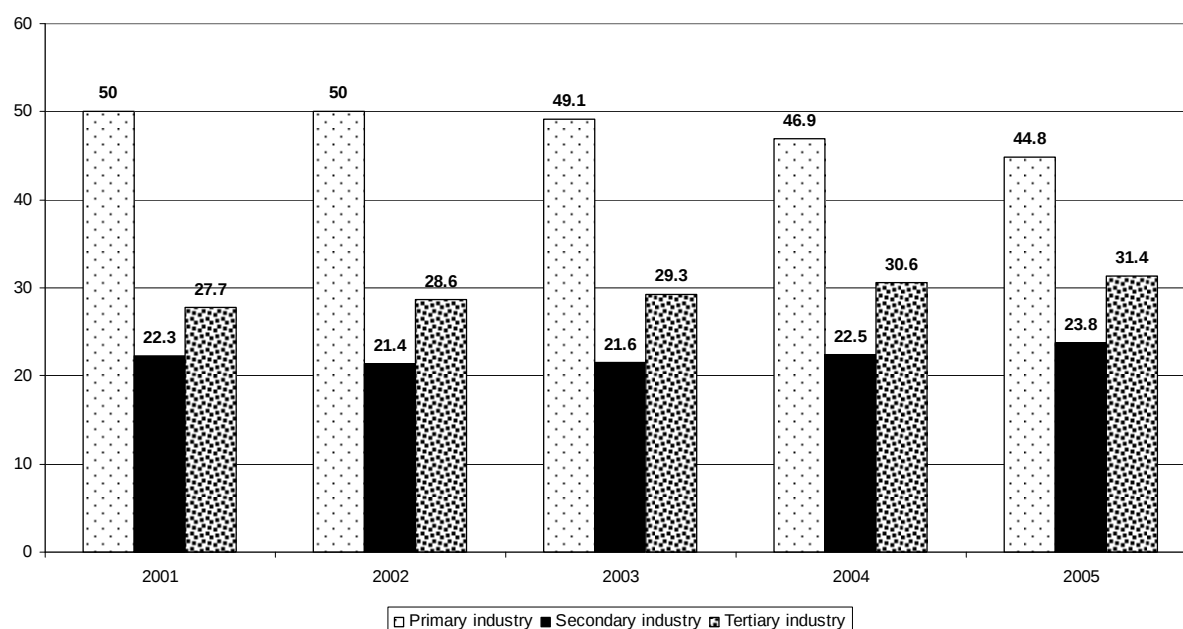
In terms of the composition of the workforce, the proportion of people involved in the primary industry dropped from 50.0 per cent in 2001 to 44.8 per cent in 2005; those involved in the secondary industry rose from 22.3 per cent to 23.8 per cent; those involved in the tertiary industry rose from 27.7 per cent to 31.4 per cent. People are constantly moving from the primary industry to the secondary and tertiary industries (see Table 1.13). While large numbers of rural labourers are transferring to urban areas, rural women and old people are working more, and in many rural areas, they have become the mainstay labour force in the local agricultural production.

Table 1.13: The composition of people involved in the primary, secondary and tertiary industries (unit: millions)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Primary industry	365.13	368.70	365.46	352.69	339.70
Secondary industry	162.84	157.80	160.77	169.20	180.84
Tertiary industry	202.28	210.90	218.09	230.11	237.71
Total	730.25	737.40	744.32	752.00	758.25

Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

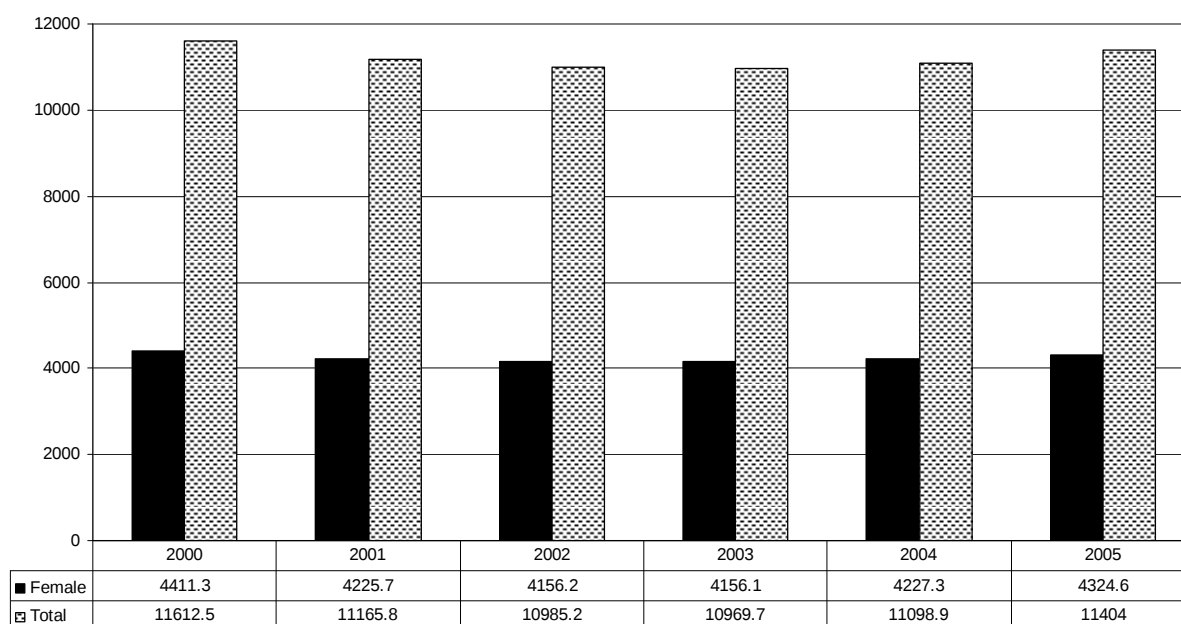
Figure 1.2 Composition of workforces in the primary, secondary and tertiary industries (unit:%)



Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

With the adjustment of the industrial structure and the deepened ownership reform of enterprises, the urban units' capacity for absorbing new labour forces during the tenth Five-year Plan began to slide. In 2005, the number of urban employed people decreased by 2,085,000 from 2000. During the same period of time, the number of urban people involved in privately-run and self-employed enterprises increased significantly, and by 2005, the number of people in privately-run and self-employed enterprises was 107.25 million, with an increase of 32.48 million from 2000, thus becoming the main channels of employment (Social, Science and Technology Department of the National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). It should be noted that in the adjustment of the employment structure, the number of employed women in 2005 decreased by 867,000 from 2000, accounting for 37.9 per cent of the total of employed persons (see Figure 1.3).

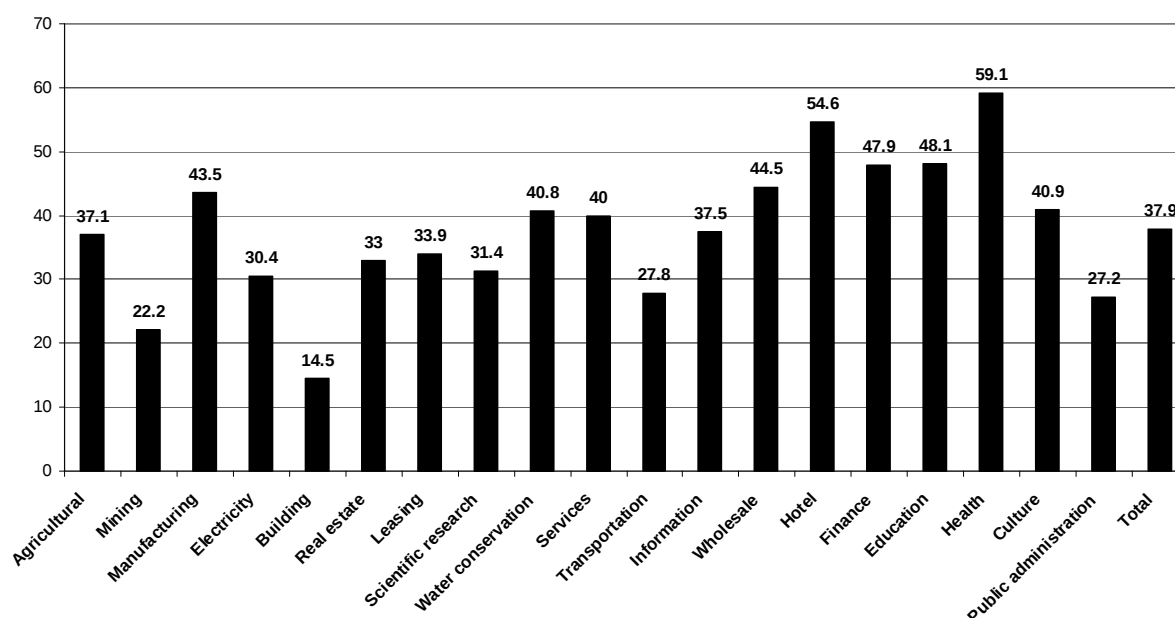
Figure 1.3: Urban employment and the percentage of women in urban employment (unit: 10,000)



Source: China Labor Statistical Yearbook 2006

In terms of the industrial composition in 2005 of urban employed persons from the gender perspective, the industries (out of the 19 industries of national economy) in which women accounted for over a half were hotels and restaurants, as well as health, social security and social welfare (accounting for 54.6 per cent and 59.1 per cent respectively) (see Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Percentage of women in employment in urban units in 2005 (unit: %)



Source: China Labor Statistical Yearbook 2006

In addition, the industries in which the employment rate of women is higher than that of men include agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishing, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, finance, community service and other service industries, and education. The industries in which the employment rate of men is higher than that of

women include mining, power generation, production and supply of gas and water, building, transportation, warehousing and postal industry, information transmission, computer service and software, real estate, leasing and business service industry, scientific research, technical service and geological prospecting, public administration and social organization. The industries in which men and women basically are equal in the employment rate include water conservation, environmental protection and public facilities management, culture, sports and entertainment (see Table 1.14). There is an obvious traditional gender division of labour in the industrial composition of urban employed people.

Table 1.14: Sector composition of employment in urban units by sex (unit: %)

<i>Industries</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishing	21.6	28.6
Mining	2.4	0.8
Manufacturing industry	21.6	23.0
Power generation, production and supply of gas and water	1.8	1.1
Building industry	7.8	1.5
Transportation, warehousing and postal industry	8.6	2.3
Information transmission, computer service and software	0.9	0.8
Wholesale and retail trades	11.5	15.9
Hotels and restaurants	3.1	4.7
Finance	1.2	1.5
Real estate	0.9	0.7
Leasing and business service industry	1.1	0.9
Scientific research, technical service and geological prospecting	0.7	0.5
Water conservation, environmental protection and public facilities management	0.7	0.7
Community service and other service industries	3.4	3.7
Education	3.4	5.5
Health, social security and social welfare	1.6	3.1
Culture, sports and entertainment	0.9	0.9
Public administration and social organization	6.6	3.8

Source: *China Labor Statistical Yearbook 2006*.

1.6: Earnings and income distribution

The wages and income of Chinese workers are increasing with China's fast economic growth. In 2005, the employment earnings in urban units was 2062.71 billion yuan; the total wages of staff was 1978.99 billion yuan; the average earning of employment in urban units was 18,200 yuan; and the average wage of staff was 18,364 yuan; increasing by 17.1 per cent, 17.1 per cent, 14.3 per cent and 14.6 per cent from 2004 respectively (see Table 1.15).

Table 1.15: Employment earnings in urban units

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>Increase in 2005 over the previous year (%)</i>
Employment earnings in urban units (billion yuan)	1761.50	2062.71	17.1
State-owned units	1103.82	1229.17	11.4
Collective-owned units	87.62	90.64	3.4
Other ownership units	570.06	742.90	30.3
Total wages of staff (billion yuan)	1690.02	1978.99	17.1
State-owned units	1077.72	1200.92	11.4
Collective-owned units	83.84	86.78	3.5
Other ownership units	528.46	691.28	30.8
Average employment earnings in urban units (yuan)	15,920	18,200	14.3
State-owned units	16,445	18,978	15.4
Collective-owned units	9,723	11,176	14.9
Other ownership units	16,519	18,362	11.2
Average wages of staff (yuan)	16,024	18,364	14.6
State-owned units	16,729	19,313	15.4
Collective-owned units	9,814	11,283	15.0
Other ownership units	16,259	18,244	12.2

Source: *China Labor Statistical Yearbook 2006*.

China does not have gender-based data in its wages statistics. However, we can see from its 2005 earnings statistics by sector that women are mostly employed in the industries in which the average annual income is below 20,000 yuan. These sectors (except health, social security and social service) include agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishing, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, hotels and restaurants, finance, community service and other service industries (see Table 1.16).

Table 1.16: Employment earnings by sector in 2005

Sector	Average earnings (yuan)
Agriculture, forestry animal husbandry and fishing	8,207
Mining	20,449
Manufacturing	15,934
Power generation, production and supply of gas and water	24,750
Building industry	14,112
Transportation, warehousing and postal industry	20,911
Information transmission, computer service and software	38,799
Wholesale and retail trades	15,256
Hotels and restaurants	13,876
Finance	29,229
Real estate	20,253
Leasing and business service industry	21,233
Scientific research, technical service and geological prospecting	27,155
Water conservation, environmental protection and public facilities management	14,322
Community service and other service industries	15,747
Education	18,259
Health, social security and social welfare	20,808
Culture, sports and entertainment	22,670
Public administration and social organization	20,234
National total	18,200

Source: *China Labor Statistical Yearbook 2006*.

1.7: Poverty in China

Since the reform and opening-up policy was adopted, China has insisted on poverty reduction through government leadership, social participation, self-reliance and comprehensive development, and the number of poor in rural areas has been decreasing. The *Report on China's Poverty Alleviation and Development* shows that, by the end of 2006, the number of poor people in rural China had dropped from 250 million in 1978 to 21.48 million, and the incidence of poverty had dropped from 30.7 per cent to 2.3 per cent (see Table 1.17). The number of people with a low income had decreased from 62.13 million in 2000 to 35.50 million in 2006, and the percentage of low-income people among the rural population had decreased from 6.7 per cent to 3.7 per cent. In 2006, the per capita net income of farmers in the major counties of state poverty reduction programme was 1,928 yuan (Office of Poverty Reduction and Development of the State Council, 2007). Relevant documents show that China is currently a country that has reduced half of its poor population ahead of time according to the United Nations Millennium Development Goal.

Table 1.17: Conditions of poverty in rural areas

Year	Poverty line (yuan/person)	Poor population (million)	Incidence of poverty (%)
1978	100	250	30.7
1984	200	128	15.1
1985	206	125	14.8
1986	213	131	15.5
1987	227	122	14.3
1988	236	96	11.1
1989	259	102	11.6
1990	300	85	9.4
1991	304	94	10.4
1992	317	80	8.8
1994	440	70	7.7
1995	530	65.4	7.1
1997	640	49.62	5.4
1998	635	42.10	4.6
1999	625	34.12	3.7
2000	625	32.09	3.5
2001	630	29.27	3.2
2002	627	28.20	3.0
2003	637	29	3.1
2004	668	26.10	2.8
2005	683	23.65	2.5
2006	693	21.48	2.3

Note: The incidence of poverty, also called the proportion of poor population, means the proportion of people below the poverty line in the total population.

Source: *China Statistical Abstract 2007*.

Meanwhile, China still faces many challenges in its development of poverty reduction:

- (1) The size of the poor population is enormous and the degree of poverty is still serious. In the rural areas of China, there are still 21.48 million extremely poor people who have not solved the basic problem of enough food and clothing. The number of people who have solved the problem of food and clothing but still have a low income at a low level of development is 35.50 million. The two items put together, the total number is 56.98 million, accounting for 6 per cent of the total rural population. In the western region of China, it is even higher: 13.7 per cent.
- (2) Development in the poor areas still lags behind.
- (3) The factors that lead to poverty are increasing. China still has a very difficult task to eliminate poverty and needs long painstaking efforts achieve this (Fan Xiaojian, 2007).

Currently China does not have gender-based statistical data about its poor population.

1.8: The situation of social security

Along with the establishment and improvement of the socialist market economic system, China has gradually built up the basic framework of a social security system that matches the market economic system, for which the central government and the local governments are responsible separately. China's social security system includes social insurance, social welfare, social assistance and housing guarantee. Social insurance is the core of the social security system, which includes old-age pension insurance,

unemployment insurance, medical insurance, work-related injury insurance and childbirth insurance.

The coverage of social insurance is expanding. In 2006, the number of people who participated in urban staff basic old-age pension insurance, urban staff unemployment insurance, medical insurance, work-related injury insurance and childbirth insurance was 187.66 million, 111.87 million, 157.32 million, 102.68 million and 64.59 million respectively, with an absolute growth of 12.79 million, 5.39 million, 19.49 million, 17.90 million and 10.51 million from the previous year, and a growth rate of 7.31 per cent, 5.06 per cent, 14.14 per cent, 21.11 per cent and 19.43 per cent respectively (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2007). Except for rural old-age pension insurance, the number of people covered by other insurances has more or less increased (Table 1.18).

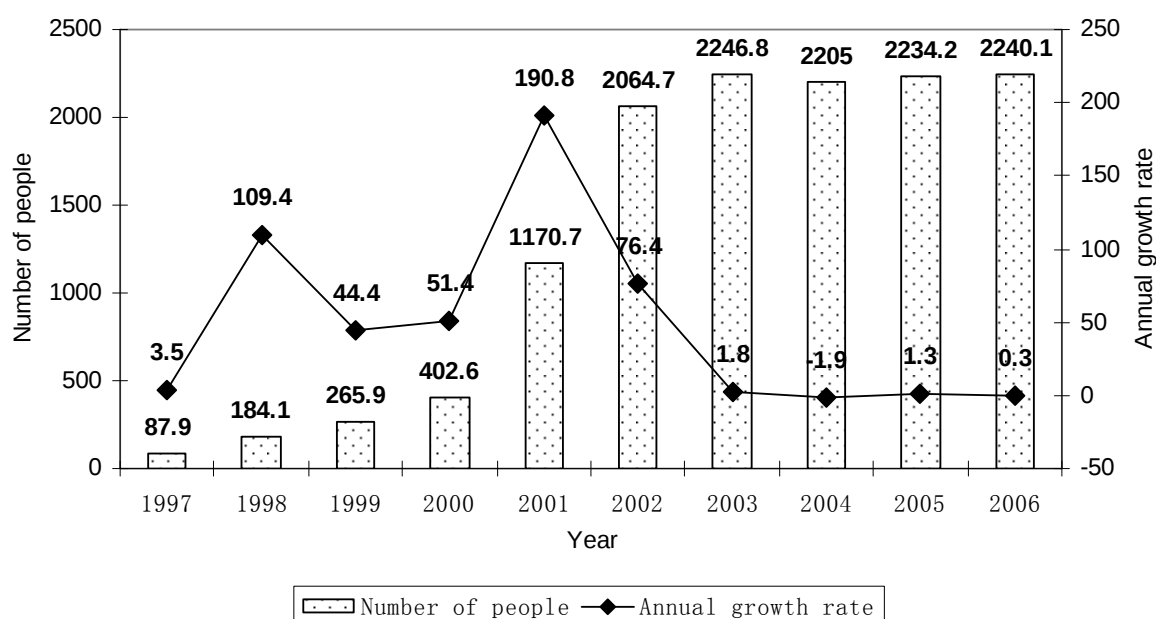
Table 1.18: Contributors of social insurances, 2002-2006 (unit: million)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Urban pension insurance	147.36	155.06	163.53	174.87	187.66
Rural pension insurance	54.62	54.28	53.78	54.42	53.74
Unemployment insurance	101.82	103.73	105.84	106.48	111.87
Medical insurance	94.00	109.02	124.04	137.83	157.32
Work injury insurance	44.06	45.75	68.45	84.78	102.68
Maternity insurance	34.88	36.55	43.84	54.08	64.59

Source: *Statistical Bulletin on Labor and Social Security Development, 2002-2006*.

Build and improve the urban and rural minimum living standard security system. In terms of urban minimum living standard, the number of beneficiaries has increased significantly: 4,026,000 in 2000; 11,707,000 in 2001; 20,647,000 in 2002; 22,468,000 in 2003; 22,050,000 in 2004; 22,342,000 in 2005; and 22,401,000 in 2006 (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2007), basically achieving the goal of “guarantee for all who need guarantee” (Figure 1.5). By the end of 2006, 10,297,000 households, or 22,401,000 urban people, had enjoyed the minimum living standard. The whole year’s total financial expenditure on minimum living guarantee was 22.42 billion yuan, increasing by 16.8 per cent over the previous year. The monthly per capita fund for urban minimum living standard was 83.6 yuan, increasing by 15.6 per cent over the previous year; and the monthly per capita payment rate for minimum living standard was 169.6 yuan, increasing by 8.7 per cent over the previous year (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2007).

Figure 1.5: Urban minimum standard of living (unit: 10,000 persons)



Source: *Statistical Report on Development of Civil Affairs, 2006*.

The rural minimum living standard system has been carried out on a full scale. By the end of 2006, 23 provinces in China had established the rural minimum living standard system, and 2,133 counties (cities) had started the work of guaranteeing rural minimum living standard. 15,931,000 people, or 7,772,000 households, had enjoyed the rural minimum living standard, increasing by 93.1 per cent and 91.4 per cent respectively over the previous year (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2007).

However, China still faces some problems in its basic social security.

1. Small coverage and low level of social security, making it difficult to adapt to the growing demands of urban and rural people.
2. The management system of the basic social security has not been straightened out.
3. The social security fund is generally arranged at a low level, the capacity of resisting risks is weak, and the function of adjusting funds is weak (Zhang Lei, 2007).

1.9: The changing work modes and informal employment

China's economic reform and high-speed economic growth have brought changes to its employment patterns and work modes. Ever since the early 1980s, great changes have taken place in employment in China, and the flexible ways of employment have started to rise and maintain a growth momentum. The changes of the industrial structure and the rise of knowledge economy have provided the space of development for variable and flexible ways of employment. Flexible employment is different from the traditional mainstream in such aspects as working time, income, workplaces, insurance welfare and labour relations. The types of flexible employment and the areas covered by it are very wide, including not only high-level freelancers, such as lawyers, writers, translators and service agents, but also ordinary workers, such as part-time workers, seasonal workers, labour contractors,

labour dispatchers and household hourly workers. Flexible employment also has such characteristics as diversified forms, poor quality, low demand, low degree of organization and lack of social protection. The flexibly employed people make up the major part of informal employment in China.

For lack of statistical data, we cannot accurately measure the actual size of informal employment in China. However, judging from the statistics, in addition to people involved in self-employed and private sectors, it should also include the working people after the formally employed people (including traditional formal sectors and newly emerging formal sectors), people involved in other units and self-employed people are deducted from the total number of urban employment. Informal workers are mostly composed of off-farm migrant workers in cities, some laid-off urban workers, re-employed workers and other flexibly employed people. Scholars have made an estimate by using the differential method and the summary method, and the results are shown below (see Table 1.19). Regarding the percentage of women in informal employment, some researchers think that women account for the majority, but we have not seen any national statistical data in this regard.

Table 1.19: Size of urban informal employment in China

<i>Year</i>	<i>Employed people in informal sectors</i>
1997	53,917,920
1998	74,036,260
1999	83,982,260
2000	95,042,550
2001	111,678,900
2002	120,282,800
2003	128,054,000
2004	136,011,800

Source: Yao Yu, 2007.

1.10: Labour force mobility

In population mobility, the percentages of the two sexes tend to equalize. According to a sample survey of 1 per cent of the national population conducted in 2005, the number of people who changed the current residence place and the registered place of permanent residence and who had been mobile for over six months was 147.35 million at the end of 2005, accounting for 11.28 per cent of the national total population, that is, nearly 150 million people. People in the labour force aged between 15 and 59 were the principal proportion of the mobile population (approximating 120 million), and nearly 90 million of them were young and middle-aged people aged 16 to 40 years old. Among the migratory or mobile people, men account for 51 per cent and women 49 per cent, basically equal (Cui Hongyan, 2006).

Among the migratory labour force, the percentage of women is slightly lower than that of men. Though the number of migratory people between the two sexes has a tendency to balance, there are some differences in the reasons for their migration. In 1990, the primary factor for women to migrate was marriage, and the primary factor for men was labour and business trade. By 2000, the primary factor for both men and women to migrate was labour and business trade, which shows that the percentage of migratory women for business trade and the number of women labourers have increased. However, in economic activities such as training, job transfer, and personnel distribution and recruitment, the percentage of women is still lower than that of men; and in subordinate elements (such as relocation due to marriage, migration together with head of household, and living with relatives and friends), the percentage of women is higher than that of men (see Table 1.20). Therefore, though the percentage of women in the migration of the labour force has

increased, it is still lower than that of men. The mobility of the labour force has brought new changes and contradictions to jobs and family care.

Table 1.20: Reasons and gender composition of migration in 1990 and 2000 (unit: %)

<i>Reasons for migration</i>	<i>Reasons for migration</i>				<i>Gender composition</i>			
	<i>1990</i>		<i>2000</i>		<i>1990</i>		<i>2000</i>	
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Labour and business trade	17.3	31.4	25.3	36.7	30.9	69.1	43.0	57.0
Relocation due to marriage	28.3	2.3	20.4	2.8	91.0	9.0	88.9	11.1
Study and training	10.0	13.9	10.6	12.9	36.9	63.1	47.3	52.7
Job transfer	7.2	15.7	2.6	6.1	27.2	72.8	32.3	67.7
Migration with head of household	14.0	7.5	14.8	10.7	60.3	39.7	60.4	39.6
Living with relatives and friends	12.5	7.7	5.3	4.8	57.0	43.0	54.9	45.1
Personnel distribution and recruitment	3.9	7.7	2.5	3.8	29.1	70.9	41.4	58.6
Moving	--	--	13.3	15.9	--	--	47.8	52.2
Retirement	0.5	2.4	--	--	15.2	84.8	--	--
Other	6.2	11.5	5.2	6.4	30.6	69.4	47.1	52.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	44.8	55.2	52.3	47.7

Source: *China Population Census Documents*, 1990 and 2000.

1.11: Gender discrimination in employment

The Constitution of China clearly stipulates that women have equal rights as men in areas such as politics, economics, culture, society and family life, including labour and social security. This implies that the government has the duty to provide jobs for the citizens and training opportunities for the workers, guarantee labour safety for the workers and provide relief for unemployed people.³ The newly revised Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests stipulates that "the government should take necessary measures to improve and guarantee all the systems for women's rights, and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women".

As China's economic management system and operating mechanism are transferring from a planned economy to a market economy, profound changes have taken place in women's employment and guarantee mechanisms. On the one hand, Chinese women have a high level of employment and have more opportunities for economic independence. At the end of 2004, the number of employed women in urban and rural areas was 337 million, accounting for 44.8 per cent of the total employed population (the international average level of labour participation is 35 per cent); the number of women employed in urban units was 44.27 million, accounting for 38.1 per cent of the total urban employed people (Information Office of the State Council, 2005). On the other hand, the market economy also brings about social division, including gender division, and the labour market's discrimination against women is showing, like the difficulty for women to find jobs, including female college students, especially the in their forties or fifties who have been laid off during the restructuring of enterprises. Sex segregation in jobs and industries is becoming obvious, women's job structure is going down, and informal employment is increasing. The income gap between men and women is widening, and the level of social security for women is lower than that for men. Women retire earlier than men, which affects their job promotion and training, and their economic interests after retirement are damaged. The working conditions and labour protection for migratory women workers are

³ Article 42, Paragraph 2 of the Constitution stipulates that: "It is a duty for the government to create labour conditions, strengthen labour protection and improve labour conditions through all possible means, and on the basis of developing production, increase labour payment and welfare treatment. Also, the government provides necessary job training for pre-employment citizens."

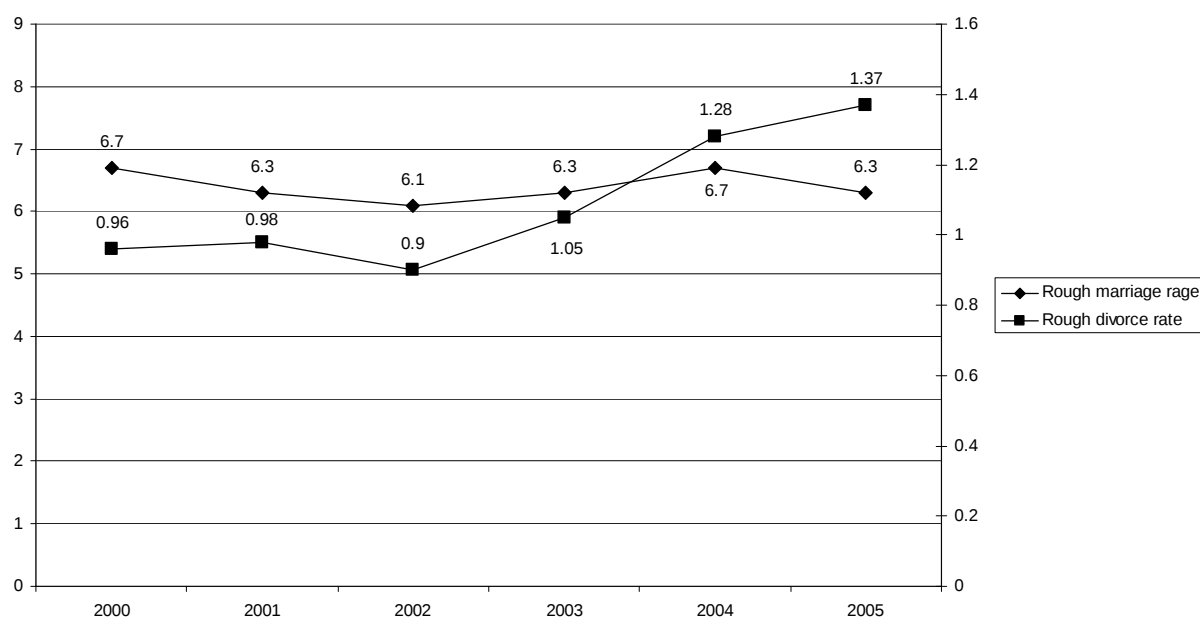
worrisome. There is sexual harassment at workplaces, which has intensified the job pressures and job risks on career women (Xue Ninglan, 2006; Wang Xinyu, 2007; Jiang Yongping, 2001; Liu Bohong, 2007). One of the major reasons why women suffer discrimination in the labour market is the heavy burdens of childbirth and housework.

1.12: Population, marriage status and the ratio of family upbringing

At the end of 2006, the total population of China was 1,314,480,000. The number of people who lived in urban areas was 577.06 million (43.9 per cent), and the number of people who lived in rural areas was 737.42 million (56.1 per cent). The number of males was 677.28 million (51.5 per cent) and the number of females was 637.20 million (48.5 per cent) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). In 2005, the total number of households was 395.19 million, and the number of people in a household was 123.694 million, with 3.13 persons in each household. Compared to the fifth population census in 2000, the population in each household had decreased by 0.31 persons. In urban areas, the population in each household was 2.97 persons, and in rural areas it was 3.27 persons (Population and Employment Department, National Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

With the reform of the society, the accelerated pace of life and the change of people's ideas about marriage, the stability of Chinese marriage and family has changed in recent years. The marriage rate is relatively steady and the divorce rate is slowly rising. The rough divorce rate in 2005 was 1.37%,⁴ increasing by 0.41% from 2000 (see Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6: Rough marriage and divorce rates (unit: %)



Source: China Civil Affairs Statistical Yearbook 2006.

Along with the implementation of the birth control policy, the reduced number of children in a family, the growth of the older population and life expectancy, and the smaller scale of family households, changes are taking place in the composition of families

⁴ Rough divorce rate: the ratio of a particular year's divorced couples in the annual average population, which is normally indicated at a thousandth rate (%).

in China. In 2006, the total dependency ratio of Chinese families was 38.31 per cent, among which the dependency ratio of young children was 27.39 per cent, a decrease of nearly half from 1982; and the dependency ratio of old people was 10.93 per cent, an increase of nearly 3 per cent from 1978 (see Table 1.21).

Table 1.21: Basic information about population

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>
Total population (year-end)	Million	101.654	114.333	126.743	130.756	131.448
Male or female						
Male	Million	523.52	589.04	654.37	673.75	677.28
Female	Million	493.02	554.29	613.06	633.81	637.20
Urban or rural						
Urban	Million	214.80	301.95	459.06	562.12	577.06
Rural	Million	801.74	841.38	808.37	745.44	737.42
Agricultural or non-agricultural						
Agricultural	Million	833.20	904.46	942.44	896.28	891.62
Non-agricultural	Million	183.34	238.87	324.99	411.28	422.86
Proportion of population						
Male or female						
Male	Per cent	51.5	51.5	51.6	51.5	51.5
Female	Per cent	48.5	48.5	48.4	48.5	48.5
Urban or rural						
Urban	Per cent	21.2	26.4	36.2	43.0	43.9
Rural	Per cent	78.9	73.6	63.8	57.0	56.1
Birth rate	Per thousand	22.28	21.06	14.03	12.40	12.09
Mortality rate	Per thousand	6.60	6.67	6.45	6.51	6.81
Natural growth rate	Per thousand	15.68	14.39	7.58	5.89	5.28
Population by age groups						
0-14	Per cent	33.6	27.7	22.9	20.3	19.8
15-64	Per cent	61.5	66.7	70.1	72.0	72.3
65 and older	Per cent	4.9	5.6	7.0	7.7	7.9
Total dependency ratio	Per cent	62.60	49.93	42.66	38.88	38.31
Young children	Per cent	54.63	41.53	32.67	28.19	27.39
Old people	Per cent	7.97	8.40	9.99	10.69	10.93
Infant mortality rate	Per thousand	37.61*	32.89	28.38	24.28	
Average life expectancy	Years old	67.77*	68.55	71.40	72.95	

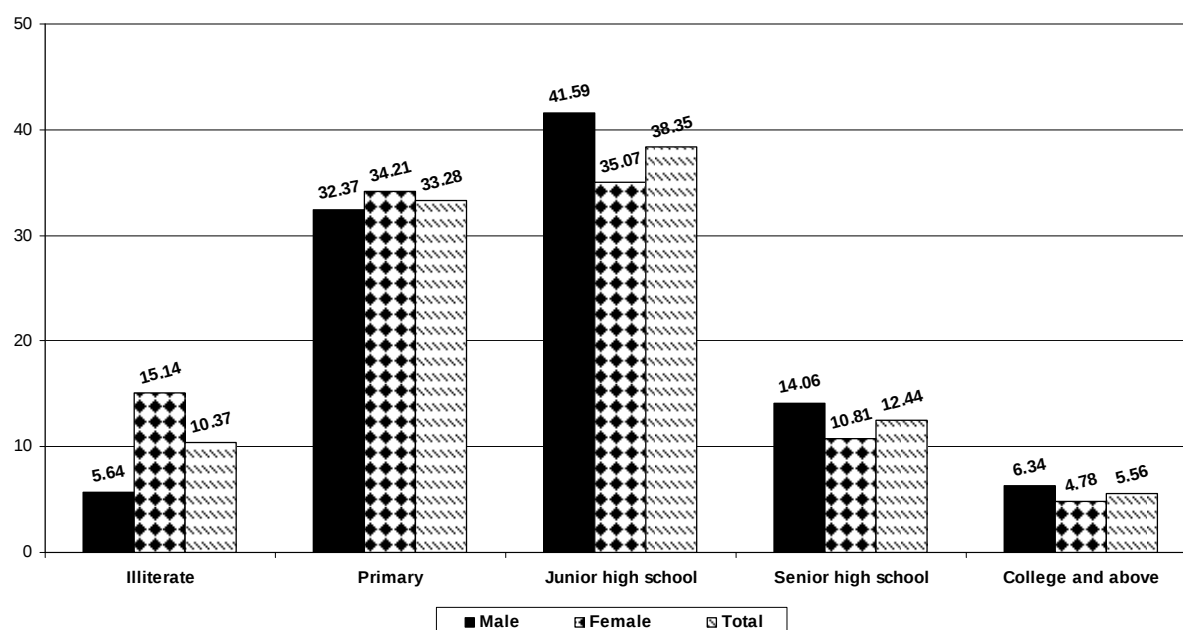
Note: Figures marked by an * refer to 1981.

Source: *China Statistical Abstract 2007*.

1.13: Educational level and child labour

During the tenth Five-year Plan, the educational level of Chinese people continued to rise. In 2005, as many as 67.64 million people had college-level education or above, 150.83 million people had a senior high school level and 467.35 million people had a junior high school level, increasing by 48 per cent, 6.9 per cent and 8.7 per cent from 2000. The number of people who had only a primary school education level was 407.06 million, decreasing by 9.9 per cent from 2000. In 2004, the average time of education for people aged 6 and above was eight years, which was 1.3 school years more than that in 1995. The average time of education for men was 8.5 school years, and for women it was 7.5 school years, one year less than that for men. This shows that women still have some distance from men in their years of education (see Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7: Degree of education for people aged 6 and above in 2005 (%)



Source: China Statistical Yearbook 2006.

China is now changing from a major nation in population to a major nation in human resources. The gross enrolment rate of students for higher education is 21 per cent, and the number of students at and above college level is nearing 70 million. The Ministry of Education sets a clear goal in its tenth Five-year Plan: by 2010, China shall make the nine-year compulsory education universal, the gross enrolment rate of students at senior high school shall approach 80 per cent and that of higher education shall approach approximately 25 per cent (Social, Science and Technology Department, National Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

1.13.1: Compulsory education

China has started to universalize the nine-year compulsory education. By the end of 2005, the national coverage of compulsory education had exceeded 95 per cent, increasing by nearly 10 per cent from 2000. In 2005, the net enrolment rate of school-aged children at primary school was about 99 per cent, with boys and girls accounting for 99.16 per cent and 99.14 per cent respectively. Compared with the situation in 2000, the gap was narrowed down. The gross enrolment rate of students at junior high school increased from 88.6 per cent in 2000 to 95.0 per cent in 2005, achieving ahead of time the goal set by the national *Program of Action for Child Development in China (2001-2010)*.

1.13.2: Senior high school education

In 2005, the gross enrolment rate of students at senior high school was 52.7 per cent, increasing by nearly 10 per cent from 2000 (42.8 per cent in 2000). The number of senior high school students was 24.09 million, with 12.08 million more than in 2000, more than a double increase, yet still unable to meet the goal of 80 per cent set by the national *Program of Action for Child Development in China (2001-2010)* (Social, Science and Technology Department, National Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

1.13.3: Higher education

During the tenth Five-year Plan, the number of students at institutions of higher education increased significantly. In 2005, the number of students was 15.618 million, 2.8 times that of 2000. The number of female students was 7.353 million, increasing by 6.1 per cent, from 41.0 per cent in 2000 to 47.1 per cent in 2005 (Social, Science and Technology Department, National Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

1.13.4: Pre-school education

Pre-school education has further developed and the degree of popularization has increased year by year. In 2005, the gross enrolment rate of pre-school education was 41.4 per cent, increasing by 5.5 per cent from 2001. At present, the large- and medium-sized cities are basically able to meet the needs of school-aged children, and the percentage of rural children who have received pre-school education is increasing year by year (Social, Science and Technology Department, National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). In China, nursery schools and kindergartens belong to the pre-school education system.

1.13.5: Child labour

The Chinese government has ratified the ILO's Convention on Minimum Age for Employment and Convention on Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour. In Chinese laws and regulations (such as the Labor Law, the Law on Protection of Minors and Regulation for Prohibiting the Use of Child Labor), it is clearly stated that child labour is prohibited. The Labor Law stipulates: "No organization is allowed to recruit minors under age 16". The Regulation for Prohibiting the Use of Child Labor bans any government department, social group, enterprise, public institution, non-governmental organization and private business from recruiting child labourers; bans any organization and individual from finding jobs for minors under age 16; and parents or other guardians are not allowed to use children under age 16 as labourers. The Regulation will impose fines on organizations and individuals that use or introduce child labour, suspend business licenses in serious cases and ascertain criminal responsibility for those who have violated the criminal laws.

However, along with fast economic development and intense social change, the phenomenon of child labour has become a real and unavoidable problem in Chinese society. There are no accurate figures on child labour in the relevant data released by the government. Not many studies touch on the conditions, features and reasons, principles and countermeasures of child labour in China. Studies show that the conditions for the survival and development of child labour are very bad, and the basic rights of survival, right of development and right of being protected of children are not ensured. Through a comprehensive analysis of Chinese children (such as the number of migratory children, the drop-out rate of children from school and the number of children who receive assistance from Project Hope), researchers estimate that the number of urban child labourers in China is about 2 to 3 million (Lu Shizhen, 2007). There is an enormous demand for child labour in the Chinese labour market and an enormous supply of potential child labour. Apart from poverty, the reasons for child labour chiefly come from the unreasonable education system (Chinese Labor, 2006), and also family care is associated with the incidence of child labour. In recent years, the central government and local governments have adopted a series of measures to eliminate child labour, such as ratifying international conventions, improving national legislation and establishing labour inspection, but without achieving a marked effect: child labour in China, both illegal employment and the potential supply of child labourers, is continuing to deteriorate. It has become an urgent task for the government to adjust the policy approach quickly and take all possible means to eliminate the phenomenon of child labour.

Part 2: Family trends and work-family conflict

Along with the social transition and economic transformation, China has seen changes in both population and family structure, with family responsibilities increasing and work-family conflict becoming more obvious. This chapter will describe the changing trends of population and family, and will focus on analyzing the relations between these trends and work-family conflict.

2.1: Trends in the family and family responsibilities

2.1.1: Legal and cultural context

(1) Definitions of family responsibility in national laws and policies

Chinese civil law does not give a clear definition of family, yet there are provisions about family relations, rights and obligations (including family responsibilities), which mainly consist of the following three aspects:

- **Both the man and the woman share family responsibility.** At present, China has basically formed a series of laws and regulations based on the 2004 Constitution of the People's Republic of China (hereafter the Constitution), stipulating that both the man and the woman have an equal status in the family and both have the obligation of bearing family responsibility. Article 49 of the Constitution states clearly that “the parents have the obligation to rear and educate minor children, and adult children have the obligation to support and assist the parents”.
- **Both the man and the woman in a family have the right to equal employment and a woman should not be ruled out of the labour market because of family responsibility.** All the laws and regulations, which are based on the Constitution, stipulate that a woman should have an equal right to employment as a man.⁵ Meanwhile, the Chinese government has specifically enacted some laws and policies to guarantee women's special needs “during menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding”, and has clearly stated that a woman worker should not be dismissed or receive lower wages during the special physiological periods, and in particular, should not be ruled out of the labour market for the reason of childbirth.⁶
- **Recognize the contributions of family members in the sharing of household labour.** The Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China (2001) (hereafter the Marriage Law) and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Women's Rights and Interests (2005) clearly define family relations, as well as the rights and obligations between family members. In principle, they recognize

⁵ Article 13 of the Labor Law (1995) clearly stipulates: “Women and men enjoy equal right to employment. In recruiting staff, women shall not be refused, nor shall the criteria for recruiting women staff be raised based on excuse of sex to take any job or position except those not suitable for women as ruled by the state”.

⁶ Article 27, Chapter 4, of the Law on Protection of Women's Rights and Interests (2005) stipulates: “No employer (unit) shall dismiss a woman worker, cut a woman worker's pay or cancel the labor (employment) contract or service agreement unilaterally on the excuse of marriage, pregnancy, birth leave or breastfeeding”.

family members' justifiability in participating in economic labour and their contributions in household labour. Article 40 of the Marriage Law says: "If the property is to be owned by each party during the marriage as to the written agreement between the two parties, he or she can ask the other party for compensation in the case of divorce and the other party should give the compensations if one party performs more duties for bringing up the young, looking after the old and assisting the other side in the work".

China adheres to the principle of equality between men and women and the principle of recognizing the family care-giver's contributions in laws and regulations concerning family responsibility, but lacks specific family-support policies and measures.

(2) Regulations about family roles

Since the People's Republic of China was founded, tremendous changes have taken place in Chinese society, and unprecedented changes in the family structure: a transition from the traditional family of the agricultural society, which is characterized by blood kin, father-son axis and male supremacy, to the modern family of the industrial society, which is characterized by marriage, husband-wife axis and gender equality (Ding Wen, 2001). The urban-rural dual system has also existed in China. These factors make family members take on many different roles in the social and family division of labour in such aspects as gender, place, generation and class.

Firstly, the gender division of labour in the Chinese family is shifting from the traditional type to the egalitarian type. The traditional gender division of labour is that the "man is in charge of external affairs and woman is in charge of internal affairs" (the man plays the role of a bread-winner in the family and the woman plays the role of a care-giver). Since China was founded, especially since the reform and opening-up policy of 1979, the traditional family gender division of labour has gradually shifted to an egalitarian gender division of labour.

Secondly, male and female members of a family jointly participate in social production activities, and thus it has changed the traditional gender division of labour. The government set "equality between men and women" as the guideline and the basic principle for women's employment, and encouraged urban women to participate equally in social production activities, thus making the employment rate of Chinese urban women higher than the world average. Through policy intervention, the government has changed the gender division of labour, changed women's social identity and people's role expectation of women, and restructured gender relations in China, especially in the urban areas (Jiang Yongping, 2001).

Thirdly, the pattern that household labour is shared by men and women in the family but mostly done by women has not been changed substantially. While women began to participate in social production activities, men also began to share household labour, especially in the urban areas. However, the physiological difference between men and women and the traditional idea of gender still limit women to their family roles: expectation of the role as a mother makes a woman devote more time and energy to giving birth to healthy babies; expectation of the role as a care-giving wife makes her have to look after the young, the old and the husband; expectation of the role as a housewife makes her provide the conditions of a decent life for all family members in conjunction with her social role, and thus, a woman actually bears the dual burden of work and family while she participates in social development.

Fourthly, the development of the socialist market economy poses a new challenge to gender division of labour in China. At the age of the planned economy, most of the dual role burdens borne by Chinese urban career women were "digested" by the government in

the form of public welfare policies and public services implemented by each “work unit”, and had support from other members of the family. After the economic system was transformed, these public services were transferred to the market and the family. When public services provided by the market are not able to meet the needs of family care, the heavy responsibility of family care falls on a woman member of a family; when a woman bears the dual burden to participate in the competition of the labour market, discrimination against women arises in the labour market; when public services are not able to meet the workers’ increasing demand for family-care service and when the labour market rejects women, the traditional idea of “man in charge of external affairs and woman in charge of internal affairs” makes a comeback and becomes a “rational” choice for most family members.⁷ In present-day China, the gender division of labour is facing a new and severe challenge from the market economy.

2.1.2: Demographic trends

Since the reform and opening-up policy of 1979, the development of the population and family in China has shown such features as ageing, significant increase of migratory population, postponed age of first marriage and first childbirth, decline in the birth rate and smaller family size.

(1) Population ageing

The Development of China's Undertakings for the Aged, a white paper released by the Information Office of the State Council, showed that by the end of 2005 the number of old people aged 60 and older was approximately 144 million, accounting for 11 per cent of the total population in China, and the number of old people 65 and older exceeded, for the first time, 100 million, accounting for 7.7 per cent of the total population. At present, the older population in China is increasing at an annual rate of about 3 per cent. According to the international common criterion, the age structure of the Chinese population has begun to enter the ageing stage (State Council Information Office, 2006).⁸ In 2006, older women exceeded men by 4.64 million, and 50 to 70 per cent were aged 80 and older (Office of China National Committee on Ageing, 2006).

Economic development and the improvement of medical and health conditions have increased life expectancy. A sample survey of 1 per cent of the Chinese population conducted in 2005 shows that the life expectancy was 72.95 years (75.25 for women, which is 4.42 years older than that of men). Compared with the fourth population census in 1990, life expectancy has increased by 4.45 years, with a higher growth rate for women than for men (Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). However, increased life expectancy does not equate with a healthy life and the ability of older people to take care of themselves.

The ageing of the population and an increased life expectancy make the old-age caring ratio increase yearly by nearly 3 per cent, up to 10.93 per cent in 2006 from 7.97 per cent in 1982. In other words, it means a higher number of old people needing to be taken care of in the family, a longer time to be spent on care and more difficulty in providing the care.

⁷ The debates on “women back to home” and “phased employment for women” after adoption of the reform and opening up policy truly reflect the situation.

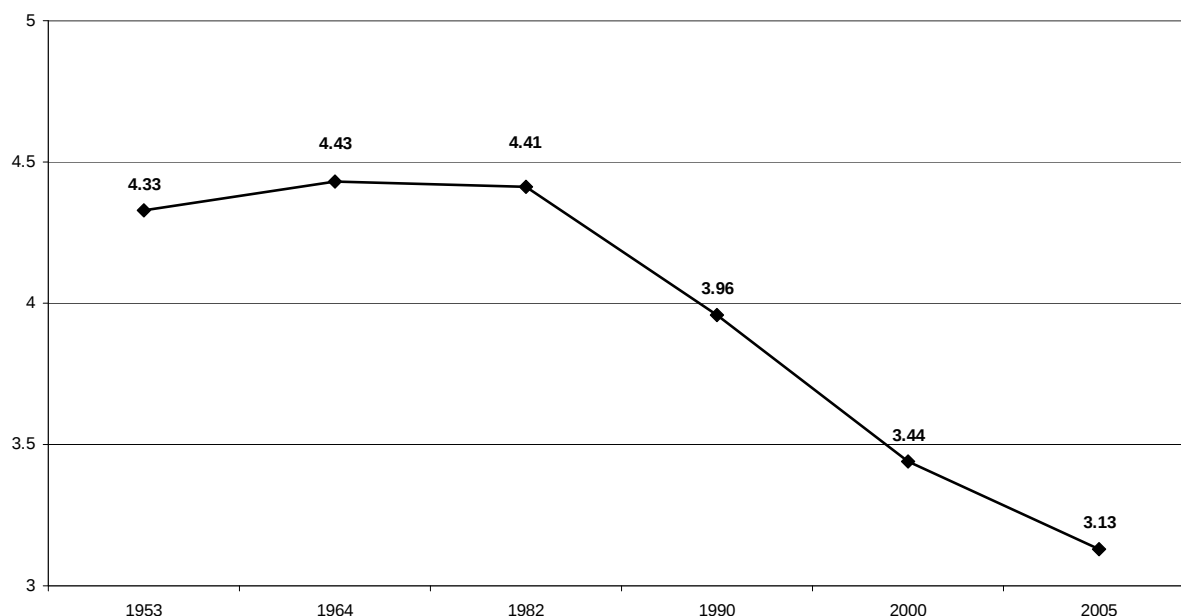
⁸ According to the common international definition, a country or region that has a 10 per cent population aged 60 or older among the total population, or 7 per cent aged 65 or older, is an ageing country or region.

(2) Smaller family size and diversified family modes

Smaller family size

Since the 1980s, the average number of family members in China has been decreasing from 4.41 persons in 1982 to 3.13 persons in 2005, with 1.28 persons decreased in each household (see Figure. 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Household size shown by national population census (unit: person/household)



Source: *China Statistical Yearbook 2006*.

The diminishing family size, on the one hand, has eased the burden of bringing up children or looking after old people, and on the other hand, it has reduced the extended family's support in providing the care.

*Diversified family modes*⁹

Families are becoming more diversified, with the predominance of the nuclear family, and the co-existence of the lineal family, compound family, single-person family and

⁹ Lineal family includes four types: (1) two-generation lineal family means one nuclear family in the senior generation living with a nuclear family(ies) in the younger generation (e.g. a couple living with their son and daughter-in-law); (2) three-generation lineal family means one nuclear family in the senior generation living with a nuclear family and children in the younger generation (e.g. a couple living with their son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren); (3) four-generation lineal family means a couple living with their grandparents, son and daughter-in-law and grandchildren; (4) cross-generation lineal family means grandparents living with grandchildren, where the couple is absent.

A compound family means one nuclear family in the senior generation living with two or more nuclear families and children in the younger generation (e.g. a couple living with two or more sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren).

A broken family consists of two or more brothers and sisters, possibly with some other family members, but where the parents are absent.

broken family. In particular, families such as the dink family (family made up of a couple without children), single-parent family (family made up of a father or a mother with unmarried children), empty-nest family (family made up of old people who do not live together with children) and single-person family (family made up of unmarried, divorced or widowed adult people) are increasing. Also, the diversification of family modes is shown in that there are increasing co-habitation families, and people who do not want to get married and do not want to have a child.

The nuclear family is always a predominant type (73.8 per cent in 1982 and 68.15 per cent in 2000). Since the 1990s, the percentage of nuclear families with one couple has increased by 7.44 per cent, from 5.49 per cent in 1990 to 12.93 per cent in 2000. The total number of cross-generation lineal families (grandparents living with grandchildren) is not big, but it has the highest growth rate, with a three-fold increase from 0.66 per cent in 1990 to 2.09 per cent in 2000 (Zeng Yi and Li Wei, 1992; Wang Yuesheng, 2006). The cross-generation lineal family is mostly found in areas where large numbers of farmers migrate to other places to find odd jobs, with stay-at-home children and stay-at-home old people being the major members of such families.

Table 2.1: Household types by national population census (%)

		1982	1990	2000
Nuclear family	Couple	4.78	5.49	12.93
	Couple and children	52.89	57.81	47.25
	Father or mother with children	14.31	9.5	6.35
	Expanded	---	---	1.62
	Subtotal	71.98	73.8	68.15
Lineal family	Two-generation lineal	---	---	2.37
	Three-generation lineal	16.63	16.65	16.63
	Four-generation lineal	0.52	0.59	0.64
	Cross-generation lineal	0.66	0.66	2.09
	Subtotal	17.81	17.9	21.73
Compound family	Two-generation compound	0.11	0.09	0.13
	Three-generation compound	0.88	1.06	0.44
	Subtotal	0.99	1.015	0.57
Single-person family		7.97	6.32	8.57
Broken family		---	---	0.73
Others		1.02	0.81	0.26
Total		100	100	100

Source: The 1982 data are from *The collection of National Population Census in 1982* (China Statistics Press, 1985), pp. 476-477. The 1990 data are from Zeng Yi and Li Wei: "Current situation, regional difference and changing tendency of Chinese family structure", in *Chinese Population Science*, No. 1, 1992. The 2000 data are from Wang Yuesheng: "Analysis of the changes of family structure in contemporary China", in *China Social Sciences*, No. 1, 2006.

(3) The trend of rural-urban migration and its effect on families

The trend of rural-urban migration

Before 1979, population migration from rural areas to urban areas in China was realized mainly in planned ways, such as job recruitment, soldier recruitment and student admission, with very limited opportunity for migration. After the reform and opening-up policy was introduced, population migration spread and the scope of migration became wider. At the beginning, it was dominated by rural enterprises which absorbed the rural labour force, a mode of transferring employment which allowed farmers to "leave land without having to leave home". In the 1990s, there emerged a large-scaled cross-regional migration and the number of migratory labourers rose. Sample survey results annually conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics show that, in 1980, the number of rural floating labourers was 20 million, and it passed the 50 million mark in 1990. By 2006, it had reached 130 million, accounting for 26 per cent of the total rural labour force (Sheng Laiyun, 2007), and the migration of the whole family accounted for 20 per cent

(Department of Rural Social and Economic Survey, National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). In terms of gender, men remain the predominant. In 2004, a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the ratio of men and women was 2:1 (Sheng Laiyun, 2007).

The impact of urban-rural migration on families

Urban-rural migration has both a positive effect and a negative effect on families. The positive effect is mainly shown in the increase of income; the improvement of the standard of living; the broadened mind of family members, which means a likely increase of opportunity; and meanwhile, migration will produce more or less effect on the change of traditional ideas among family members. However, migration also has negative effects on family care and development.

Impact on children. After a labourer moves, children either stay at home to live with grandparents or other relatives and become stay-at-home children, or live together with the parents at the workplace and become migratory children.

For stay-at-home children, the absence of one or both parents to educate and instruct them is, to a considerable degree, unfavourable for their growth. On the one hand, for the lack of loving care, these children tend to be mentally unhealthy, or relatively unsociable, or rather naughty; and on the other hand, the guardianship from grandparents or other relatives, and the lack of education are unfavorable for their growth, for instance, spoiling children, etc.

For migratory children, education is another problem. Though laws and policies provide the right to education for migratory children, the restriction of the permanent residence system and economic conditions make it rather difficult for migratory children to enjoy compulsory education of the same quality as the local urban children; they are either disqualified to go to public schools or unable to pay the expensive sponsorship fee, which is a heavy burden for migratory labourers. Despite the privately run schools for the children of migratory labourers, there is no guarantee concerning teaching facilities, educational quality, and even the students' personal safety (Li Chenggui, 2007).

Impact on stay-at-home old people. After a labourer moves away for work, old people generally stay at home. Migration has three major impacts on rural old people: (1) old people have to do a lot of work, including agricultural production, daily housework and care for grandchildren; (2) along with the change of modern family structure, the popularization of modern education and the betterment of the younger generation's economic income, old people are losing their patriarchal status; and (3) there are more and more empty-nest households with only old people, and their mental consolation is a serious problem. Their children move to strange places to work, the family structure has a tendency to become smaller, and the number of empty-nest or widowed old people is increasing. Meanwhile, old people find fewer friends to communicate with, and some old people who are physically handicapped can only stay at home leading a lonely life (Yu Xianya, 2005).

Impact on matrimonial relationship and family stability. After the husband goes to another place to work, the wife either stays at home or goes along with the husband. The impact of migration on two types of family is different.

After the husband goes away, the stay-at-home wife alone bears the family responsibility and duty that formerly should have been shared with the husband, including household labour, the children's education, providing for the aged, social intercourse and agricultural labour. Meanwhile, because the husband and the wife live in separate places

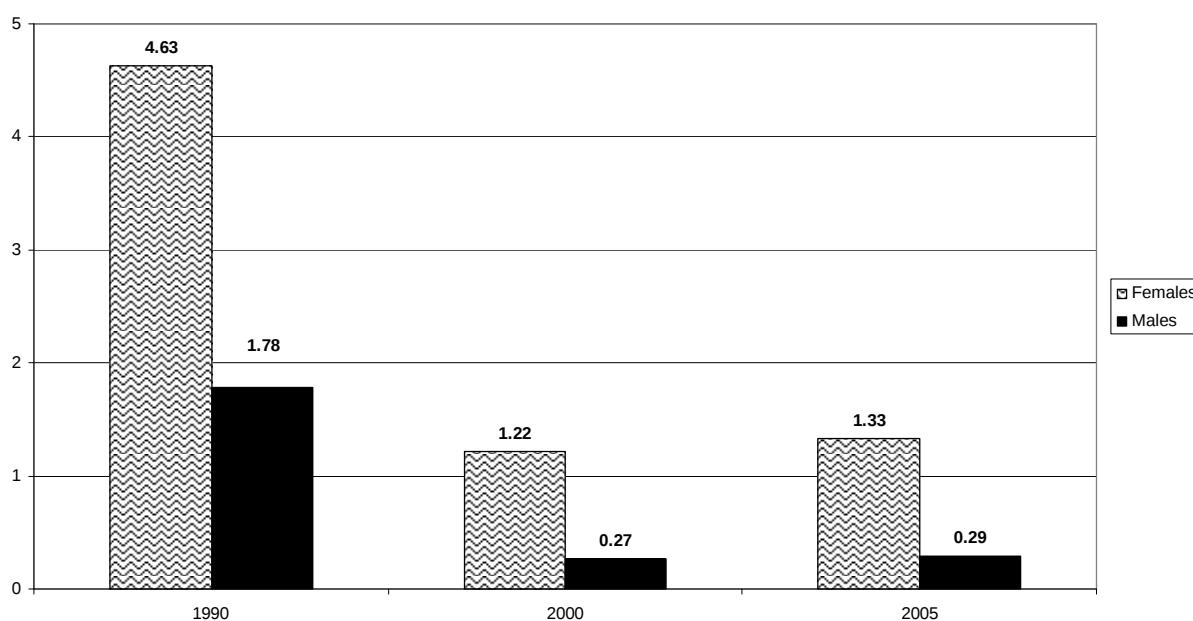
for a long time, their love is affected and the rate of divorce in rural areas is rising (Yu Xianya, 2005).

Women who migrate to urban areas with their husband have to do paid jobs with a heavy workload, long hours of work and low employment guarantee in order to increase the family's income; and meanwhile, they have to do a lot of household labour, taking care of children and providing support for old people who stay at home. Once a family member falls ill, the burden becomes heavier.

(4) Postponed age of first marriage and first childbirth, fall of birth rate, and emergence of people who do not want to have a child

Along with the progress of society, the development of the economy, the migration of the population and the change of people's ideas of marriage, the average age of first marriage and first childbirth is generally postponed, and the rate of early marriage has dropped significantly.¹⁰ A sample survey of 1 per cent of the national population conducted in 2005 shows that the rate of early marriage for people aged 15-19 was 0.8 per cent, 75 per cent less than in 1990. It dropped by 71.3 per cent for women and 83.4 per cent for men (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Early marriage rate of people aged 15-19 in 1990, 2000 and 2005 (unit: %)

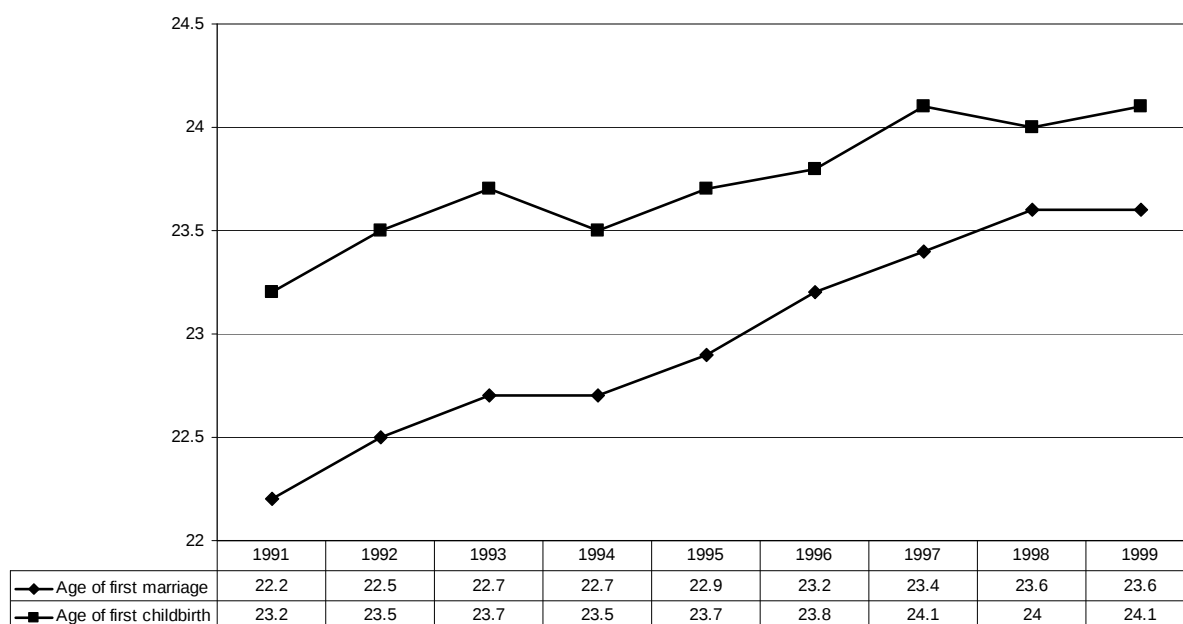


Source: data from the population census of 1990 and 2000, and data from the sample survey of 1 per cent of the national population in 2005.

Since the 1990s, the average age of Chinese women at first marriage has been on a steady rise. Between 1991 and 1999, the average age of first marriage rose from 22.23 to 23.62, increasing by 1.4 years (National Bureau of Statistics, 2001). Meanwhile, the average age of first childbirth was also postponed, from 23.2 in 1991 to 24.1 in 1999 (see Figure 2.3) (Guo Weiming, 2003).

¹⁰ Rate of early marriage refers to the ratio of the population aged 15 to 19 having a spouse in the total population of the same age.

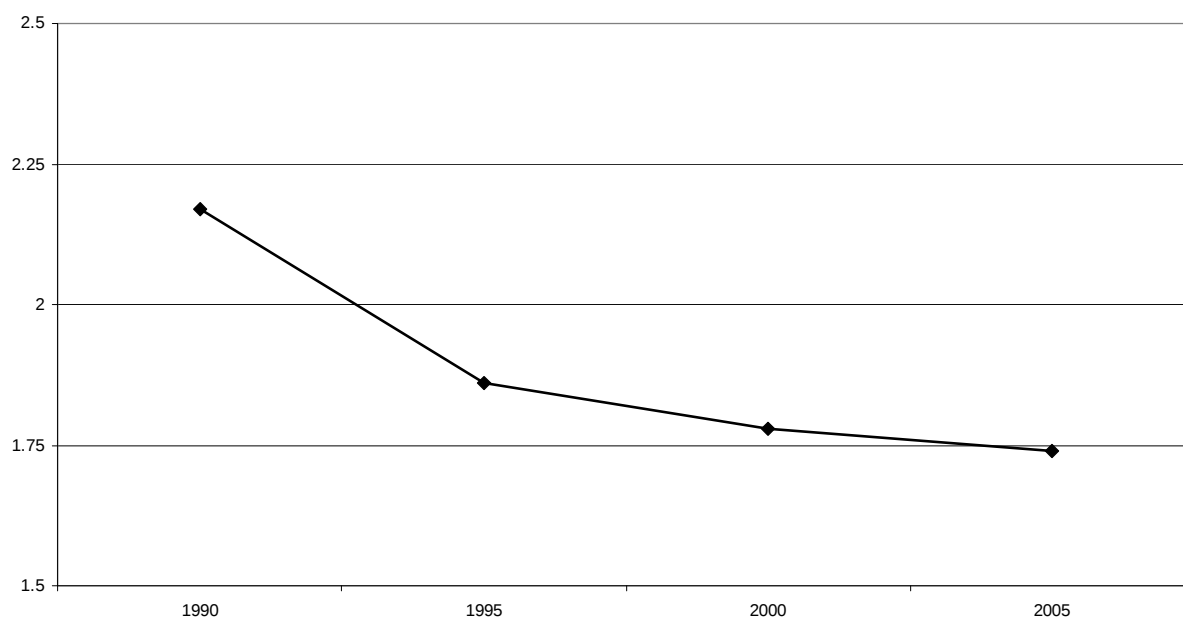
Figure 2.3: Women's average age of first marriage and first childbirth (unit: year)



Source: Yearbook of China Population Statistics 2001, and Overall collection of survey data on family planning and reproductive health in China in 2001.

With the implementation of the family planning policy, the overall birthrate of Chinese women has decreased. Population census data show that the overall birthrate in China decreased from 2.17 per cent in 1990 to 1.86 per cent in 1995, and even down to 1.74 per cent in 2005 (see Figure 2.4). In urban areas, the overall birthrate dropped from 3.3 children in 1970 to 1.3 children in 2005; and in rural areas, it dropped from 6.4 children to two children (Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

Figure 2.4: Changes of overall birthrate over the years (unit: %)



Source: National Strategic Research Report on Population Development and China Statistics Yearbook 2006.

In urban areas, many married couples do not want to have a child. A survey conducted by the Horizon Research Consultancy Group in February 2002 shows that there were already 600,000 “dink families” in large and medium-sized cities who did not want to have a child, and nearly 70 per cent of people surveyed believed the number would be larger (Xu Bin, 2005). A survey conducted by the Shanghai Municipal Women’s Federation shows that the number of married but childless “dink families” already accounts for 12.4 per cent of all the families in Shanghai (Xiao Aishu, 2004).

There are many reasons for late marriage and late childbirth, and the choice of not having children. Pressure from work is a major factor. Women of childbearing age often are entangled in the conflict between childbirth and work. A survey of married, childless women shows that when there is only one choice between childbirth and work, 57.2 per cent would rather abandon childbearing temporarily (Chen Daolin and Yao Jian, 2007).

The increase in the age for a first marriage and first childbirth and the decrease of the overall birthrate, and even the willingness not to have children, lead to a decline in the children dependency ratio in the family by nearly half: from 54.63 per cent in 1982 to 27.39 per cent in 2006.

2.1.3: The tradition related to childcare and care of the elderly and recent trends

(1) Childcare

Traditional modes of childcare and feeding

After the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, equality between men and women became the mainstream ideology and legal provision of this socialist country. While mobilizing and organizing women to walk out of home and into the frontline of industrial and agricultural production to participate in paid jobs, the Chinese government made vigorous efforts to develop nursery schools, kindergartens, public service and public welfare through the work units (or enterprises) in urban areas and through the people’s communes (or production brigades) in rural areas, in order to ease the family burden on workers and realize the socialization of household labour.

In the urban areas where conditions permit, organizations – especially government departments, army units, large state-owned enterprises and public institutions – have made vigorous efforts to run all kinds of public welfare and public services. These public services offer a high level of quality and a low-fee system. Despite an excessive number of children, a high ratio of family rearing and short supply of materials in those years, these policies and services have greatly eased the reconciliation between work and family care.

Under this system, the government and each organization provided convenient conditions and appropriate facilities for the care of children. According to policy, a woman had 56 days of maternity leave after childbirth, and the childcare center could admit babies 56 days’ old. This solved a woman’s dilemma between work and childcare after her maternity leave was over. Also, according to policy, periods of time were granted to allow women workers to breastfeed infants in the breastfeeding room in the workplace. Childcare centres and kindergartens offered daycare and full-care services, and the operating hours were usually longer than the mother’s working time. The fee charged for childcare was low, and when the child fell ill, there were special people providing nursing services, so the mother did not need to ask for leave (Jin Yihong, 2005). Some workplaces provided commuter buses and pregnant or childbearing women took the buses free of charge, where

special seats were reserved for pregnant or childbearing women, and mothers could bring their children with them to go to work.¹¹

For families without a nursery school or a kindergarten to rely on, the care of children may have the following options:

- First, the care provided by the wife and other female members of the family, mostly the mother or mother-in-law, is normally the primary choice. Such help is “unconditional”.
- Second, the care provided by the wife and the housemaid. Yet, under the system of the planned economy, only very few economically well-off people would employ a housemaid or other relatives to help look after children. In cases without any help from relatives, and after the nursery school or kindergarten is closed for the end of the day or for vacation, some women workers take their children to the office. Sometimes they would ask a neighbor for help, but this kind of childcare normally is not paid in the form of money (Jin Yihong, 2005).

During the period of the planned economy, mothers generally breastfed children. China has a tradition of breastfeeding by the mother, and since the People’s Republic of China was founded, it has formulated a series of regulations to provide convenient conditions for mothers who are breastfeeding infants. Because of a generally low standard of living and the shortage of alternative products before the 1980s, there were very limited options other than breastfeeding.

In rural areas, especially during the years of the Great Leap Forward, public canteens, nursery schools, kindergartens and old-age nursing homes run by the People’s Commune were most representative of the socialization of household labour. However, the three-year natural calamity that ensued changed the situation of “the socialization of household labour”. Except for a small number of nursery schools and old-age nursing homes which have continued to exist, the rearing of children, the caring for old people, and daily household chores are undertaken at home.

Childcare in rural areas is mainly family care. Because of the common existence of extended families, different family members play a different role in childcare (Rudd, 2004). First, female members of a family are the main providers of childcare. Apart from the mother, the caregivers also include the paternal and maternal grandmothers, and other relatives of the second or third generation, usually with the paternal grandmother as the primary caregiver.¹² Second, elder children look after younger children. Because of early marriage and early childbirth, and because the grandparents are fairly young and still have to work, in some families elder children (especially girls) look after younger brothers or sisters. Third, men participate in childcare occasionally. Apart from family care, the seasonal nursery school during the busy farming time is also very common. Actually, some women of older age are employed to keep an eye on children.

Mothers living in rural areas usually breastfeed their infants. Rural women are more flexible with their worktime and have more convenient conditions for breastfeeding. Also,

¹¹ Based on interview data.

¹² Influenced by the marriage tradition that a woman should live with the husband’s family and the idea of carrying on the family name, caregivers are mainly from the older generation of the children’s fathers.

the rural economy is less developed than urban areas and, particularly in the years of short supply of food resources and an underdeveloped economy, mother's breastmilk was the only source of food for a baby.

Trends in childcare since the start of the reform and opening-up policy

In urban areas, as the planned economy transitioned to the market economy, the public service and public welfare established on the basis of a work unit collapsed rapidly and transferred to market and privatization. Thus, childcare has gradually come to be regarded as a family or personal private matter. Meanwhile, the introduction of the Western ideas of childcare and the implementation of the one-child policy make young people pay more attention to the quality of childcare. With the change in social ideas and lifestyles, and the estrangement of neighbourhood relations in the urban areas, there is less and less support from people who are not related (Jin Yihong, 2005). The modes of childcare are changing and facing more and more problems and challenges.

The market-orientation of nursery schools and kindergartens creates many problems. First, the high fees: the sponsorship fee, the education fee and the interest class fee have become three new expensive fees created by nursery schools (Wang Qian and Luo Hualin, 2007).¹³ The high fees limit the accessibility to affordable and high-quality childcare services for families of middle- and low-income levels. Second is the limitability of service. Most of the early education service institutions in the market are education-oriented rather than care-oriented, unable to meet the demand for daily care of young children. Third, opening hours of childcare services are not compatible with the working hours of parents. Nursery schools and kindergartens open too late and close too early in most cases. The pure pursuit for economic profits leads to an uneven development of childcare institutions. The imperfect legal system and the lack of effective supervision make the quality and safety of childcare services worrisome. This not only limits the family's choice of childcare institutions, but also increases the family's cost of caregiving.

In the areas where nursery schools and kindergartens are unavailable, a household service provider (housemaid) becomes a choice for childcare. However, under the market-oriented conditions, the high fees, insecurity and short supply of household service limits the possibility of choosing a housemaid to provide childcare. Thus, a family, especially the female members in a family (including old women), become the main providers of childcare. In the cases where there is no help from old people, the choice can only be made between the husband and the wife. Normally, it is the wife who abandons a paid job, temporarily or permanently leaving the labour market and becoming a housewife.

Since the reform and opening-up policy, the percentage of mothers who breastfeed has dropped abruptly in China, particularly so in urban areas. A survey conducted in 1990 shows that breastfeeding in urban areas has dropped from 80 per cent in the 1950s and 1960s to 30 per cent, with the lowest rate in Beijing, which is 10.4 per cent.

In order to curb the falling tendency in mothers breastfeeding infants, the Chinese government has taken various measures to advocate and promote breastfeeding. Since the 1990s, the percentage of mothers who breastfeed in urban areas has increased. A survey conducted in 2005 shows that mothers who breastfeed in urban areas is 67 per cent for the

¹³ The sponsorship fee is paid by parents when infants are enrolled in kindergartens on a supposedly voluntary basis, but in reality is mandatory. The education fee is the cost for day-to-day expenses, such as the cost of teaching equipment. The interest class fee comprises costs such as literacy classes, painting classes, English classes, chess and *go* classes, abacus classes and dance classes. All these fees are paid for children attending kindergarten.

first four months and 60.8 per cent for the first six months (Ministry of Health, 2005). However, this does not reach the goal of 80 per cent for the year 2000 as required by the National Program of Action for Child Development in China in the 1990s and is a long way from the goal of “85 per cent for babies 0-6 months old in the year 2010” as proposed by the National Program of Action for Child Development in China (2001-2010).

The main reasons for this situation are the commercialization of the breastmilk substitutes, and the conflicts between urban women’s work and breastfeeding. A survey conducted by the China Consumers’ Association shows that 32.3 per cent of people think that “short maternity leave or busy with work” is the reason for being unable to breastfeed for six months (China Consumers’ Association, 2007). The four-month paid maternity leave system currently practiced in China is not in line with the Strategy for Feeding of Babies and Infants, which recommends breastfeeding infants for the first six months. The pressure of work affects the quality of a mother’s breastmilk. Too much pressure is liable to cause insufficient breastmilk, making it difficult to continue breastfeeding.

In rural areas, though educational institutions for young children have developed considerably since the reform and opening-up policy, family care remains the predominant mode of childcare. As large numbers of labourers go to work in other places, the responsibility for the care of stay-at-home children falls on the stay-at-home family members (mostly wives and old people), and the percentage of cross-generation upbringing increases. This has produced a bad effect on the healthy growth of children and increased the burden of stay-at-home old people, especially female old people.

A survey shows that 33.1 per cent of migratory children aged 0 to 6 are cared for by the mother who does not work, 24.5 per cent by nursery schools or kindergartens, 22 per cent by the mother who has to work, 15.7 per cent by other family members, 1.7 per cent by hired help, and 1.1 per cent without any people to give care. The poorer the family’s economic conditions, the higher the percentage of working mothers, stay-at-home mothers and without any people to give care (Zou Hong, Qu Zhiyong and Zhang Qiuling, 2004). This proves that most of the floating children, limited by economic conditions, are not able to go to the formal pre-school educational institutions, and they are mostly cared for by women. This greatly limits the opportunity for women to have paid jobs.

More mothers breastfeed in rural areas than in urban areas; however, the percentage of floating women labourers who breastfeed is far below the average level of rural areas. One survey shows that the percentage of rural migratory women with infants under 6 months of age who breastfeed is only 61 per cent, and for rural women in other occupations the rate is 91 per cent. The percentage of migratory women with babies 6 to 11 months old who breastfeed drops abruptly to 9.9 per cent, far below the rate in other rural areas (74 per cent) (Wei Ping, 2006).

(2) Care of the elderly

Traditional modes of elder care

In rural areas, the family providing for the aged is the dominant mode in the traditional society. After 1948, an informal old-age security system was practiced in rural China, with land and family at the core, and supplemented by community and government relief. Children and relatives were the main providers of economic support and daily care of old people, with the son mainly in charge of the family’s economic income and the daughter-in-law in charge of the daily care. The daughter bears less duty in the care of her parents.

For those old people who did not receive family care, the government introduced the “five guarantee” policy¹⁴ in 1956 when the People’s Commune was just established, and ran pilot nursing homes for the aged to meet the basic living needs of old, weak, childless, widowed and disabled people.¹⁵ Personnel were hired to care for those old people who had difficulties in managing their own life (Song Shiyun, 2007).

In urban areas, state-owned enterprises and public institutions provide welfare based on the work unit. These include the retirement old-age pension system and the medical security system established on the basis of the work unit during the period of the planned economy, as well as centralized housing and the supporting facilities around the work unit, such as hospital, activity centre for old people, etc. These systems guaranteed old people’s medical expenses and provided mental consolation and exchange of feelings. The labour protection medicare system for family dependents can be used to partially settle the medical expenses of a worker’s direct relatives, which eases the economic burden of family providing for the aged.

In terms of daily care, family is still an important resource, especially for urban old people who do not belong to any work unit. The care-giver for the aged is no longer just the son and the daughter-in-law; the daughter is also a care-giver. Children who live together with old people often take on more care duties.

The trend in elder care since the reform and opening-up policy

Since the practice of the reform and opening-up policy, many factors have had an effect on caring for old people.

Firstly, the family providing for the aged remains the dominant mode, but it faces the insufficiency of economic supply and the inadequacy of daily care.

In urban areas, the family provides for the aged, but the burden is heavy, especially for a one-child family. A survey conducted in Beijing shows that 72.9 per cent of families have old people to take care of, and 72.1 per cent think caring for old people has affected their work, and things will be worse if an old person falls ill and needs to be hospitalized for a long time. As an only child’s parents become older, more old people need to be taken care of and the burden on the only child will be heavier (Wang Shuxin and Zhao Zhiwei, 2007). Meanwhile, for both only-child families and large families, only about one-third live together with parents (Feng Xiaotian, 2006). This form of separate living will increase the children’s burden of caring for old people, and thus raising the cost of care.

In rural areas, the family providing for the aged faces economic pressures. Though the government has formulated the rural old-age security system and the minimum living standard system, most of the rural old people remain involved in the traditional mode. Unlike before the reform, they depend economically on the children’s family financial

¹⁴ In January 1956, Article 31 of the National (Draft) Outline for Agricultural Development 1956-1967, proposed by the Political Bureau and discussed by the Supreme Meeting of the State Councils, stipulates: “Agricultural co-ops should make proper arrangement for the widowed, solitude farmers and disabled demobilized soldiers within the co-op who have no labourer, no income, making sure that they are guaranteed food, clothes, fuel, education (for children) and funeral arrangements”. Such a security system was called “five guarantee system”, and those families and people who enjoy such welfare were called “family under the five guarantee system” or “target people under the five guarantee system”.

¹⁵ There are two forms of nursing care in China: (1) separate nursing care for old people living in their own homes, and (2) centralized nursing for old people living in nursing homes.

condition and willingness to provide care, hence the phenomenon of “rotational caring” (caring for old people in turns) (Wang Dongmei, 2007). There are disputes arising between old people and their children over the duty of caring (Zhao Xiaoqiu, 2004). Rural old people are in a dilemma in which they can neither rely on the government or the organization, nor can they rely on their own children, thus in a poor and helpless state.

Secondly, empty-nest old people take care of themselves mutually.

The fifth national population census in 2000 shows that 22.83 per cent of families with old people aged 65 and older are empty-nest families, and old people living in empty-nest families account for 26.5 per cent of all old people aged 65 and older. Also, 71.58 per cent of empty-nest families are found in rural areas, which is higher than that in urban areas (27 per cent) (State Council Population Census Office, 2002).

In rural areas, empty-nest old people do not completely rely on their children economically. Many rural empty-nest old people continue to do farm work to feed themselves as long as they are capable of physical labour. Though the income of migratory labour is higher than the income from agriculture, migratory children usually give very limited economic support to their old parents, and some even ask their parents for support, especially those who entrust their own children to old parents (Gong Wenjun, 2007). In daily care and mental consolation, empty-nest old people, especially in the absence of their children, can only care for each other.

In township areas, old-age pensions and pensions for guaranteeing a minimum living standard are the main economic sources of empty-nest old people, and their children share part of the medical expenses. In daily care and mental consolation, the spouse is the main undertaker. If economic conditions permit, some empty-nest families will spend money buying services, for instance, employing a housemaid or an hourly odd-jobber. A survey conducted in Xuzhou of Jiangsu Province shows that as many as 80.2 per cent of old people with a spouse think that it is the spouse who should offer the direct help, and only 15.3 per cent of old people employed a housemaid or an hourly odd-jobber, who normally only does housework and does not provide nursing care for a patient. Besides, there are problems such as unreasonable collection of fees, unavailable services and lack of confidence (Li Aiqin, 2007).

However, in terms of gender in both urban and rural areas, old men and women have a striking difference in their opportunity to enjoy care from the spouse, usually with men enjoying more care than women. First, the triple roles of an old woman who has to take care of her spouse, her children and herself make her more often act as a caregiver rather than a caretaker (Liu Shuhe, 1994). Second, an old man usually has an old woman to accompany him and take care of him until the end of his life, which is determined by biological genes and cultural tradition. The re-marriage rate of old men is far higher than that of old women (Ma Jin, 1998), which means an old man can continue to enjoy care from a spouse after his former wife dies. Third, cultural restrictions make it difficult for an old woman to remarry and gain help from a new partner. Furthermore, the cumulative discrimination in the labour market makes it difficult for an old woman to enjoy the old-age pension and medical security. Providing care for them means increasing the economic burden on the children’s family. Also, old women usually have a low educational level, so they find it difficult to communicate with their children’s family members. Therefore, in the most urgent need for care, old people are mostly liable to fall into a lonely or poor situation (Liu Bohong, 2003).

Third, the care of sick old people is mainly the charge of family members.

Two surveys conducted by the Ministry of Health in 1998 and 2003 show that the average rate of old people aged 65 and older suffering from illness has increased by 44.2

per cent, and in rural areas it has increased by 60 per cent (Yao Yuan, 2007). Some disease-afflicted old people, especially those who have completely or partially lost the ability to manage their own daily lives, need long-term nursing and professional nursing. Surveys show that, between 2000 and 2006, the percentage of urban and rural old people who needed care and nursing in daily life rose from 6.6 per cent to 9.8 per cent (it rose from 8 per cent to 9.3 per cent in urban areas and from 6.2 per cent to 9.9 per cent in rural areas). Both the family and society feel an obviously heavier responsibility for caring for disabled old people (Office of China National Committee on Aging, 2007).

In urban areas, the basic medical insurance system and the medical assistance system implemented by the government have more or less alleviated the pressures of medical expenses, but it is still difficult to meet the demand for nursing services. It is almost impossible for jobless old people without incomes or with low incomes to enjoy such a guarantee.

For ill old people who have good economic conditions (those who have high income and savings, or their children have high incomes), their family members can choose institutional caring (nursing home for the aged) or community residential caring (old people live at home and special people are employed to take care of them), or when an old person is ill and hospitalized, a nursing worker may be hired to provide care. However, old-age institutions charge very high fees, and most old people cannot afford to live in such institutions. In Beijing, the average fee for hiring a nursing worker in 2007 was 1,500 yuan per month, or 18,000 yuan per year.¹⁶ To live in an old-age institution with complete nursing services, an old person has to spend all his old-age pension and savings (Zhang Yan and Zhao Huaxia, 2007).

In cases where market services are unattainable, old people have to rely on the care from family members, which increases the economic burden on families. Firstly, with increased life expectancy, the younger generation taking care of old parents has reached or approached retirement age, hence the phenomenon of “old people taking care of older people”. Secondly, in only-child families or small families, the younger generations are unable to devote all their time and energy to caring for older parents, thus very liable to fall into the difficult situation of “leading from one illness to another” and “return to illness after illness”. Thirdly, the traditional idea about gender-based division of labour that “man in charge of external affairs and woman in charge of internal affairs” continues to exist in caring for sick old people.

The caring for sick old people in rural areas is more serious than in urban areas. The third national health service survey conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2003 shows that 79.1 per cent of rural people do not have any medical insurance and they basically spend their own money to see the doctor (Yao Yuan, 2007). The health condition of disease-afflicted old people, to a considerable degree, depends on the economic condition of their children’s family or how much money they have set aside. In terms of daily care, family members are the main caregivers. A survey conducted in Hubei Province shows that, when contracting a major illness, 46.5 per cent of rural old people rely on their spouse for the nursing service, 31.9 per cent rely on their children living at home, 9.3 per cent rely on their children who have returned home from migratory labour, and 9.8 per cent rely on themselves with no outside care (Luo Fang and Peng Daiyan, 2007).

Therefore, during the social transition, providing for the aged faces many challenges, and providing public services for the aged has become an urgent issue.

¹⁶ Based on interview data.

2.1.4: Family work and domestic tasks

(1) Roles and tasks of different family members

In China, every family member of working age normally participates in activities to earn income and in unpaid housework and caring for family members. Influenced by the idea that “man in charge of external affairs and woman in charge of internal affairs” and the urban-rural dual system, Chinese women and men in urban and rural areas play different roles in the economy, society and family life. This section will give an analysis based on the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics in *Pilot Survey Report on the Use of Time in 2005 in China* (Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, 2006).¹⁷

Chinese women and men in both urban and rural areas participate in economic activities and unpaid household work

On both workdays and non-workdays, women spend nearly nine hours working every day, 22 minutes longer than men. As for rural women, the longest working time can be as much as ten hours. Urban men spend the least time on work, only seven hours. This proves that most women have to bear the dual burden of economic activities and family life, and bear more social and family responsibilities.

Chinese women and men in both urban and rural areas participate widely in economic activities

In terms of the participation in economic activities and working time, there is a large difference between urban and rural areas, with the rate of rural people higher than that of urban people. For rural people, the rate of participation is 86 per cent and for urban people it is 62 per cent. Farmers spend 2:47 hours more than urban people on economic activities every day.

In terms of gender difference, 85 per cent of rural women and 88 per cent of rural men participate in production activities, with a small difference of just 3 per cent between men and women; in urban areas, there is a difference of 14 per cent. In terms of working time, there is a difference of 1:30 hours between men and women in urban areas; in rural areas, the difference is 57 minutes. This shows that rural women participate widely in production activities for the family, with a small difference from men. It can be said that rural women are the mainstay force in agricultural production in present-day China (see Table 2.2).

¹⁷ The pilot survey covers 13,778 people in 4,290 households in 16 districts or counties of eight cities and regions of Zhejiang and Yunnan Provinces.

Table 2.2: Working time and participation rate in the system of national accounts economic activities, per day, per person

Per day	Working time per person			Participation rate (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	6:31	7:08	5:53	76	80	71
Urban	4:59	5:44	4:13	62	69	55
Rural	7:46	8:13	7:16	86	88	85
Working day	7:14	7:53	6:33	82	87	78
Urban	5:53	6:42	5:04	72	79	65
Rural	8:19	8:47	7:48	91	93	88
Rest day	4:45	5:16	4:11	59	62	55
Urban	2:42	3:18	2:06	38	44	32
Rural	6:23	6:48	5:56	76	77	75

Source: Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics: *Pilot survey report on the use of time in China in 2005* (Beijing, 2006).

Chinese women and men in both urban and rural areas participate in unpaid household work

In both urban and rural areas, 85 per cent of women do household chores or take care of family members every day; 59 per cent of urban men and 47 per cent of rural men participate in unpaid work. The average time that women spend on household chores is 2:57 hours, with over three hours for urban women and 2:44 hours for rural women, both more than double the time that urban men and rural men spend on household work.

In terms of gender in both urban and rural areas, women are always the main undertakers of unpaid work, the only difference being that urban women do more household work than rural women, and that urban men are more willing to share in household work on weekends than rural men.

Compared with the two surveys of Chinese women's social status conducted in 1990 and 2000, the average time that women spent on household work has decreased, especially for rural women. However, the basic fact that women bear more burdens remains unchanged. The time that women spend on household work is 2.7 hours more than men, only six minutes less than in 1990 (see Table 2.3) (Tao Chunfang and Jiang Yongping, 1993; Jiang Yongping, 2006).

Table 2.3: Working time and participation rate in unpaid housework, per day, per person

Per day	Working time per person			Participation rate (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Total	2:02	1:10	2:57	68	52	85
Urban	2:17	1:22	3:11	72	59	85
Rural	1:50	1:00	2:44	65	47	85
Working day	1:49	0:59	2:41	66	50	84
Urban	2:01	1:09	2:54	70	56	83
Rural	1:39	0:52	2:29	64	45	84
Rest day	2:38	1:40	3:40	73	58	88
Urban	3:00	2:02	3:59	78	67	89
Rural	2:20	1:23	3:23	69	51	88

Source: Department of Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics: *Pilot survey report on the use of time in China in 2005* (Beijing, 2006).

Both men and women participate in unpaid household work

In respect of household work, men do most of the physical labour, then the coaching for the child's schoolwork, and then the shopping. Men spend the least amount of time washing clothes, looking after children, washing dishes and cleaning.

In the most time-consuming daily household chores, such as washing clothes and house cleaning, the contents of chores have increased, the difference between men and women have become wider, and the degree of increased working time for women is larger than that of men.¹⁸ The average working time for women in 2000 increased by 22 minutes per day than in 1990, and for men it only increased by seven minutes per day, with a difference of 54 minutes per day between men and women. Particularly in urban areas, the average working time for women has increased by 55 minutes per day, and for men it only increased by five minutes per day. Thus, the time spent by women on house cleaning does not decrease, but increase.

Urban people have more free time than rural people, and men have more than women

Urban people generally have more free time than rural people, with 1:30 hours more than rural people every day. On non-work days, the difference is even larger, with two hours more than rural people. In terms of gender, men have 39 minutes more of leisure time than women, and on non-work days, the difference is even larger, with one hour more than women. Thus, women cannot rest on non-work days and they have to do large quantities of housework.

Old people and stay-at-home children also have to share the burden of housework

In traditional extended families, old people also have to share the household chores. Old people (especially women) are mainly in charge of cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, house cleaning and looking after children. However, by shopping, tutoring children's homework, buying coal and other physical work, they do less. This has something to do with their economic status, educational level and generation gap. A survey in Shanghai shows that, in as many as 26 to 27 per cent of young people's families, washing clothes, cooking meals and looking after children are mainly done by old people, and mostly done by old women (Xu Anqi, 2005). Rural stay-at-home old people shoulder even heavier household chores. Survey shows that, compared with the situation before their adult children migrate for work, nearly 50 per cent of old people think that their burden of household labour is heavier (Du Peng et al., 2004), especially for old women.

In China, children in most families face learning pressures, particularly in urban areas, where children undertake very little household work at home. In rural areas, however, stay-at-home children have to take on more burdens of household labour because of the absence of their parents and the hardships of their guardians (stay-at-home old people) (Ye Jingzhong et al., 2006).

(2) Access to labour-saving technologies

In urban areas, along with the reduced number of children, as well as the wide use of household appliances such as washing machines, refrigerators and various cooking utensils, the time spent on household work is decreasing. The use of running water and natural gas is increasing markedly, from 48 per cent and 19.1 per cent in 1990 to 91.1 per cent and 82.1 per cent in 2005, respectively, thus reducing the total quantity of heavy physical labour such as buying the coal (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Also, the increase in clean vegetables and semi-processed and semi-finished foodstuffs, the purchase

¹⁸ The two surveys on Chinese women's social status in 1990 and 2000 have slightly different indicators. It was "time for washing clothes" in 1990 and "time for cleaning and washing clothes" in 2000.

of ready-made garments and the employment of hourly odd-jobbers, have more or less alleviated women's burden of traditional household chores (Xu Anqi, 2006).

In rural areas, running water has replaced the necessity of carrying water; mechanized millhouses have replaced the human labour of grinding; and biogas, gas stoves and solar stoves have replaced firewood or cattle manure, thus reducing the total quantity of household labour. The construction of water pipelines and toilets have made running water and sanitary toilets more widely used in rural areas, increasing from 30.7 per cent and 10 per cent in 1990 to 61.3 per cent and 55.3 per cent in 2005, respectively (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). These convenient facilities have saved women time when performing household chores. A survey shows that the use of solar stoves for one year can reduce at least 120 hours of picking up cattle manure for a woman (Zhang Xuemei et al., 2005).

(3) Convenience of business opening hours and services

In the 1980s, the supermarket was not yet popular, the grain shop closed early every day, and restaurants did not have ready-made rice and steamed bread, so it was a difficult thing for a woman to cook a good meal for the whole family. Twenty years later, eating out in a restaurant has become commonplace, especially for young people. With the improvement in living standards and the progress of urbanization, restaurants, supermarkets, chain stores and drug stores are becoming popular in urban areas, with business staying open 24 hours, a rich variety of services, and convenient and flexible service facilities. All this saves time when undertaking household work.

However, these services and facilities are not found in all urban and rural areas; most of them are concentrated in big cities, with very few in the suburbs, let alone the rural areas. Many people find it inconvenient to enjoy these services, and they still have to hurry to supermarkets and marketplaces after they get off work.

2.1.5: Transportation and time spent commuting

Since the 1990s, the urban population has increased, the urban sprawl has expanded, residential houses have moved to the suburbs, and the distance between home and the workplace (or the school) has widened.

With the longer commutes, the increase in economic levels and the change in lifestyles, transport and the ways of travelling for many people are also changing: the percentage of bicycles is dropping significantly and the percentage of cars, especially private cars, is rising quickly. The sharply rising number of cars, the slow development of road construction and public transportation, and the inappropriateness of traffic management cause very serious traffic congestion.

Therefore, people spend more and more time on the way to and from the workplace. A survey shows that about 40 per cent of Beijing residents need to spend one hour or more going to work: 34.30 per cent of people spend 60 to 80 minutes, 6.50 per cent spend 100 minutes, and only 5.5 per cent can reach their workplace within 20 minutes (Yang Kaizhong, 2005). Also, a 2006 survey conducted by the Beijing Municipal Academy of Social Sciences shows that people living in the four districts of downtown Beijing spend 1:21 hours every workday on the way to and from the workplace, spending 32 minutes more than five years ago (Dai Jianzhong, 2008). In order to avoid traffic rush hours, some people have to go to work earlier or get back from work later, thus actually increasing the time of work or outside the home.

People spend more and more time on the road, so they have less and less time at home. Yet, the tasks of family caring and household labour are not reduced; what has been

reduced is leisure time or recreational time. Therefore, the traffic problem has worsened the conflicts between work and family.

2.2: Conclusion on family trends and work-family conflict

Since the practice of the reform and opening-up policy, tremendous changes have taken place in the Chinese population and family, and also changes in family care. This poses new problems and challenges for employees who have family responsibilities.

Firstly, the changing tendency of urban-rural population and family has made the family nursing ratio drop greatly, but it has not eased the responsibility of family care. The ageing of the population and the increase in life expectancy have led to an increase in the nursing ratio of old people in the family. Yet, the decline in the birthrate and the rising number of nuclear families have led to a drop in the ratio of young children in the family, and led to a drop in the family's total rearing ratio. This should have reduced the family burden on people. However, people have changed their ideas of life. They pursue the quality of life and show more concern for family members, especially the only child. Thus, people's family responsibilities, duties and burdens have become even heavier.

Secondly, influenced by the market economy, the responsibility for rearing the young and providing for the aged has a tendency to return to the family. The government, the enterprise and the work unit no longer take the responsibility for family care and public welfare support as they did during the planned economy. The market-orientation of child-caring institutions, old-age institutions and housemaids has made it difficult for middle- and low-income families in most cities to buy services through the market, so the responsibility for family care returns to the family and falls on the wife and an old person, especially an old woman. The labour migration from rural areas makes stay-at-home women and old people bear the dual burdens of farm work and family care. The reform of the market economy has increased the heavy burden on women in both urban and rural areas.

Thirdly, both men and women in urban and rural areas have the dual burdens of paid work and unpaid household labour. Comparatively speaking, men shoulder more responsibility in social production and become the primary bread-earner of the family; while taking on the burden of social production, women in both urban and rural areas have to take more responsibility for unpaid household work and subordinate themselves as the secondary bread-earner. Women, especially rural women, have to do most household chores, and many women have taken more social and family responsibility.

Fourthly, the reform oriented at market and technology, on the one hand, has provided a convenient life for workers who have family responsibilities, while on the other hand, it has brought about many more inconveniences. The convenience of various commercial services, the development of household appliances, and the wide use of clean water and gas has provided conveniences for people's family care and life. However, the reform of urban housing and traffic, obviously, has not alleviated employees' work-family conflicts, thus increasing the difficulty for urban people to commute to and from their workplaces, and also failing to meet the rural migratory labourers' needs to return to their rural homelands.

Fifthly, when women bearing the dual burdens of participating in social development, they have to face three options: caring for their family, devoting time to their career, or taking on the dual responsibility of work and family. In China, only a small number of women choose either to be a housewife or to be a career woman; most women have to bear the dual responsibility of work and family. Yet, what interests an employer is a labourer's

high productivity at work, rather than a labourer's devotion to the family. Therefore, married women are liable to be discriminated against in the labour market. For instance, a new phenomenon has arisen on the labour market in recent years: unmarried women (women college students) are discriminated against because they are viewed as potential childbearers.

Part 3: Working conditions and work-family conflict

Working conditions have an important influence on work-family conflict. Family-friendly working conditions and work environments are conducive to alleviating and eliminating work-family conflict. This section will give an account of the working conditions for workers provided in Chinese laws and collective contracts, as well as their influence on work-family conflict.

3.1: The industrial relations and labour law framework

Regarding the relations between labour and management, China has formulated a series of laws and regulations, based on the Constitution (2004) and dominated by the Labor Law (1995), the Law on Labor Contracts (2008), the Regulation of the State Council on Staff Work Time (1995), and the Regulation of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security on Minimum Wages (2004). These laws and regulations give a specific definition to the working conditions of workers, including their wages, working time, rest periods, holidays, labour protection and social security. There are special regulations with regard to labour protection for women workers: the Regulation on Labor Protection of Women Workers (1988), the Regulations on the Types of Work Unsuitable to Women Workers (1990), the Trial Provisions for Maternity Insurance of Enterprise Workers (1995), as well as the Regulations on Maternity Insurance, which were promulgated by local governments in different years.

3.1.1: Role of collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and trade unions

The Chinese government and trade unions have tried to promote the collective contract in recent years. The contents of collective contracts can be found in the Labor Law, the Law on Labor Contracts and the Regulations on Collective Contracts. Article 33 of the Labor Law provides that “workers can sign a collective contract with the enterprise over matters such as payments, work time, break time, holiday, labor safety and sanitation and insurance benefits. The draft of the collective contract should be submitted to the workers’ congress or general assembly for discussion and adoption”. Article 35 provides that “a collective contract that is legally signed has a binding force to the enterprise and all the workers of the enterprise. The standard for labor conditions and payments in a labor contract signed between individual workers and the enterprise should not be lower than that in a collective contract”.

In 2004, the MOLSS issued *Regulations on Collective Contracts*, which give detailed instructions on the principles and contents of collective consultation; the representatives who participate in collective consultation; the procedures of collective consultation; the signing, alteration, cancellation and termination of a collective contract; the examination of a collective contract; and the coordinating settlement of disputes in collective consultation.

Chapter 5 of the Law on Labor Contracts, which was passed in June 2007, has a special section on “collective contracts”. In addition to the contents in the Labor Law, there is also a special regulation on collective contracts and regional collective contracts. Article 52 stipulates that “enterprise workers can sign special collective contracts with the employer over labor safety and sanitation, protection of women workers’ rights, adjustment of payments, etc.”. Article 53 stipulates that “within the areas below the county level, the trade union and the representative of the enterprise can sign an industrial

collective contract or a regional collective contract for industries such as building, mining and catering service”.

Many laws and regulations have given a clear description on the role of the trade union in signing collective contracts and protecting the lawful rights of workers: the Labor Law, the Trade Union Law, the Law on Labor Contracts and the Regulation on Collective Contracts. Paragraph 2, Article 51 of the Law on Labor Contracts stipulates that “a collective contract is signed by the trade union on behalf of enterprise workers with the employer; as for those employers which have not yet had a trade union, the upper-level trade union shall guide a representative elected by the workers to sign a contract with the employer”. Also, the Trade Union Law clearly defines the trade union’s duties in protecting workers’ rights and interests: “The trade union shall help and guide workers, enterprises and public institutions to sign a labor contract”.

3.1.2: The implementation of relevant laws and collective contracts

Despite the lack of national statistics, surveys conducted by the China Enterprise Confederation (CEC), the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) and other agencies show that significant progress has been achieved in the signing of collective contracts in recent years. However, problems exist, such as a low signing rate and an uneven development between different types of ownership.

According to ACFTU statistics at the end of 2006, enterprises and public institutions all over China had signed 862,000 collective contracts, covering 1,538,000 enterprises and 110 million employees, increasing by 14.3 per cent, 11.6 per cent and 8.3 per cent respectively over the previous year (Chinese Workers’ Movement, 2007).

A special collective contract for protecting women workers’ rights is an important element in the promotion of the collective contract system. On 1 December 2006, the ACFTU promulgated the Opinion about Promoting Special Collective Contracts to Protect Women Workers’ Rights and Interests, in which it proposes that, beginning from 2006, it will try to increase the signing rate of special collective contracts to 80 per cent over the next three years among the organizations which have established trade unions for women workers and which have signed collective contracts.

There are currently two main forms of signing contracts for the protection of women workers’ rights and interests. First, write the clauses about the protection of women workers’ rights and interests into the collective contract as a separate section and as an annex to the collective contract. Second, regard the clauses about the protection of women workers’ rights and interests as a special collective contract and signed simultaneously with a collective contract. A survey of 29 provinces shows that 862,970 enterprises have signed collective contracts and that 81 per cent have incorporated the protection of women workers’ rights into their signed collective contracts; 12.8 per cent of enterprises have independently signed special collective contracts about the protection of women workers’ rights and interests (Department of Women’s Work, ACFTU, 2007).¹⁹

Despite significant progress in the signing of collective contracts and special collective contracts about the protection of women workers’ rights and interests, a fairly large number of labourers have not been covered by laws and collective contracts. In 2007, the ACFTU set goals for the signing of collective contracts: that the collective contract

¹⁹ Provisions concerned with the rights and interests of women workers include equality of treatment in recruitment, promotion, welfare and retirement; and maternity protection.

system shall cover at least 60 per cent of enterprise workers in 2008; and from 2008 to 2012, it will spend five years to ensure that the systems of equal consultation and collective contract will cover all enterprises (People's Net, 2007). This shows that the signing rate of collective contracts is still rather low in China. A survey of over 40 enterprises conducted by the CEC shows that state-owned enterprises and state-reformed enterprises have a high rate of signing collective contracts; joint-funded and foreign-funded enterprises have a low rate of signing collective contracts; privately run enterprises generally do not sign such contracts; and only a small number of privately run large and medium-sized enterprises that operate by law have started in the past few years (Hang Yu, 2007).

In particular, most of the informal employment sectors are still outside the protection of laws and collective contracts; for example, the signing rate of labour contracts among off-farm migratory labourers is rather low. Statistics show that in Wuhan (Hubei Province), the signing rate of labour contracts among 270,000 off-farm migratory labourers engaged in building and decorating, catering, hairdressing, garments and daily consumer goods is less than 20 per cent (Jin Ping, 2007).

3.2: Earnings

3.2.1: Standards for minimum wages

In 2004, the MOLSS promulgated the Regulation on Minimum Wages. Article 5 stipulates that "the standards for minimum wages are normally divided into two forms: monthly minimum wages and hourly minimum wages. The standard for monthly minimum wages is applicable to full-time workers and the standard for hourly minimum wages applicable to odd-time [part-time] workers".

In practice, different provinces have different standards for minimum wages. By the end of November 2006, the lowest standard for monthly minimum wages (270 yuan) was in Jiangxi Province, and the highest (810 yuan) was in Shenzhen. The standard for hourly minimum wages also varies greatly from place to place: the highest (7.9 yuan/hour) was in Beijing, and the lowest (1.85 yuan/hour) was in Heilongjiang Province (MOLSS, 2006).

3.2.2: Actual earnings level

According to the *China Yearbook of Labor Statistics*, the economy has developed fast and staff wages have increased since the 1990s. The average wage increased from 2,711 yuan in 1992 to 12,422 yuan in 2002. The wage rise is unevenly distributed in different sectors. It rises faster in monopolized, newly emerging and hi-tech sectors, such as production and supply industries of electricity, gas and water, transportation, warehousing, post and telecommunications, finance and insurance, real estate, scientific research and integrated technical service industry; it rises slower in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, and catering industry, where the employees' average wage is the lowest (see Table 3.1).²⁰

²⁰ It must be noted that the scope of staff in this table is very narrow, referring to people who work and get paid in state-owned, urban collective, jointly operated, joint-stock, foreign-funded, as well as Hong Kong-, Macau- and Taiwan-funded enterprises or affiliated units. It does not include the following people: (1) people employed in rural enterprises; (2) people employed in privately run enterprises; (3) urban self-employed people; (4) retired and resigned people; (5) retired people who are re-employed; (6) community-paid teachers; (7) foreigners as well as Hong Kong, Macao and

Table 3.1: Average wage by sector from 1987-2002 (unit: yuan)

Year	1987	1992	1997	2002
Total	1,459	2,711	6,470	12,422
Agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery	1,143	1,828	4,311	6,398
Mining industry	1,663	3,209	6,833	11,017
Manufacturing industry	1,418	2,635	5,933	11,001
Production and supply of electricity, gas and water	1,677	3,392	9,649	16,440
Building industry	1,684	3,066	6,655	10,279
Geological prospecting and water conservation	1,768	3,222	7,160	12,303
Transportation, warehousing, post and telecommunications	1,621	3,114	8,600	16,044
Wholesale and retail trades, catering industry	1,270	2,204	4,845	9,398
Finance and insurance industry	1,458	2,829	9,734	19,135
Real estate	1,327	3,106	9,190	15,501
Social service industry	1,085	2,844	7,553	13,499
Health, sports and social welfare	1,446	2,812	7,599	14,795
Education, cultural art, broadcasting, film and television	1,409	2,715	6,759	13,290
Scientific research and integrated technical services	1,620	3,115	9,049	19,113
Government agencies, Party organizations and social bodies	1,468	2,768	6,981	13,975
Others	---	---	6,838	14,215

Source: *China Yearbook of Labor Statistics 2005*.

As staff wages rise, the level of consumption also rises (see Table 3.2). This, to some degree, has offset the positive effect of increased wages on the standard of living. In the beginning years of the reform and opening-up policy, Chinese people had a low wage, but they enjoyed a fairly good social security and welfare, and their expenses on medicine, housing and education were basically paid by the government. In the market economy, however, along with the reform of health care, housing and education, these public services must be bought by each family, which increases their heavy burden.

Taiwan nationals who work in urban areas; (8) other people who are not listed as staff members according to relevant regulations.

Table 3.2: Residents' consumption levels and indexes

Year	Absolute quantity (yuan)			Urban and rural consumption levels (rural people = 1)	Index (previous year = 100)			Index (1978 = 100)		
	All residents	Rural residents	Urban residents		All residents	Rural residents	Urban residents	All national people	Rural residents	Urban residents
1978	184	138	405	2.9	104.1	104.3	103.3	100.0	100.0	100.0
1980	236	178	496	2.8	108.7	108.8	106.3	115.8	115.5	111.9
1985	437	347	802	2.3	113.1	114.1	108.2	181.3	194.4	147.5
1990	803	571	1,686	3.0	103.4	100.3	107.5	221.0	219.5	198.1
1991	896	621	1,925	3.1	108.3	106.7	109.3	239.4	234.2	216.6
1992	1,070	718	2,356	3.3	112.9	109.8	115.4	270.3	257.2	249.9
1993	1,331	855	3,027	3.5	108.1	106.1	108.9	292.2	272.8	272.1
1994	1,746	1,118	3,891	3.5	104.3	104.6	101.7	304.8	285.4	276.7
1995	2,236	1,434	4,874	3.4	107.5	108.2	104.6	327.7	308.7	289.6
1996	2,641	1,768	5,430	3.1	109.1	114.0	102.5	357.5	351.9	296.7
1997	2,834	1,876	5,796	3.1	104.2	103.3	103.5	372.4	363.6	307.0
1998	2,972	1,895	6,217	3.3	105.5	101.8	108.3	393.1	370.2	332.4
1999	3,138	1,927	6,796	3.5	107.9	104.7	111.3	424.2	387.6	370.0
2000	3,397	2,037	7,402	3.6	108.3	104.9	113.1	459.4	406.6	418.5
2001	3,611	2,156	7,761	3.6	105.4	104.4	107.5	484.2	424.6	449.8
2002	3,791	2,259	7,972	3.5	106.1	103.9	107.9	521.1	441.3	485.1
2003	4,089	2,361	8,471	3.6	106.3	102.7	104.9	546.1	460.8	464.0
2004	4,552	2,625	9,105	3.5	107.2	104.7	105.0	585.4	482.5	487.2
2005	5,434	2,608	9,278							

Note: The absolute quantity in this table is gained by calculating the price of the same year, and the index is calculated at the comparable prices. The comparison of urban and rural consumption levels does not rule out the factor of price incomparability between urban and rural areas.

Source: *Facts and figures in China in 2006*, China Net, at www.china.com.cn/ch-06ss/3-18.htm.

3.2.3: Gender difference in income

While income is rising, the gender gap in income is still very obvious and has a tendency to become wider. According to the second survey of Chinese women's social status conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics and the All China Women's Federation (ACWF), employed women's economic income grew significantly from 1990 to 1999, yet the income gap with men was obviously widening. In 1999, urban employed women's annual average income, including all forms of income, was 7,409.7 yuan, about 70.1 per cent of men's income, and the income gap between the two sexes increased by 7.4 per cent from 1990. For women engaged in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, their annual average income in 1999 was 2,368.7 yuan, only 59.6 per cent of men's, and the income gap increased by 19.4 per cent from 1990 (Women's Studies Institute of China, ACWF, 2006).

Gender difference in income is closely associated with the gender-based division of work in the labour market and the gender segregation between sector and occupation. Referring to the average wage level in different industries in 2001, the *China Yearbook of Statistics 2002* arranged 16 sectors in the order of wage level from low to high (four sectors to a category) (see Table 3.3).²¹ As the average wage level rises progressively from

²¹ The first category of sectors includes agriculture, mining, building, trading and catering; the second category includes manufacturing, geological prospecting, water conservation, education, cultural arts, broadcasting, film and television, and the social service industry; the third category includes Party organizations and social groups, health, sports and social welfare, real estate and other industries; and the fourth category includes transportation, warehousing, post and

the first category to the fourth category, the threshold for their entrance and the degree of monopolization rise as well. Studies show that the gap between males and females in sector distribution is very striking. A high percentage of females work in the first, second and third categories and a low percentage of females work in the fourth category. This shows that females are concentrated in the low-income sectors, so their income is lower than males, and even in the same sectors, their income is lower than males (Wang Meiyuan, 2005).

Table 3.3: Sector distribution and hourly wages of male and female workers

	<i>Sector distribution</i>				<i>Hourly wages (yuan)</i>			
	Females		Males		Females		Males	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Average value	Standard difference	Average value	Standard difference
Category 1	402	24.72	472	21.95	4.88	7.98	5.82	8.63
Category 2	711	43.73	868	40.37	4.58	5.32	5.63	4.49
Category 3	281	17.28	299	13.91	5.38	3.71	5.86	4.24
Category 4	232	14.27	511	23.77	6.14	5.85	7.31	7.20
Total	1,626	100.0	2,150	100.0	5.01	5.96	6.24	6.29

Source: Wang Meiyuan: "Gender-based income differences in Chinese urban labor markets", in *Economic Studies*, No. 12, 2005.

3.2.4: The social security system in China and its development

Before the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, China practiced a social security policy in accordance with the planned economic system for many years, providing people with all kinds of social security, including health care, pension and housing, to a maximum degree. The government and the enterprise were mainly responsible for social security. Along with the progress of the reform and opening-up policy, the enterprise has become the main body of the market economy, making social security a heavy burden that affects an enterprise's economic benefits. To adapt to this economic transformation, and to keep pace with the establishment and improvement of the socialist market economic system started since the mid-1980s, China launched a series of reforms to its social security system in the planned economy and reduced the burden on the enterprises. The government, the enterprise and the individual share the cost of social security, and the basic framework of a social security system compatible with the market economic system has now been established.

The social security system in China includes social insurance, social welfare, preferential treatment, social relief and housing guarantee, etc.; social insurance is the core part of the social security system. Social insurance includes pension insurance, unemployment insurance, medical insurance, work injury insurance and maternity insurance.

In recent years, the coverage of social insurance in China has expanded and the degree of guarantee has increased. Yet, there still exists the problem of uneven development in different systems and between different sectors.

Initially, China's basic pension insurance only covered state-owned enterprises and urban collective enterprises and their staff. In 1999, China expanded its basic pension insurance to cover foreign-invested enterprises, urban privately run enterprises, and other urban enterprises and their staff. In 2002, China expanded its basic pension insurance to

telecommunications, production and supply of electricity, gas and water, the finance and insurance industry, scientific research and integrated technical services.

cover informal-employed people in urban areas. Thanks to the constant expansion of coverage, more and more people began to participate in pension insurance. The number of staff participating in pension insurance increased from 104.475 million in 2000 to 141.31 million in 2006, and the number of retired people increased from 33.806 million in 2000 to 46.35 million in 2006.

The number of people participating in medical insurance, maternity insurance and work injury insurance; the number of people receiving insurance money; and the amount of paid insurance money all have witnessed a significant growth (see Table 3.4). The growth rate of people participating in maternity insurance in recent years has remained at about 20 per cent, and the number of people participating in medical insurance and the number of retired people has maintained an annual growth rate of 37 per cent and 36 per cent respectively since 2000.

The number of people participating in unemployment insurance is increasing, whereas the number of people receiving unemployment benefits and the amount of unemployment benefits paid are decreasing (see Table 3.4). At the end of 2006, the number of people participating in unemployment insurance in China was 111.87 million, with an increase of 5.39 million from 2005; the number of people receiving unemployment benefits was 3.27 million, with a decrease of 0.35 million from 2005. This shows that the situation of employment is improving and the rate of unemployment is decreasing in China in recent years.

Table 3.4: Basic information about unemployment, medical, work injury and maternity insurance

Year	Unemployment insurance			Maternity insurance	Basic medical insurance		Work injury insurance	
	Number of people participating (million)	Number of people receiving benefits (million)	Amount paid (million yuan)	Number of people participating (million)	Number of people participating (million)		Number of people participating (million)	Number of people receiving benefits
					Staff	Retired people		
Absolute quantity								
1995	82.380		819.64	15.002	7.026	0.433	26.148	71,000
2000	104.084	1.9	5,619.84	30.016	28.628	9.242	43.503	188,000
2001	103.546	3.12	8,325.63	34.551	54.707	18.152	43.453	187,000
2002	101.816	4.40	11,677.36	34.882	69.258	24.754	44.056	265,000
2003	103.724	4.15	13,344.48	36.554	79.749	29.268	45.748	295,000
2004	105.839	4.19	13,749.83	43.838	90.450	33.592	68.452	519,000
2005	106.48	3.62		54.08	100.22	37.61	84.78	650,000
2006	111.87	3.27		64.59	115.80	41.52	102.68	780,000
Increase over previous year (%)								
2000	4.8	74.3	76.3	2.5	89.7	66.2	9.8	25.0
2001	-0.6	64.2	48.1	15.1	91.1	96.4	-0.1	-0.6
2002	-107	41.0	40.2	1.0	26.6	36.4	1.4	41.7
2003	1.9	-5.7	14.3	4.8	15.1	18.2	3.8	11.3
2004	2.0	1.0	3.0	19.9	13.4	14.8	49.6	75.9
2005	0.6	-13.6		23.4	10.8	12.0	23.9	25
2006	5.1	-9.7		19.4	15.5	10.4	21.1	20

Source: China Yearbook of Labor Statistics 2005 and Public Bulletin of Statistics on Labor and Social Security Development in 2006.

Despite a significant progress in the reform of social security, the problem of uneven development in different regions and among different sectors is still very striking. In terms of sectors, government agencies and public institutions have a high level of social security, whereas enterprises – especially people who are self-employed or work in privately run enterprises – are not well-protected in terms of their rights and interests of social security. Compared with formal sectors, workers in informal sectors have a lower level of social security and have a heavier individual burden of social insurance.

The most uneven development in social security is the difference in the urban-rural dual system. For many years, China's social security system was basically targeted at urban people, and the masses of rural people were ruled out of the coverage of the social security system. In recent years, the government has been giving more and more attention to the issue of social security in rural areas, and is trying to find the proper modes of rural social security. At present, old-age insurance, new co-operative medical care and other forms of social security systems in rural areas are on trial.

Old-age security in rural China is mainly guaranteed by the family. Since the 1990s, a kind of cumulative old-age insurance of personal account has been established in some places by combining with the reality of rural socio-economic development and by following the principle of "paid mainly by the individual, supplemented by the community and policy support provided by the government". At the end of 2003, 1,870 counties (cities or districts) in China had launched old-age insurance work in rural areas in varying degrees: 54.28 million people participated in the insurance, accumulating a fund of 25.9 billion yuan, and 1.98 million farmers receive an old-age pension (State Council Information Office, 2004).

Regarding rural medical security, the Chinese government introduced a new type of rural co-operative medical care in 2002, taking major diseases into overall consideration. It was organized, directed and supported by the government, with farmers participating of their own will. The government, the community and the individuals all contributed to the funds. There are now 310 pilot counties (cities) in 30 provinces. By the end of June 2004, it covered 95.04 million farmers, and the number of participants was 68.99 million (State Council Information Office, 2004).

3.2.5: Gender difference in social security

In terms of laws and policies, gender difference is not found in the content and the standard of social security. However, in practice, because of cumulative discrimination in the labour market, women do not have an equal social security as men.

According to the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics in *Men and Women in Chinese Society 2004*, the coverage of social security for both men and women workers in the urban areas of China is not high. The highest coverage is found in old-age insurance, which is about 60 per cent; in unemployment insurance and work injury insurance, it is approximately 20 per cent. In almost all kinds of insurance, women workers account for a lower percentage than men (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Medical, pension, unemployment and work injury insurance covered by work units (%)

	<i>Medical insurance</i>		<i>Pension insurance</i>		<i>Unemployment insurance</i>		<i>Work injury insurance</i>	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Covered	45.6	54.5	57.1	62.1	22.4	26.3	29.7	40.7
Not covered	52.6	43.6	40.7	35.3	70.3	66.3	62.8	52.6
n/a	1.7	1.9	2.2	2.6	7.3	7.4	7.6	6.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ACWF: *Second survey of Chinese women's social status*.

Gender inequality in social security, on the one hand, is associated with women's major responsibility for family care and, on the other hand, it increases women's burden of housework, and intensifies work-family conflict.

3.3: Working time

3.3.1: Relevant regulations on working time

China enforces the Regulations of the State Council on Staff Work Time, which were formulated by the State Council in 1995. Article 3 says clearly that “a staff member works for 8 hours every day and 40 hours every week”. With regard to overtime work, the Labor Law gives a clear definition of the time, conditions and payments of overtime work. Article 41 of the Labor Law states: “On account of the need for business, the employer can prolong the work time after consulting with the trade union and the laborer, normally no more than one hour in a day; in the case of the need to prolong the work time for special reasons, the employer can prolong the work time no more than 3 hours in a day, or no more than 36 hours in a month, on the condition that the laborer’s health is ensured”. Article 44 states: “In one of the following cases, the employer should pay the laborer a wage higher than that for normal work time according to the following standards: (1) The employer that arranges the laborer to work for a prolonged time shall pay no less than 150% of the normal wage; (2) The employer that arranges the laborer to work on off-duty days and does not change rest shall pay no less than 200% of the normal wage; (3) The employer that arranges the laborer to work on statutory public holidays shall pay no less than 300% of the normal wage”.

3.3.2: Actual hours of work

(1) Average working time

Judging from various statistics and studies, we find that both the actual daily hours of work and the weekly hours of work of Chinese labourers have exceeded the time limits set by the state laws. According to the *China Yearbook of Labor Statistics*, weekly hours of work for urban employed people exceeds 40 hours, and it increased progressively from 2001 to 2004. In 2004, it was 45.5 hours, 5.5 hours more than the time limit set by the state laws (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Weekly hours of work in urban areas (unit: hours per week)

	October 2001	October 2002	November 2003	November 2004
All	44.9	45.2	45.4	45.5
Male	45.2	45.6	45.8	46
Female	44.5	44.7	44.9	44.9

Source: *China Yearbook of Labor Statistics* 2005.

According to a survey conducted by the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, only less than 4 per cent of employed people work less than five days a week: 45 per cent work for five days and 44 per cent work for seven days.²² In Beijing, the average working time in a week for employed people is 5.9 days, which exceeds the time limit set by the state laws (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

In terms of gender, men work for a longer time than women: 48 per cent of men work seven days a week, nearly 10 per cent higher than women. On average, men work for 6.0 days a week and women for 5.8 days. This only means the time spent in their paid jobs. If the time spent on housework is included, women work longer hours than men. A survey of

²² In this context, a day is equal to eight hours. Seven days is the equivalent of 56 hours of work a week. In some cases, workers work over ten hours a day.

working time in China shows that men work for longer hours than women, but if we put together the time spent at a paid job and the time spent for unpaid housework, women work 1.34 hours longer than men every day (Zhang Kai, 2000).

(2) Overtime work

Judging from the average hours of work, which have exceeded the statutory working time, overtime work is common in China. It is found in all sectors and all enterprises. According to an online survey conducted by the Sichuan Online Talent Net, over half of the people surveyed often work overtime: 65.88 per cent work more than eight hours; 63.86 per cent of organizations often resort to overtime; 47.62 per cent work overtime because they are required to do so by their organizations; only 5.95 per cent work overtime voluntarily. In this survey, 27.06 per cent of respondents were from state-owned enterprises, 11.76 per cent from public institutions, 49.41 per cent from privately run/ non-state enterprises, and 11.76 per cent from foreign-funded/joint-funded enterprises (Sichuan Online Talent Net, 2005).

In terms of occupations, there is a serious phenomenon of overtime work both among the frontline workers in labour-intensive enterprises and among the white-collar managers in hi-tech enterprises. The survey shows that in some labour-intensive enterprises, such as textile, garment, electronics and printing, overtime work is very serious; in some enterprises, the employees normally have to work for about 14 hours every day (Wang Daobin et al., 2007). In some hi-tech enterprises, white-collar workers have to work overtime very often. A survey shows that currently 42 per cent of employees work more than 50 hours a week in Shanghai. A well-known IT enterprise in China advocates a “bed mattress” culture: it encourages its employees to keep a mattress in the office so that they can rest when they feel too tired to work at night (Gao Lu, 2006).

The degree of overtime work varies more or less in different sectors, with the public service sectors having the lowest overtime work (see Table 3.7). A survey in Beijing shows longer working time in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, mining, building, wholesale and retail trades, and catering where more than 60 per cent of people work seven days a week. In the sectors of scientific research and integrated technical services, 86.7 per cent of people work five days a week. At least 80 per cent of people engaged in finance and insurance, education, cultural art, broadcasting, film and television work five days a week. People working in health, sports and social welfare, production and supply of electricity, gas and water, government agencies, Party organizations and social groups usually work five days a week (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

The different degrees of overtime work in different sectors have a direct relation to the nature of a sector. Heavy overtime work is mostly found in labour-intensive industries or service industries. These sectors are mostly self-employed and privately run enterprises, and they do not abide by the government regulations on working time. The lowest occurrence of overtime work is found mainly in the public service sector, where the government regulations on working time are normally adhered to.

Table 3.7: Average weekly working days by sector in Beijing (unit: day)

Sectors	Total	Male	Female
Agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery	6.1	6.2	6.0
Mining industry	6.4	6.5	6.0
Manufacturing industry	5.8	5.8	5.8
Production and supply of electricity, gas and water	5.5	5.5	5.3
Building industry	6.3	6.4	5.7
Geological prospecting and water conservation	5.7	5.8	5.3
Transportation, warehousing, post and telecommunications	5.8	6.0	5.5
Wholesale and retail trades, catering industry	6.2	6.3	6.2
Finance and insurance industry	5.3	5.3	5.2
Real estate	5.6	5.6	5.5
Social service industry	5.9	6.0	5.8
Health, sports and social welfare	5.4	5.5	5.3
Education, cultural art, broadcasting, film and television	5.3	5.4	5.2
Scientific research and integrated technical services	5.2	5.2	5.2
Government departments, Party organizations and social groups	5.6	5.6	5.4
Other industries	5.3	5.4	5.3

Source: Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics.

With regard to the payments for overtime work, many surveys show that most enterprises do not pay for overtime work according to the standards set by laws and regulations. A survey conducted by the Sichuan Online Talent Net shows that most of the enterprises simply do not have an “overtime work payment” system: 76.47 per cent of enterprises or organizations do not give payments for overtime work on weekdays, and 53.01 per cent never give payments for overtime work on public holidays or festivals (Sichuan Online Talent Net, 2005).

In most cases, people are compelled to work overtime. In the context of the intensely competitive labour market in present-day China, the fear of being fired compels people to work overtime. Blue-collar workers have to work overtime in order to earn more money because of low wages. White-collar workers have to bear the pressures of both competition for promotion and personal career development. Moreover, there are other reasons for such a widespread practice of overtime work, like the enterprises’ advocacy of overtime work and the undue public compliment on overtime work (Gao Lu, 2006).

The widespread practice of overtime has produced a negative effect on the health of both the labourers personally and their family members. Most employees who are compelled to work overtime will become resentful as time passes, leading to dissatisfaction about their work. In addition, because overtime workers are often in a nervous state, they are apt to suffer from insomnia, frequent dreams, dizziness and a tight chest, which makes it hard to concentrate and easy to be injured both physically and mentally. Meanwhile, because they often work overtime, they have less time to share family responsibility and less opportunity to communicate with family members, which is harmful to a harmonious family relationship.

3.3.3: *Part-time work*

(1) Laws and regulations on part-time work

The definition of part-time work in the Law on Labor Contracts is: “It is a form of employment which is paid by hour, and if a laborer works for the same employer, he or she normally works for no more than four hours in a day, or a cumulative total of no more than 24 hours in a week”. It also defines a part-time worker’s rights and interests in such things as labour contracts and payments: Article 69 says that “both sides in the part-time employment may sign an oral agreement”, and that “a part-time laborer may sign a labor contract with one or more than one employers”. Article 70 says that “the two sides in the part-time employment are not allowed to make an agreement on a trial period”. Article 72 says that “the hourly payment standard for part-time employment shall not be lower than the minimum wage standards set by the local government”.

In 2003, the MOLSS promulgated Opinions about some Issues in Part-Time Work (MOLSS File No. [2003]12), which also define the working time, payment and social insurance of part-time workers. Part-time workers can participate in basic old-age insurance and medical insurance as self-employed people; and the employer must buy work injury insurance for part-time workers.

(2) The scope of part-time work

In recent years, part-time employment in the form of hourly work has developed rapidly in many parts of China, and part-time employment has become a major form of flexible employment. At present, most of the flexible employees are farmers who find jobs in cities and laid-off or unemployed urban residents; they account for 80 to 90 per cent of total informal employment. In terms of sector distribution, flexible employment shows the following characteristics:

- a high percentage of people are employed in the service industry, especially in labour-intensive service industries, such as wholesale, retail, trading and catering industries;
- a lower percentage in telecommunications, financial insurance, culture, arts, broadcasting, film and television;
- the percentage of flexible employment is increasing year by year in some traditional industries, such as manufacturing, mining and building;
- in some industries, part-time employment makes up the main source of labour; for instance, flexible employment accounts for 80 per cent in the building industry (Liu Yunhai, 2004).

Women workers account for a large percentage in part-time employment. Currently, China has not gathered any gender-based statistics on this subject. Yet, by analyzing the sectors where part-time jobs are concentrated and the main groups of people who are engaged in part-time jobs, we can infer that the ratio of women engaged in part-time jobs is higher than in full-time jobs. As mentioned above, most of the part-time workers are migratory off-farm workers and laid-off or unemployed urban residents, and women account for a very large percentage among these two groups of people, especially laid-off or unemployed urban residents. Also, judging from the sectors where part-time jobs are concentrated, most women are concentrated in sectors such as catering and home service.

(3) Working conditions of part-time workers

Part-time employment provides more options for labourers, making it possible for them to shoulder family responsibilities while earning some money. However, judging from the current situation in China, part-time workers have poor working conditions, and their rights and interests in employment and social security are hard to guarantee.

Many problems exist in the working conditions of part-time labourers. First, the labour relationship is unsteady. Part-time workers normally only have an oral agreement with the employer; few have signed a written contract. Second, compared with full-time workers, part-time labourers have a lower income. Third, their social welfare and social security is insufficient. The MOLSS has formulated relevant policies for part-time labourers; for instance, they can participate in old-age insurance as self-employed people and participate in medical insurance as individuals. However, in formal employment, the insurance fees are shared by the employer and the employee, whereas part-time labourers have to pay the total amount of the fees. This adds some financial pressures to a part-time worker and his or her family. Moreover, there is a low rate of participation in social insurance among flexibly employed people. By the end of 2004, less than 30 per cent of flexibly employed people had participated in the basic old-age insurance, and less than 10 per cent had participated in the basic medical insurance. This is quite a gap from the national average coverage of old-age insurance and medical insurance (Shi Meixia and Han Siwen, 2006).

From the gender perspective, women account for a large percentage of part-time labourers, and they are at a disadvantage regarding income and social security compared with part-time male workers. According to the second survey of Chinese women's social status, the income gap between men and women in informal employment has increased by 15.6 per cent compared with the income gap in formal employment. This proves that even if they are equally employed in the informal sector, women's income has dropped much more dramatically than men's (Jin Yihong, 2006).

The same situation is found in social security. In both informal employment and formal employment, the level of social security enjoyed by women is lower than that of men (see Table 3.8).

Table 3.8: Gender difference in insurance and welfare (unit: %)

		<i>Informal employment</i>	<i>Formal employment</i>	<i>Total</i>
Retirement pension or old-age pension	Men	20.0	88.4	77.0
	Women	16.3	84.8	68.0
Free medical service or medical insurance	Men	18.7	76.1	66.6
	Women	12.8	67.9	54.5
Salary during sick leave	Men	21.0	74.9	66.1
	Women	20.8	70.9	58.5

Source: Project Research Team of the Women's Studies Institute, ACWF: *Social status of Chinese women in the social transformation* (China Women Press, 2006), p. 190.

3.3.4: Flexible schedules

(1) Current situation of flexible schedules in China

Flexible schedules were introduced from abroad and, in China, it is also known as the elastic work hour system. At present, the elastic work hour system in China is just an issue discussed and advocated by scholars and human resource management experts. In practice, some multinational enterprises have taken the lead, and some large Chinese enterprises are also following the example and adopting some flexible schedules.

(2) Examples of flexible schedules

Some enterprises, especially large enterprises which are properly managed, have adopted measures to reconcile family and work. A good example is the “work time breathing system” practiced by Shanghai Volkswagen. This system consists of four sub-systems: elastic work time, elastic work shifts, elastic work days in a week and time securities. These four sub-systems provide enterprises and employees an opportunity to flexibly arrange their hours of work from a single day to a whole job career, depending on the work requirements and their own situation. Employees no longer have to worry about arriving late and leaving early due to traffic jams, family affairs or other unexpected happenings. On the other hand, this work style greatly increases the efficient worktime for the enterprise, and prolongs the enterprise’s business time. A survey shows that the rate of satisfaction about flexible working time among leaders and employees is respectively 100 and 98.67 per cent (51made.com, 2007).

Proctor & Gamble also has its rules and regulations on flexible working hours. Employees can choose to work at home on one of the five weekdays. In addition, employees can apply for a part-time job, or apply to work three or four days a week. In this way, an employee only draws 60 or 80 per cent of the salary, depending on his or her hours of work in a week, but the company does not deduct other benefits. Lenovo, a Chinese IT enterprise, also practices flexible working hours. Apart from core hours of work, an employee can choose to work in the morning or in the afternoon, as long as he or she works a full eight-hour day (Shan Yun, 2007).

3.4: Leave entitlements

3.4.1: Laws and regulations concerning leave

According to existing policies, laws and regulations, a worker’s main leaves include statutory festivals and holidays, paid annual vacation, sick leave, home leave, marriage leave, bereavement leave and maternity leave. However, these days off work are targeted at urban labourers, and do not include rural labourers, because the family-contracted responsibility system is practiced in the rural areas of China, and farmers belong to the category of self-employed people, who are not within the scope of these laws and regulations.

(1) Paid annual vacation

Article 45 of the Labor Law stipulates that “China introduces the paid annual vacation system. A laborer who works continually for one year and above can enjoy a paid annual vacation. The specific methods are enacted by the State Council”. Recently, the State Council drafted the Regulation on Staff’s Paid Annual Vacations, and made the draft known to the public for soliciting opinions. The draft of the regulation says that “employees who have cumulatively worked for more than 1 year and less than 10 years may have a 5-day annual vacation; those who have worked for more than 10 years and less than 20 years may have a 10-day annual vacation; and those who have worked for more than 20 years may have a 15-day annual vacation”. Also, it says that “if a unit really cannot arrange an annual vacation for employees for the sake of work, it should give compensations to the employees according to their daily salary standard, in addition to paying the normal salary and welfare”.

(2) Maternity leave

According to the Labor Law as well as the Regulations on Labor Protection of Women Workers issued by the State Council, a woman worker employed by any enterprise

or organization has the right to maternity leave for 90 days, including 15 days before childbirth. Those who have a difficult delivery may have an additional 15-day maternity leave. Women giving birth to two or more children may have an additional 15-day maternity leave for each additional baby. For women workers whose pregnancy ends in a miscarriage, the work unit should give a certain amount of time for maternity leave according to the certificate produced by the medical institution.

In addition to the nationally unified maternity leave, local governments normally set regulations to encourage maternity leave. The period of maternity leave differs from place to place; for example, Article 6 of the Interim Regulation of Guangdong Province on Vacation and Death Compensation for Enterprise Employees provides that “women who have a late childbirth (producing the first baby after age 24) will have an additional 15-day maternity leave. Those who receive the *Special Treatment Certificate for Only One Child* will have an additional 35 days off. During maternity leave, the husband will be given 10 days as a care leave”.

The Regulations on Maternity Insurance, which are set by all local governments, grant women workers the following benefits at childbirth

- (1) Childbirth allowance: when a woman worker gives birth, she will be granted a sum of childbirth allowance from the childbirth insurance fund every month during the maternity leave. The standard of childbirth allowance is the charged monthly per capita salary for the enterprise's employees in the previous year.
- (2) Medical costs of childbirth: the cost of pre-natal examination, the cost of delivery, the cost of operation, the cost of hospital care and the cost of medicines shall be paid by the childbirth insurance fund. In Fujian Province, it is stipulated that if a male employee's spouse gives birth in accordance with the province's family planning policy and yet does not receive benefits from childbirth insurance, the childbirth insurance fund shall give a one-time childbirth subsidy, the payment rate of which is 50 per cent of the childbirth allowance.

Regarding the protection of women workers' right to employment during childbirth, the Labor Law and the Law on Protection of Women's Rights and Interests have clearly stated that women workers may not be dismissed during maternity leave and their original job post be retained.

(3) Other leaves

In addition to the above kinds of leave, the government has authorized other leaves for labourers.

- *Sick leave* gives the labourer a certain period of time for medical care depending on his or her hours of work, and the salary during the sick leave is also calculated depending on the length of the working time.
- *Home leave*: paid days off every year or every few years granted to a labourer whose spouse or parents live in another city, for the purpose of a family reunion. This regulation on home leave is only applicable to people who are employed in government departments, social groups, state-owned enterprises and public institutions.
- There are government regulations on marriage leave and bereavement leave (death of lineal family members).

3.4.2: Implementation of leave entitlements

In China, many regulations concerning holidays or vacations are passed down from the era of the planned economy, so there are a wide variety of holidays, such as home leave, marriage leave and bereavement leave, all of which were intended for government agencies, state-owned enterprises and public institutions. However, along with the intensification of the market economy and the increase of privately run /foreign-funded enterprises, there are more and more employees who do not enjoy these benefits. Taken as a whole, people who work in government agencies and public institutions have more access to leaves than those who work in enterprises, especially privately run and foreign-funded enterprises.

In terms of paid annual vacation, the Labor Law has written that labourers have the right to a paid annual holiday, but on the whole, it is not widely enforced. Over 80 per cent of employees, in fact, do not have such a benefit (people.com.cn, 2006). Generally speaking, only state-owned units, especially government agencies and public institutions, have put the paid annual vacation system into practice. In some places and departments, there is even a compulsory requirement for holidays. In enterprises, except for some large state-owned enterprises and foreign-funded enterprises, few are really able to put the annual vacation system into practice. In many small- and medium-sized enterprises, there is not even the concept of paid annual vacation.

In terms of maternity leave, women who work in government agencies and public institutions normally are able to enjoy six and even seven months of maternity leave, whereas women who work in enterprises, especially foreign-funded enterprises and privately run enterprises, normally take three to four months or less. In terms of maternity leave benefits, women who work in government agencies and public institutions again have the most benefits. Although there is the maternity insurance system, at present it does not cover all enterprises and their employees. Many enterprises are not willing to pay maternity insurance fees, nor are they willing to pay women workers a childbirth allowance and the medical fees according to government regulations. The same situation is found in the protection of their right to employment. Women who work in government agencies and public institutions normally are able to return to their old jobs after maternity leave, whereas enterprise employees are likely to be transferred to a new job and even be dismissed (Sun Qiongru, 2005).

At a seminar on work and family held in May 2008, ILO constituents and the government women's machinery confirmed that there are considerable problems in the coverage and the implementation of current maternity leave provisions.

- The law on the protection of woman and children covers maternity protection, and several labour regulations deal with maternity insurance. New regulations to ensure the right to the same or equivalent position after maternity leave are also being developed. However, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity is not explicitly prohibited in the labour law, while discriminatory practices against women of reproductive age on the basis of actual or potential pregnancies are widespread (see also section 3.6.1).
- Maternity protection coverage among urban resident permit-holders has increased from 30 per cent in 2001 to 47 per cent in 2007. It is clear that it will be difficult to reach the target of 90 per cent coverage by 2010. Many groups are not covered; for example, migrant workers from rural areas do not have access to maternity protection in most localities.
- The government's financial contribution to maternity protection is limited to its role as employer, covering maternity benefits for employees in the public

sector. However, even women who are covered face difficulties in getting their medical fees reimbursed.

- Many employers cannot bear the full cost of maternity, including benefit payments and replacement costs of women workers who become pregnant and give birth. Many enterprises are hesitant to provide maternity insurance as they are responsible for the financing of such social pooling schemes; participation in such schemes is voluntary. A few social security schemes provide maternity protection successfully at the county level, but such good practices are sparse.

3.4.3: The influence of leaves on workers with family responsibilities and on workplaces

Leaves are very important to ease work-family conflict. Workers with family responsibilities expect to spend these leaves accompanying their family members and performing their duties as spouses, parents or children. A survey shows that over half of the interviewed fathers admit “I wish to spend more time together with my child, but I’m too busy to spare the time”; and 70 per cent of husbands approve that “the father should also have maternity leave and child-care leave like the mother” (Family Research Center, Shanghai Municipal Academy of Social Sciences, 2007).

There are problems, such as a narrow coverage and a weak enforcement of the leave system, which intensifies the labourers’ work-family conflict. Once something urgent happens in the family, a labourer finds it difficult to concentrate on two things; in order to settle the family affair, the labourer has to suffer from losses at work, such as arriving late, leaving early and even absence from work. Some companies are very severe with late arrivals. Some companies practice the punch-card system very severely: anybody who shows up for work one minute later than the punching time will be considered as arriving late. Normally, the penalty against late arrival is to deduct a certain amount of bonus and, if an employee is late for a certain number of days in a month, he or she will face more severe punishment; for instance, they will be recorded for one day’s absence from work, or deduction of all the bonus, etc.

According to a survey conducted by the Beijing Municipal Committee for the Aged, when an old family member is sick and needs to be hospitalized, 65 per cent of children went to look after the sick person at the hospital, and as many as 59 per cent had been docked their bonus or salary. In Shanghai, some enterprise workers complain that they are the first to be laid-off or sacked if they ask for leave to look after their sick parents at hospital or at home (Fang Jiake, 2007).

3.5: Family support benefits

3.5.1: Working conditions for pregnant women and nursing mothers

The Regulations on Labor Protection of Women Workers gives a clear definition: “For a woman worker who has a baby less than one year old, the employer should allow her to feed (including artificial feeding) the baby two times within the shift, with 30 minutes each time. A woman who has polycyesis will have an additional 30-minute feeding time for each additional baby. The two feeding times may be merged into one time. The feeding time and the time spent on the way to and back from home are counted as work time ... Enterprises or units with a large number of women workers should build facilities such as sanitation room, lounge for pregnant women, breastfeeding room, nursery

school and kindergarten independently or jointly, and properly solve women workers' difficulties in physiological hygiene, breastfeeding, and baby nursing".

In the planned economic system, when enterprises did not have to seek economic benefits, they were able to provide fairly good working conditions for women workers. However, along with the social transformation, the social functions of state-owned enterprises are becoming weaker. To reduce their burdens, many state-owned enterprises have demolished the service facilities formerly built for pregnant women and nursing mothers, and non-state-owned enterprises basically do not have such facilities. According to a survey conducted by the CEC in 2005, 26 enterprises provided a breastfeeding room for women workers, accounting for 5 per cent of the total number of surveyed enterprises. Among them, there were 20 state-owned enterprises (accounting for 77 per cent), and there were three privately run enterprises, three joint-stock companies and three limited liability companies (accounting for 11.5 per cent) (CEC Project Team, 2006).

3.5.2: The medical insurance system for an employee's family members

The current regulations on the medical costs for an employee's family members (labour insurance for family members) are still legally based on the Ordinance of the People's Republic of China on Labor Insurance, which was formulated in 1951 and revised in 1953. Article 13 of the Ordinance provides that "When an employee's lineal family member is sick, he or she can be treated free of charge at the enterprise's clinic, hospital, or/and [by] specially authorized doctors, and the enterprise should write off half of the operation costs and ordinary medical costs".

In 1953, the policy for labour insurance for family members was revised. Over the past 50 years, great changes have happened to China's economic ownership structure, labour relations and employment in enterprises and, as a result, many problems are difficult to resolve. In terms of implementation, some enterprises think the labour insurance for family members is a heavy burden, so they either refuse to provide labour insurance for family members or simply shift the responsibility (Tang Haihua, 2003). Meanwhile, the Decision on Building Basic Medical Insurance System for Urban Employees, which was issued by the State Council (Guo Fa No.44 [1988]), does not regard employees' family members as the target people of the basic medical insurance, so the reform of the medical system does not consider the issue of labour insurance for employees' family members.

3.6: Managers' attitudes towards family responsibilities

3.6.1: The influence of family responsibilities on employment: Gender discrimination in employment

Though Chinese laws adhere to the principle of equality between men and women, the traditional idea that men are in charge of external affairs and women in charge of home affairs has not changed. Women are still the main undertaker of family responsibility. It is a very common phenomenon that women suffer from gender discrimination because they have to take family responsibilities, whereas men seldom encounter this phenomenon.

Some examples of gender discrimination in employment are listed below.

Employers either refuse to recruit women or raise the standard for recruitment of women in the process of recruitment. A survey conducted in 2002 shows that there are gender and age restrictions, to varying degrees, in all forms of job recruitment. For

example, in a job fair involving 265 enterprises, 44 per cent of the enterprises said clearly that they only wanted males; and their job requirements contained obvious job segregation and discrimination (Tan Lin, 2003). The positions available to women included positions as secretaries, desk clerks and waitresses; the positions available to men only included managers, engineers, technicians, etc.

Due to the increased combat against discrimination in recent years, tangible discrimination is becoming less, yet intangible discrimination remains very common. Some employers ask female jobseekers during the interviews some questions of personal privacy, questions that have nothing to do with their work ability: do they have a boyfriend, when they got married, when they plan to have a baby, etc.

Employers restrict women workers' pregnancy. When signing a labour contract with women workers, some employers request women workers to promise not to give birth for a few years, otherwise it is impossible to sign the contract. Some employers purposely evade a woman's childbearing time and set restrictions on age when signing the contract, say between 18 and 22, and thus, when a woman worker is ready to have a child, her labour contract will come to an end. Also, some employers require a woman worker to send a written application to obtain permission to have a child during her labour contract.

Gender segregation in jobs. Because women play a major role in sharing the family responsibility, they are restricted in choosing a job, and most of them are engaged in technically easy, replaceable and marginalized jobs. Gender segregation in these jobs is clearly shown in the following table (Table 3.9). In contrast, the top ten jobs occupied by men are "leaders" and "technical specialists", and mostly high-paid jobs.

Table 3.9: Top ten occupations for men and women

	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery and water conservation	91.7	Textile, knitting, printing and dyeing	79.3
2	Technicians of airplanes and ships	86.4	Economic business	73.8
3	Operators of transport equipment and related occupations	82.9	Tailoring, sewing and processing of leather products	73.8
4	Engineering construction	79.1	Attendants in hotels, tourist spots and recreational places	72.2
5	Repairers of mechanical equipment	77.3	Auxiliary workers of medical services	69.5
6	Security, sanitation and fire-fighting workers	74.5	Health technical specialists	67.8
7	Prospecting and mining	67.5	Manufacturing, installation, debugging and repair of electronic apparatus and equipment	66.0
8	Members and leaders of the central and local committees of the Chinese Communist Party	67.5	Production of handicrafts and fine arts	65.5
9	Leaders of government agencies and public institutions	67.3	Inspection and measurement workers	65.1
10	Leaders of enterprises	32.3	Teachers	62.6

Source: Document of Chinese population census 2000 (China Statistical Press, 2002).

Gender difference in income. Closely associated with gender segregation in jobs is gender difference in income. For details, please see Section 3.2.

3.6.2: The influence of family responsibilities on employment: The attitudes of managers

Employers are hesitant to recruit and promote women who have family responsibilities. Some reasons are listed below.

First, this is related to the public understanding of family and the gender-based division of labour. For a long time, family has been considered as a private area segregated from public life, and family responsibility considered as internal affairs of a family, having nothing to do with the employer. Therefore, family responsibility is regarded as a burden to work. From this perspective, an employer certainly does not want to employ a worker who shares family responsibility. Judging from the gender-based division of labour, the tradition is that men are in charge of external affairs and women in charge of internal affairs, and men are bread-earners and women are family care-givers. Therefore, when recruiting employees, the employer would naturally think that women must shoulder family responsibility and be unwilling to recruit women.

Second, there is a difference in the cost of employment. An important distinction between the two sexes is that women in fact take the main responsibilities of bearing children, nursing and bringing up young children, and managing family affairs. All this takes a lot of time and energy for women. Moreover, a woman's childbirth expenses, salary and bonus during maternity leave are paid by her employer. A woman usually retires five to ten years earlier than a man, so the expenditure for a woman's welfare is higher than that of a man.²³ For economic reasons, the employers would naturally consider the reality of employment costs, and they would be inclined to employ and promote a man on equal conditions (Lan Liyan, 2004).

Third, the government lacks an appropriate legal system and provides insufficient public services. Although the reform of the social insurance system has alleviated the enterprise's responsibility for social security, the enterprise is still the main undertaker of the social security responsibility for employees. Childbirth and family responsibility are matters that concern the whole society, so the government should be the main undertaker of responsibility. The development of public service in present-day China still fails to meet people's needs, making the responsibilities of family care mainly undertaken by the family, especially by the female members of the family. This, in effect, has intensified women labourers' work-family conflict.

Fourth, enterprises generally have a poor awareness of social responsibility. With supply exceeding demand in today's Chinese labour market, enterprises seek maximized profits, and tend to recruit male employees at a lower cost.

²³ Women tend to live longer than men, which leads to more welfare being paid to women after retirement for a shorter length of working life.

Part 4: Support facilities for workers with family responsibilities

An important way of reconciling work-family conflict is to provide family-care facilities for workers with family responsibilities and reduce their pressure of family care. This section will introduce the patterns of family care in China, the development of family-care facilities and the problems in recent years, and will focus on discussing the government's attitude toward and policy about the arrangement of family care.

4.1: Care facilities

4.1.1: Patterns of family care

(1) Patterns of child care

Care of infants aged 0 to 3 years

In both rural and urban areas, the care for infants aged 0 to 3 years is dominated by family care, and the caregivers are mostly mothers. If the mother wants to work or she does not have enough strength to look after the infant, the grandmother will be the caregiver of primary choice. The father and the grandfather also share some of the responsibility. In a family with strong financial power, or where old persons cannot help due to physical conditions or lack of time, a service worker of home economics (a housemaid) will be employed to assist in childcare.

In recent years, many early education institutions intended for infants aged 0 to 3 years have sprung up in cities, and the kindergartens which enroll infants aged 3 to 6 years have started to run toddler classes or early education classes. This, on the one hand, shows that the issue of care for infants aged 0 to 3 has attracted the attention of society, especially the market; on the other hand, the services of these institutions are not able to meet the labourers' demand for childcare. The reason is that these early education services are usually provided on weekends rather than on weekdays, and concentrate on mental development or baby games, requiring the parents to participate. They are unable to solve the work-family conflicts, and because of high fees, families of middle- and low- income cannot afford them.

Care of children aged 3 to 6 years

The care of children aged 3 to 6 years is a combination of kindergarten with family care. The national rate of children going to kindergarten for the three years of pre-school was 35.38 per cent in 1995, 37.53 per cent in 2000, and 37.4 per cent in 2003. In 2004, the gross rate increased significantly, rising to 40.75 per cent. Nationwide, there is the problem of uneven regional development. In some large and medium-sized cities, the rate of children going to kindergarten has gone increased to 85 per cent, and in the developed areas, all children go to kindergarten. Yet, in the rural areas of China, the rate is low. In some areas, the rate of children going to kindergarten for one year of pre-school is less than 50 per cent, and as a result, the national rate remains low (Yu Dongqing, 2005).

Though kindergartens play an important role in the care of young children aged 3 to 6, care from families is also necessary, because the care offered by kindergartens is limited (mostly day care; full-care kindergartens are seldom found). A survey of kindergartens in Beijing shows that about 50 per cent of infants and their parents live with their

grandparents, or parents leave their child with grandparents, who look after the child and accompany the child to and from kindergarten (Zhang Yan, 2006). In rural areas, where the rate of children going to kindergarten is low, family members play an even more important role in childcare.

Care of children aged 6 and older

Care for children of this age group is still a combination of school care with family care. According to Chinese law, children over the age of 6 years must receive compulsory education. Yet, the daily care of children is still mainly provided by the family. In some places, especially in big cities like Beijing, the time for primary school children to leave school is in conflict with the parents' working hours; for instance, some schools dismiss children at 15:30, yet most parents cannot leave work until after 17:00. Thus, the care for the child in this period of time becomes a problem: either the parent leaves work early to pick up the child at school or a grandparent goes. Some community neighborhood committees run temporary childcare centers or "small tables", help parents to pick up children at school and look after these children temporarily.

(2) Patterns of elder care

There are three main patterns of caring for the elderly in present-day China: family care for the aged, institutional care for the aged, and community care for the aged at home. Family care for the aged remains the dominant pattern, and community care for the aged at home is a new pattern that has been piloted in urban communities in recent years.

Family care for the aged

In China, the traditional way to care for the aged is family care. This point is also embodied in the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Old People's Rights and Interests, which went into force on 1 October 1996. The law clearly states that "care for the aged mainly relies on the family, and the family member should care for and look after the aged. The family providers should perform the obligations of providing financial assistance, material subsistence and spiritual consolation for the aged, and take care of the aged people's special needs".

In actual life, family care for the aged is still the dominant pattern in China, and also the pattern preferred by the aged. A survey shows that 82.29 per cent of interviewees choose informal care (family care) provided by the spouse and the children, 9.69 per cent choose formal care (institutional care for the aged), and 8.02 per cent choose community care for the aged at home. Thus, it shows that the spouse and the children remain the people whom the aged mainly rely on (Jiang Yuexiang and Si Wen, 2006).

Family care for the aged, an old tradition in China, is the predominant way of caring for the aged in rural areas. In 2000, about 67 per cent of people aged 60 and above in rural China lived together with their children or grandchildren; 25.3 per cent lived with the spouse; 7.6 per cent lived alone; and only less than 1 per cent lived in institutions for the elderly, such as the social welfare institutions for elderly (Zhang Benbo et al., 2007). In the process of social transformation, the pattern of family care for the aged in rural China faces challenges. One challenge is that, along with the rapid development of the market economy as well as the acceleration of industrialization and urbanization, farmers face a crisis in their available land resources, both in quantity and in quality; thus, the security function of "land providing for the aged" shows a tendency of weakening. The other challenge is that, along with the acceleration of industrialization, the implementation of the family planning policy in rural areas, the reduced number of children in a family, the mobility of labour forces and less emphasis on the traditional idea of filial piety, the function of "bringing up children to provide against old age" is beginning to weaken.

In urban areas, along with the development of society and economy, especially the development of industrialization and urbanization, as well as the implementation of the family planning policy, the “nucleus family” has become a major unit that makes up society, thus making family care for the aged difficult (Liu Yana, 2005). On the one hand, due to the pressures of competing for survival, young people have to engage in work and career, without taking time to care for their aged parents. On the other hand, parents pay too much attention to their children’s education and growth, hence the phenomenon of “downward tilt in inter-generation relationship”; that is, “too little provision for the aged and too much love for the young”. This has produced a negative effect on the mental health and the actual living standard of the aged.

Institutional care for the aged

Along with the weakened functions and the inadequate capacity of family care for the aged, more and more old people choose to go to various institutions for the elderly to spend the rest of their lives. A survey shows that 80 per cent of people aged 60 to 70 choose to live on their own, though they have the possibility of living with their children; 75 per cent choose to go to an old-age institution when they have difficulty in managing themselves. People aged 70 to 80 enter a period of venerable age, high incidence of diseases, deterioration of health and more difficulties to look after themselves; 65 per cent choose to go to a nearby old-age institution. To allow for better care for their old parents and to reduce their own burden as caregivers, 80 per cent of children are willing to choose old-age institutions for their elderly parents or grandparents (Cai Kun, 2003).

In rural areas, institutional care for the aged is far from meeting people’s needs, both in quantity and in service. Institutions for the elderly in rural areas are mostly social welfare institutions. By the end of 2002, there were 35,000 institutions for the elderly and 967,000 beds in rural areas, providing for 689,000 people (Zhang Benbo et al., 2007).²⁴ Most of these institutions have very simple facilities and services, which makes it difficult to meet old people’s demand for personal and various services.

In urban areas, there are a wider variety of institutions for the elderly to choose from and the service is also varied. Institutions for the elderly in urban areas are divided into two categories: government-run institutions and non-governmental institutions. Non-governmental institutions include those run by communities, village committees, enterprises and individual investors. In terms of the health status of old people, there are three categories of institutions: those in which old people can take care of themselves; those in which old people can partially or cannot take care of themselves; and integrated institutions, providing different kinds of services for old people with health problems. The number of institutions for the elderly is far from enough for the enormous size of the old-age population in urban areas, and the fees are too high. As a result, many old people cannot afford to enjoy the services provided by these institutions.

Community care for the aged at home

Community care for the aged at home is a socialized pattern in which an old person lives at home, but enjoys services provided by the society. The aged can live in their familiar residence and environment, and the government does not need to spend too much money building institutions and facilities for the elderly, only providing direct delivery services within the neighborhood where the aged live.

²⁴ A survey conducted in June 2006 by a national committee of old people estimated that there were 108 million people over 60 years of age living in China’s rural areas.

At present, community care for the aged at home is at an experimental stage. For example, in the Xuanwu District of Beijing, the piloting work of community care for the aged at home has been conducted actively in recent years to good effect by building appropriate old-age service institutions which rely on the community service centre, developing specific measures and providing different kinds of service depending on the circumstances of old people. Considering old people's medical needs, they also keep health profiles for old people above 65 at the community health service station, visit old people's homes regularly to provide medical treatment, and offer free physical examinations for old people who have difficulty in life. They install emergency medical-calling machines for old people living alone who have special difficulties, to ensure that the old people can get timely help in emergency situations. The old-age service institutions cooperate with the community association for the aged to organize different forms of sports and cultural recreation activities for old people (Wang Haitao et al., 2007).

In rural areas, the community service for the aged is just starting, with a very low level of need, yet with strong potential. A survey in 2000 shows that rural old people have a fairly high rate of using community door-to-door medical service (38.6 per cent) and a high rate of demanding for the service (62.7 per cent); they have a demand for housework and nursing services (approximately 20 per cent), yet a very low rate of using the services (less than 1 per cent); the services of daily recreation, physical and cultural activities are basically not requested (Zhang Benbo et al., 2007).

4.1.2: Care facilities

(1) Childcare facilities

In China, pre-school childcare facilities mainly refer to kindergartens and other educational institutions for children aged 3 to 6 years. Since the 1990s, China has achieved some progress in the education of young children. Statistics show that China had 130,500 kindergartens in total in 2006, 6,093 more than the previous year; the number of children in kindergartens (including pre-school classes) was 22,638,500, 848,200 more than the previous year. The total number of kindergarten headmasters and teachers was 898,200, 62,100 more than the previous year (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Table 4.1: Number of children in pre-schools* in 2006 (unit: person)

	<i>Enrolment</i>		<i>Retained</i>		<i>Leavers</i>	
	Total	Pre-school	Total	Pre-school	Total	Pre-school
Total	13,912,457	7,047,910	22,638,509	8,542,795	10,451,092	6,424,139
Female	6,216,253	3,161,932	10,151,756	3,823,268	4,689,995	2,905,706
Run by Education Department	8,383,975	5,931,103	11,462,242	6,752,249	6,480,912	5,035,400
Run by community	950,090	135,922	2,223,136	259,626	883,613	215,478
Non-state/private	4,104,503	879,333	7,756,871	1,362,448	2,628,256	1,009,902
Run by non-education department	473,889	101,552	1,196,260	168,472	458,311	163,359

* China's pre-school education system includes two forms: kindergarten for children 3 to 6 years of age; pre-school classes for children 6 years of age are usually run by primary schools.

Source: Ministry of Education: *Statistics of education in 2006: China education*, www.edunews.net.cn.

Table 4.2: Number of kindergartens and classes in pre-primary education*, 2006

	Kindergartens	Pre-school classes	
	Total	Total	Pre-school
Total	130,495	788,701	294,204
Run by Education Department	26,877	386,053	235,479
Run by community	22,680	77,607	8,359
Non-state/private	75,426	285,746	45,460
Run by non-education department	5,512	39,295	4,906

* Pre-primary refers to the pre-school educational system; pre-school (in the column) refers to pre-school classes.

Source: Ministry of Education: *Statistics of education in 2006: China education*, www.edunews.net.cn.

Types of childcare facilities

In China, educational institutions for young children include those run by educational departments, those run by the community, and those run by private persons and other departments.

Kindergartens run by educational departments (government-run kindergartens). Kindergartens run by educational departments and supported by governmental budgets have long been the major approach to childcare. However, along with the reform of the economic system and the market, there are more forms of investing in and running kindergartens. This produces an impact on government-run kindergartens. In some places, in order to reduce financial burdens, educational departments reform government-run kindergartens in the same way as enterprises, and some kindergartens are sold. In some counties, the government-run kindergartens have all been sold. To make money, the owners of new kindergartens employ unqualified teachers at a low price and dismiss experienced teachers, resulting in a generally lower quality of kindergartens (Wang Huamin, 2004).

Privately run pre-school education institutions. Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 show that the number of privately run kindergartens is far more than that of other forms of kindergartens, yet the number of classes and students in privately run kindergartens is obviously lower than that of kindergartens run by educational departments. This proves that, on the one hand, privately run kindergartens have developed very fast and become the principal type of kindergarten; yet, on the other hand, because privately run kindergartens have a short history, they are in size far inferior to government-run kindergartens which have a long history.

The forms of privately run kindergartens are flexible. Some of them prolong opening hours and even allow children to stay overnight in the kindergarten occasionally, which is greatly convenient to and welcomed by parents. The forms include full-time nursery, day care, and the mixed form of full-time nursery and day care, etc.

However, there are some problems in privately run kindergartens: small size, insufficient funds, inadequate infrastructure facilities, low teaching level and high fees, etc. Meanwhile, the government does not provide sufficient support for privately run kindergartens and does not have an effective control over them; for instance, the educational administrations are unable to supervise the charges of privately run kindergartens (Bi Lifeng et al., 2004). As a result, both good and bad privately run kindergartens exist.

Kindergartens run by enterprises. In the planned economy, enterprises set up a large number of kindergartens as a kind of welfare to workers. However, along with the

reform of ownership, kindergartens run by enterprises are widely influenced by the market orientation of education and pushed to the market, so the number of kindergartens run by enterprises has been greatly reduced. In Heilongjiang Province, for example, 1993 statistics show that kindergartens run by enterprises and public institutions accounted for 87 per cent of urban kindergartens, and the number of children in kindergartens accounted for 70 per cent; in 2003, both categories dropped to 30 per cent. At the end of 2004, only 301 kindergartens run by enterprises in Heilongjiang Province existed, decreasing by 67 per cent. Take land reclamation enterprises as an example: comparing 2004 to 1998 figures, the number of kindergartens decreased by 123, the number of children going to kindergartens decreased by 10,190 and the number of teachers decreased by 1,112. Large numbers of well-operated kindergartens in the past have been sold, contracted or transformed for other uses, thus leading to a heavy loss of educational resources, a lower rate of children going to kindergartens, the inability to guarantee the teachers' rights and the falling of educational quality as a whole (Chu Zhaohui, 2005).

Neighbourhood kindergartens. It is a form of kindergarten run by the collective. Neighborhood kindergartens started to emerge in the 1950s. At that time, in order to emancipate women and make them work outside the home, there was an urgent need for the children to be looked after by specially appointed people, hence the emergence of many neighborhood kindergartens in urban areas. One striking feature of a neighborhood kindergarten is its convenience to parents, and its varied forms of childcare, including boarding care, day care, half-day care and holiday care.

Neighbourhood kindergartens provide convenient nursing and educational services for society, especially the nearby community residents. Meanwhile, thanks to a lower price, a neighborhood kindergarten is the primary choice for low-income wage-earners, laid-off workers and migratory off-farm labourers. In order to save costs, neighborhood kindergartens have adopted many measures. For example, in the Xicheng District of Beijing, the teachers of Guozishi Kindergarten volunteered to organize themselves into a "construction team" and mobilized their family members to work as helping hands, thus saving a large sum of construction money for the kindergarten.

Over the past ten years, the number of neighborhood kindergartens has been on the decrease. In the Xicheng District of Beijing for example, the number decreased from 50 in 1987, to 25 in 1998, and to 17 in 2002, and the number is still decreasing. The main reasons for the cancellation, merging, closing down or disappearance of neighborhood kindergartens in recent years include the declining birthrate in cities and the loss of students because of urban reconstruction. There are other reasons as well, such as the government's reduced inputs into neighbourhood kindergartens, the inadequate equipment, and the sub-district office unwilling to bear the enormous medical expenses of staff members retired from kindergartens (Zhang Yan and Wu Ying, 2006).

Kindergarten fees

Since the 1990s, local authorities in charge of education and pricing have jointly formulated a "category- and quality-based" method for kindergartens to charge in accordance with the 1996 Regulations on the Work of Kindergartens, which was promulgated in 2006 by the State Council. A survey shows that the rate of nursing fees and the rate of educational fees set for kindergartens are generally low; for example, the fees per month in the 14 surveyed provinces and cities were 243 yuan for urban people and 94 yuan for rural people in highly developed areas; 130 yuan for urban people and 50 yuan for rural people in intermediately developed areas; 116 yuan for urban people and 43 yuan for

rural people in less developed areas. In some poor rural areas (approximately 40 per cent), the fee is only 10 to 20 yuan (Wang Huamin, 2002).²⁵

The national fee is rather low, which makes many kindergartens difficult to operate, especially kindergartens without much financial support from the government. Also, impelled by economic interests, many kindergartens began to charge sponsorship fees, or to charge fees by running specialty classes and interest classes. Judging from the survey results in 14 provinces and cities, 36 per cent of urban kindergartens charge sponsorship fees, with the highest being 10,000 yuan and the lowest 100 yuan. In Beijing, some kindergartens charge sponsorship fees as high as 30,000 yuan. Such fees, in fact, have become a major source of funding for kindergartens. Low-income families cannot afford such a high fee.

Services provided by kindergartens

A survey conducted in Beijing shows that a kindergarten provides services for about ten hours a day. Kindergartens provide three meals and two snacks, including breakfast and supper (Zhang Yan, 2006).

According to the survey, in terms of services provided by kindergartens, 28 per cent of parents hope to get the nursing time prolonged, 41.6 per cent of parents hope to leave the child with the kindergarten when a family member is sick, and 22.8 per cent of parents hope that the child can still go to kindergarten when he or she is ill. This shows that the services provided by kindergartens at the present time are not able to meet the parents' needs completely, thus should be improved (Zhang Yan, 2006).

In terms of whether or not childcare institutions meet the needs for childcare, it seems that the needs of babies aged 0 to 3 years are far from being satisfied. A survey shows that among the 200,000 babies aged 0 to 3 years in Shanghai, the overwhelming majority (79.7 per cent) do not attend professional education institutions, but are reared by the family (Xie Lingli, 2007).

According to a 2006 survey of 367 families in Quanzhou Fujian province, 44.8 per cent of families preferred childcare arrangements with family members, and 51.1 per cent preferred professional education institutions. The majority of parents were worried about older family members caring for the children because of out-dated ideas or lack of education (Chen Jingming, 2006).

(2) Care facilities for the elderly

Community caring facilities

In 2000, the State Council promulgated the Decision on Strengthening the Work for the Aged, and required a quicker development of welfare for the elderly. In June 2001, the Ministry of Civil Affairs began to implement "Star Light Project of Social Welfare Service for Elderly in Community" (shortened to Star Light Project). By June 2004, the Star Light Project had been completed successfully. A total of 32,490 Star Light Homes for the Aged were established or constructed in urban and rural areas all over the country, with a total investment of 13.485 billion yuan. The services provided by the Star Light Home for the Aged include many functions, such as home service, emergency rescue, day-time care,

²⁵ In urban areas, care and education fees came up to 22 per cent of per capita disposable income and 6.2 per cent of family income. In rural areas, care and education fees account for 25 per cent of per capita net income and 7.6 per cent of family income (Wang Huamin, 2002).

health rehabilitation, physical and cultural recreation. The homes provide service to more than 30 million old people (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2004).

At the end of 2005, there were 195,000 urban community service facilities and 8,479 comprehensive community service centers (State Council Information Office, 2006). Different forms of service (i.e. home service, spot service and circuit service) are adopted to provide daily care, housework help, emergency rescue, and other free or low-fee services for the aged.

However, compared with the total number of old people, community service facilities in China are still far from meeting the demand. A survey shows that a total of 54 million old people in China need community welfare facilities.

Institutions for the elderly

At the end of 2005, there were 39,546 such institutions and 1,497,000 beds to provide service for the aged all over the country. In rural areas, there were 29,981 welfare homes and 895,000 beds for the aged (State Council Information Office, 2006).

At present, the number of people aged above 60 is 140 million, and the number of people aged above 80 is 13 million. In the 20 years to come, the number of old people will grow at an annual rate of 3 per cent. However, in China, the number of welfare facilities for the elderly is small and the functions too simple, far from enough to meet the demand. In China today, there are about 32 million old people who need different forms of long-term care, yet the number of beds in different types of welfare institutions is only enough for about 1 per cent of old people aged above 60. This is far below the level of developed countries, which is 5 to 7 per cent, and below that of Brazil and some other developing countries, which is 2 to 3 per cent (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2007).

(3) Care facilities for the sick and disabled

At present, there are no relevant studies and statistics about caring facilities for sick or disabled people. In general, sick or disabled people are cared for by their family, and mostly by the female members of the family. In terms of education for disabled children, the government has created special schools to admit disabled children. In 2006, there were 1,605 special schools in China, and the total number of disabled children attending these special schools was 362,900 (Ministry of Education, 2007).

4.2: Government policies and measures

China's policy for family-care facilities has experienced a process of change. In the planned economic system, the government and the enterprise provided free family-care facilities (nursery schools, kindergartens, etc.) for staff members. Since the reform and opening-up policy started, the reform of the economic system has changed enterprises into market-oriented companies, which assume responsibility for their own profits and losses, and the social functions of enterprises have become weakened. Meanwhile, in the process of transition toward the market economy, the government also tended to transfer its social responsibility to enterprises, families and individuals. The government's financial inputs into care facilities become less and less and it encourages society to run caring facilities; for example, in 1990, the Ministry of Education promulgated the Regulations on Management of Kindergartens, which says that the government at all levels encourages and supports enterprises and public institutions, social groups, neighborhood committees, village committees and citizens to run kindergartens or to contribute money to running kindergartens. Therefore, since the 1990s, along with the reform of enterprises, there was a decline in the development of pre-school education institutions. Large numbers of

government-run kindergartens and kindergartens run by enterprises were either closed down or sold. Table 4.3 shows that between 1997 and 2006, apart from the rapid rise of privately run kindergartens, the number of the other three forms of kindergartens was on the decline. As a result, the quality of education in kindergartens falls and the fees rise.

Table 4.3: Changing number of kindergartens in China

Year	Run by Education Department	Run by communities	Non-state/private	Run by non-education departments
1997	30,694	106,738	24,643	10,410
1998	31,741	99,649	30,824	19,154
1999	35,710	90,979	37,020	17,427
2000	35,219	80,722	44,317	15,578
2005	25,688	24,054	68,835	5,825
2006	26,877	22,680	75,426	5,512

Source: Ministry of Education: *Statistics of education from 1997-2006*.

Table 4.4: Changing number of kindergartens in China for the years 2001 to 2003*

Year	Total	Run by Education Department and communities	Non-state/private	Run by non-education departments
2001	111,706	55,682	44,562	11,498
2002	111,752	53,838	48,365	9,549
2003	116,390	51,774	55,536	9,080

* Because statistics for the years 2001 to 2003 were gathered in a different way, they are listed in a separate table.

Source: Ministry of Education: *Statistics of education from 1997-2006*.

Such a situation has attracted government attention. In 2003, the State Council released the Opinion about Guiding the Reform and Development of Infant Education (hereinafter Opinion), which was issued jointly by the Ministry of Education and a few other ministries and commissions, putting forward some measures to deal with the problems in the education of young children. The Opinion points out the overall goal of reforming the education for young children: develop a pattern with government-run kindergartens as the backbone and model, the privately run kindergartens as the principal part, and the combination of government-run and privately run kindergartens, formal and informal education. Also, the Opinion points out the overall goal of developing the education for young children: the educational rate of children in the three years of pre-school shall reach 55 per cent and that of children in the one year of pre-school shall reach 80 per cent; the pre-school three-year education shall be popularized in large and medium-sized cities; and the parents and caregivers caring for children from 0 to 6 years shall be instructed in the scientific way to raise children.

In view of the local government's reduced inputs into the educational institutions for young children, the Opinion stresses that the local government at all levels must strengthen the construction of government-run kindergartens, ensure the financial inputs, and increase the quality of nursing and education for young children. Stopping or reducing the financial inputs into government-run kindergartens with the excuse of reform is not allowed, nor is it allowed to sell government-run kindergartens and rural community kindergartens. Those which have been sold must be recovered over a set period of time. The reform of government-run kindergartens must gain the approval from the provincial educational departments. After the layout of primary and middle schools in urban and rural areas is readjusted, the evacuated school buildings must first of all be used for running kindergartens.

In view of reforming or selling government-run kindergartens and enterprise-run kindergartens, the Opinion requires a stricter management. After being transformed, enterprises and public institutions can continue to run kindergartens or transfer the assets of the kindergartens to the local educational departments for overall management. This will increase the efficiency and vitality of kindergartens by jointly running, contracting or reforming the state-owned and privately run kindergartens.

In view of the high fees of kindergartens, the Opinion requests that kindergartens not charge fees for running experimental classes, specialty classes and interest classes, nor be allowed to charge sponsorship fees or other supporting fees which are linked to children's access to kindergartens.

In view of the care for old people, the State Council issued in 2000 the Decision of Strengthening the Work for Elderly (hereinafter Decision), which points out the major goal of old-age work for China for a long time to come: build an old-age work mechanism based on family care for the aged, relying on community service, and supplemented by social provisioning for the aged; gradually build up a perfect old-age service system, with the contents of old-age welfare, everyday care, medical health, physical and cultural education and legal services.

The Decision also points out the need for the community's positive role in old-age work, to strengthen the construction of service facilities and service networks for old people, and to build up a community old-age service system with supportive facilities, perfect functions and proper management. People should make full use of the existing facilities and take an active part in running different forms and different grades of old-age welfare centers, old-age nursing centres, old-age apartments and old-age caring centres in order to provide a wide variety of services, such as everyday care, cultural recreation, nursing and health care for the aged. Medical health institutions at different levels should make vigorous efforts to conduct different forms of medical health services for the aged, build up a perfect community health service system, improve the health service network and enhance the quality of service. Also, China should increase the community health facilities for old people, develop sick beds at home, provide different forms of services (e.g. spot service, circuit medical service and home service), and provide old people with such services as epidemic prevention, medical care, health care, nursing, rehabilitation and psychological advice.

The Decision makes a clear definition of the government's responsibility. For example, it requires the government at all levels to incorporate old-age work into the intermediate and long-term plans as well as the annual plan of national economy and social development. Great importance should be attached to community construction, and a good community construction plan should be made for the tenth Five-year Plan. On the basis of actual needs and conditions, as well as the existing facilities, build and reconstruct some community old-age service facilities, welfare facilities and work activities. The funds needed for the construction of non-profit welfare facilities are mainly contributed by the People's Government at all levels, and policies should be made to encourage and guide social forces to run old-age welfare institutions. While formulating investment plans and arranging investment projects, the government should provide more inputs for old-age service facilities. By the end of the tenth Five-year Plan, each county (city) shall have at least one activity centre for old people; cities above the prefecture level shall have a certain number of community service facilities, welfare facilities and activity centres for the elderly; and each neighborhood shall have general service facilities. The townships should do a good job in building nursing homes for the aged, and where conditions permit, it is necessary to build the nursing homes for the aged into all-inclusive and multi-function welfare service centre for the elderly.

In order to speed up the development of institutions for the elderly, the Chinese government has issued a series of policy documents, such as *Opinions about Accelerating the Socialization of Social Welfare* and *Opinions about Accelerating the Development of Old-age Service Industry*, to encourage and mobilize social forces to promote a fast development of institutions for the elderly by adopting different forms: institutions built by the government but run by the community, or run by the community but supported by the government, government subsidy and purchased service.

Judging from the Chinese policy about childcare and care for old people, there is a common tendency to encourage the market to run these caring facilities. The fast increasing number of privately run kindergartens is a direct result of such a policy. Due to a short time of policy implementation, it needs to conduct further research of what results this policy will bring about and what influence it will produce on family care. Yet, it is imaginable that the privatization of these caring facilities will inevitably lead to the rise in fees, and these high fees will produce a greater negative effect on the life of low-income and poverty-stricken families.

These two policies show that the government has realized the problems resulting from its lack of responsibility, so it emphasizes the government's responsibility for providing care facilities and has taken some measures to remedy the situation: for instance, making institutional arrangements for children's education and old-age care. However, whether these measures can be realistically implemented and what effects or benefits they will have remains yet to be seen. Furthermore, except for children's education, the government has not adequately realized the importance of childcare and has not incorporated childcare services into public service. With the mind-set that childcare services are basically provided by the family, workers – especially women workers – have found their responsibility for family care greatly increased, and this inevitably will prevent them from spending enough time and effort on their paid jobs outside the home.

Part 5: Assessment of the current situation

5.1: Is there a problem?

China's sharp social transition and reform is bringing about a rapid and sustained economic development and a steady rise of its economic strength. The work-family conflict is becoming tenser, resulting in a series of social problems. The impact is multifaceted.

5.1.1: Poverty

The reform of the economic system makes the reform of education, medicine, housing, old-age and insurance transform to the market. This has rapidly increased the cost of family livelihood and caring. The expensive fees of nursery and kindergarten services, old-age services, medical services and housemaids, along with poor service quality and insufficient supply, have made poor families unable to improve the work-family relations by purchasing the market service. Public service, originally, should benefit the public and narrow down the gap between the rich and the poor; yet, the ongoing market-oriented reform of public service widens the gap between the rich and the poor.

The mobility of the labour force produces a double effect on migratory farmers' family life and care. The dual mechanism between urban and rural areas has ruled farmers outside many public services and security systems. The move to urban areas means an increasing economic cost of family life and care. It not only makes them lead a relatively poor life in urban areas, but also increases the burden on family members, especially women and old people who stay in rural areas, thus bringing new economic and living pressures to the family.

The adjustment of the economic structure and the market orientation also give birth to poor families in urban areas; for instance, the families of laid-off and unemployed people, the single-parent families whose household heads are women, and the families which became poor because of illness. These families rely more heavily on the income earned by women for subsistence. The high cost of public services and the low income of informal employment make it difficult to shake off the constant trouble of poverty and work-family conflict.

5.1.2: Families and their dependents

The increasingly smaller family size, the fall in the birthrate and the decline of family upbringing ratio should, in principal, reduce the burden of family care. However, in recent years, the change of social ideas, the pursuit for the quality of life and modern lifestyles, the high expectation of the only child, the change in bringing up children, as well as the shortage and high costs of housekeeping services, have increased the duty, added to the housework and prolonged the time of family care.

The introduction of modern lifestyles, nonetheless, ignores the advocacy of men and women sharing family and social responsibilities. Influenced by the strong traditional idea that "men are in charge of external affairs and women in charge of internal affairs", the duty of family care mostly falls on women, not only the wife, but also the wife's mother or the husband's mother.

The change in the system providing for the aged, the heavier burden and higher cost of bringing up children, the reduced help from the traditional extended family, the insufficiency of social services, as well as the pursuit for personal happy life, have greatly shaken the Chinese cultural tradition of “bringing up children to provide for old age”. In urban areas, there is a trend of late marriage and late childbirth, and even not to have a child. This, to some degree, has alleviated the contradiction between work and family care, but in effect, it is a helpless choice if a two-earner family wants to keep a decent job and life.

5.1.3: Labour force participation patterns and use of human resources

In the era of the planned economy, the labour force participation pattern in China was a mode of “low salary and high employment”, with a different system between urban and rural areas. Urban men and women all had a job (“it was a glory to work; and it was a disgrace to detest work and seek comforts”), otherwise they would find it difficult to make a family living. Rural people, who were engaged in agricultural production, were not fully employed, and childbearing women and elderly people were allowed not to participate in agricultural labour. There was a diversified change to the labour force participation pattern under the regulation of the market. On the one hand, it was formal employment dominated by men and, on the other hand, it was informal employment dominated by migratory farmers and women; on the one hand, it was continual employment and, on the other hand, it was phased employment when women withdrew from the labour market to have children. Furthermore, when the cost of purchasing family-care services exceeded the income of the female family member, or when the man’s income was enough to feed the whole family, the woman withdrew from the labour market and focused on housework or childrearing, thus becoming the so-called “housewife” or “full-time housemaid”.

More and more Chinese women receive higher education and professional education equally. In 2006, the percentage of female college students amounted to 47.1 per cent (see section 1.13.3). Because women have to bear the dual responsibilities of childbirth and family care, female college graduate students are rejected by the labour market, hence an enormous waste of high-level female human resources. Moreover, in China today, women retire five to ten years earlier than men. This retirement system is also a serious waste of large numbers of experienced women who are still in their prime.

The designers of such a system, which separates the functions of public service from enterprises, think that enterprises can shake off their burden and enhance their competitiveness. In reality, however, such a practice of transferring the duty of childbirth and family care to individual workers or the market not only has obstructed the development of human resources, but also cannot really and continually increase the workers’ enthusiasm. Instead of maintaining a robust energy and physical strength, it will make enterprises lose their profit, competitiveness and influence.

5.1.4: The workplace

Due to the transition to the market economy and the dysfunction of the original social service, enterprises are now perfectly justified in seeking economic interests and regard workers’ family responsibilities as a private matter that has nothing to do with the enterprise, and regard public service and welfare as a matter for society and the market. Private enterprises and joint-funded enterprises are even more oriented towards the market and profit making. They ignore the protection of workers’ basic rights, not to speak of “private” matters such as family responsibilities. China appears on the stage of the world economy with a cheap labour force, in some sense, at the cost of workers’ basic rights, especially women workers’ heavy burdens of both work and family care. In the disorderly

competition, employers – especially the employers of SMEs – were often simply intent to seek economic interests in workplaces, a practice which is more unfavorable to workers with family responsibilities.

First, overtime work is widespread. In China, there is extensive extra work or overtime work in enterprises of different sectors, occupations and ownership forms, even in government departments and public institutions. Most enterprises do not pay for the extra or overtime work according to the standards set by law. In some enterprises, overtime work, on the surface, is the workers' own will; in effect, it is mandatory for a small amount of extra payment. In some IT enterprises, the normal working time is "from nine to five", but in reality, it is "from nine to no end"; some enterprises even advocate a "bed-mattress-in-office culture" and "regarding the office as the home". Thus, it has a negative effect on the employee's personal health and family life.

Second, the vacation system exists only in name. The various forms of holidays or vacations prescribed by national laws in the era of the planned economy have been almost all cancelled; only maternity leave and paid vacation are still practiced, rather incompletely, in public service agencies. In enterprises, due to the ambiguity of regulations, the heavy burden of work and the advocacy of corporate culture, most staff members are unable to enjoy a vacation. In small- and medium-sized enterprises, especially in private enterprises, workers do not dare to take a vacation for fear of receiving less income or being dismissed. Maternity leave for female staff is not ensured either. In China today, there is not yet a special vacation for workers to spend on family care. When there is the need to attend a parents' meeting at the child's school or when a family member falls ill, it is often the woman who asks her work unit for leave.

Third, support facilities provided for workers with family responsibilities have been reduced considerably. As enterprises and public institutions transfer their function of public service to the market, the old facilities (such as breastfeeding rooms, baby nursing rooms, childcare centres and kindergartens) have been almost all closed or sold. The "30-minute breastfeeding time for new mothers" has become the time for late arrival and early departure, which affects the health of both the mother and the baby. In some enterprises and organizations, dining rooms, bathrooms and sanitary rooms are closed down, which causes inconvenience to staff. In the name of transportation reform, some enterprises cancel the commuter bus and give a transportation subsidy instead, which adds to the staff's difficulty of getting to and from work. The housing reform also compels large numbers of low-income staff members to live in the suburbs, bringing new traffic problems to adults who go to work and to children who go to school. All these, actually, have aggravated the work-family conflict.

5.1.5: Gender equality in the labour market and in the home

The work-family conflict has aggravated sex discrimination in the labour market

First, the work and family conflict has seriously affected women's job opportunities. Since 1949, China has maintained a high rate of women participating in economic activities, higher than the world average, and the Chinese government, despite an inadequate economic strength, has shouldered the cost of childbirth for urban women and the welfare for family care, thus promoting equal employment of women. After the reform of the economic system, sex discrimination in the labour market became obvious. It is difficult for laid-off women at age 40 to 50 to be hired, and for rural women who have migrated to urban areas to find a job at the childbearing age. Female college students are viewed as potential childbearers and caregivers, so they suffer from discrimination on the labour market.

Second, the work and family conflict has seriously affected women's career development. Women bear the double duty of childbirth and family care, so it is difficult for them to compete equally with men in career development. Opportunities for training, continuing education, job promotion and jobs at key posts often go to men instead of women. More women work in sectors which are said to be more suitable to women (mostly the social extension of the family role), and more men work in high-risk and high-income sectors. The percentage of women who work in formal sectors is falling and those who work in informal sectors is rising. Women are gradually marginalized in the intense competition on the labour market.

Third, the work and family conflict has seriously affected women's income and social security. Gender segregation in jobs, women's earlier retirement and cumulative discrimination in the labour market have seriously affected women's income and social security. In future, it will affect their family income and life when they become old.

The work-family conflict has aggravated gender inequality in the family

First, the gender division of labour in the labour market has intensified the traditional roles that "men are in charge of external affairs and women in charge of internal affairs". The market-orientation and privatization of family care has intensified women's responsibility for family care, including the responsibility and role identity of old, middle-aged and young women in the family. Though women have participated in paid social and economic activities, their unpaid work at home does not decrease, and their role as a minor bread-winner and their reliance on husbands do not change substantially.

Second, the labour market's rejection of women causes a woman to return home and lose her equal status in the family. After the reform and opening-up policy was practiced, a "housewife class" has re-emerged in Chinese society. Though a woman has gained the choice of not working, she has subjected herself to rely on her husband for a living without an equal status in the family. Thus, the idea of trying to change her destiny by relying on a man came up. "A good marriage is better than a good job" and "it's better to find a husband than to find a job" have become an unharmonious note in Chinese women's pursuit for equality and emancipation.

Third, the dilemma of having dual roles is an obstacle for women to enhance their social status. On the one hand, the social culture expects women to play a good family role and, on the other hand, the labour market refuses to accept them because of their family role. Women's subordinate status in the family and the labour market brings them to a disadvantageous place in political and social life.

5.2: Result of past policies and measures

5.2.1: Policy achievements

(1) Unswervingly adhere to the principle and policy of facilitating employment to make more people have jobs. China is a country with a vast population and a vast number of workers, facing an enormous pressure of population and employment. The Chinese government always regards employment as vital to people's livelihood and as a strategic task of national economy and social development, making active policy to promote employment and trying to improve the environment for employment and self-employment. In a very difficult situation, China has established a unified labour market in urban and rural areas, expanded the scale of employment, improved the structure of employment, developed flexible and variable forms of employment, and increased the total quantity of

employment, laying down a solid economic foundation for urban and rural workers to reduce work-family conflict.

(2) Quickly build a social security system that covers both urban and rural people to ensure their basic needs. Since the 1980s, the Chinese government has been dedicated to building a social security system that suits the socialist market economic system, in order to overcome the disadvantages of the planned economic system, in which enterprises and public institutions took all responsibilities for public services but wasted resources due to low efficiency. After many years of exploration, China has formed a framework of reforming the social security system which suits its economic and social development. Though there are many shortcomings and loopholes in the current Chinese social security system, such as a small coverage, a low security level and poor fund accumulation and fund management, it has provided more or less support for urban and rural workers to alleviate work-family conflict, and in particular, it has made a positive contribution to reducing and eliminating poverty in China.

(3) Establish a tripartite mechanism to regulate and coordinate labour relations and protect workers' lawful rights. In August 2001, the Chinese government formally established a tripartite mechanism composed of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, and the China Enterprise Confederation/Chinese Enterprise Directors Association. Since then, it has basically formed a legal system that suits the socialist market economy, and established a system for labour contracts and collective contracts, a system for labour standards, a mechanism for handling labour disputes, and a system for labour security and supervision, which maintains harmonious and steady labour relations, and protects workers' lawful rights and interests. Guided by the ILO strategic framework "Decent Work for All", the government and the employers have tried to provide support and convenience for men and women workers with family responsibilities in such aspects as working time, care facilities and company welfare by requiring the enterprises to assume social responsibility and build corporate culture.

(4) Provide the facilities of public service and care to reduce the workers' burden of family responsibilities. The Chinese government encourages the private sector to run nursery schools, kindergartens and old-age institutions; actively promotes the reform of the institutions for young children's education and old people's lives to correct the disadvantages that the market economy brought to these undertakings, thus boosting a fast development of different institutions for young children's education and old-age services in communities. These service facilities have played a certain role in alleviating the workers' burden of family care.

5.2.2: Policy shortcomings

(1) The government does not fully realize the importance of providing equal job opportunities and equal treatment for men and women workers with family responsibilities. In the socialist cultural tradition of China since 1949, slogans such as "work arduously and build a new country thriftily" and "fear neither hardships nor death" reflected the revolutionary spirit advocated by mainstream society. "Improving the hillside before improving the house" and "a small river will become full when a big river swells with water" showed the sequence of collectives coming before individuals, nation before family, and public before private advocated by mainstream society. In the planned economic system, the government and the work units brought every "unit person" under control and in the meantime provided care for their families, thus relieving them from any family worry. Article 3.1 of ILO Convention No. 156 points out that "with a view to creating effective equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, each Member shall make it an aim of national policy to enable persons with family responsibilities who are engaged or wish to engage in employment to exercise their right to

do so without being subject to any discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities". Convention No. 156 went into effect in 1981, but it is not exaggerated to say that early in the planned economic system, the Chinese government had carried out this requirement in advance in urban areas.

However, when enterprises and organizations no longer assumed other functions beyond their business functions, the government did not immediately realize its duty of assuming the responsibilities for men and women workers who had family burdens and did not continue to carry out this duty. After the reform of the labour market started in the 1980s, conflict between work and family burdens came up immediately, and a solution to these conflicts, as suggested by the mainstream economists, was to "let women return home".²⁶ At the beginning of the 21st century when supply exceeded demand in the labour market, one idea proposed by the government was to "build a phased employment system", which was written into the tenth Five-year Plan for National Economy and Social Development (Draft).²⁷ The approach to solving the contradiction is to let childbearing women withdraw from the labour market, rather than provide policy support and facilities for women who want to continue to work. The Law on Promotion of Employment, which went into force in 2008, contains a chapter on "fair employment". It is a historic progress. Yet, the government's approach to settling "sex discrimination in jobs" is to "make a list of jobs and positions which the government defines unsuitable for women", in order to prevent the refusal to employ women on the excuse of gender. The government fails to see the real causes behind sex discrimination and, even if it has seen the causes, it does not realize that this is a due responsibility for the government, and "a goal of the national policies".

(2) The basic public services, which should be implemented by the government, do not include a deep probe into the level of family care. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Chinese government has been advocating a scientific outlook on development, emphasizing the important role of public services in economic and social development. The government has achieved positive progress, and this has been welcomed by the people. Yet, it is clear that the main purpose of developing the facilities for young children in China is to develop early education and enhance national quality, rather than solving the responsibility for family care, and so it is under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Education. Also, China develops social institutions of providing for the aged mainly for the purpose of reacting to the challenge of population ageing. Objectively, it is conducive to alleviating the conflicts of family care, but subjectively, it does not address the responsibility of looking after the aged, which should be assumed by workers. China develops different forms of basic social security for the purposes of increasing the living quality of all the community members and creating a stable and orderly social environment, rather than reducing the burden of family care. Similarly, the reforms of the employment policy, the collective negotiation system, the medical system, the housing policy, the vacation arrangement and urban traffic do not focus on solving workers' problems with family responsibilities. For lack of adequate knowledge, the Chinese policies for basic public service seldom contain anything related to family care.

²⁶ See Zhong Pengrong: "Men stay on job posts and women return to home", in *A cross-century problem: Who will make rice bowls for Chinese people*, Section 13 (China Economy Press, 1998), pp. 232-255.

²⁷ Later, opposed strongly by women representatives of the National Congress, the tenth Five-year Plan was rewritten as "taking flexible and variable forms of employment", which was formally adopted.

(3) The government fails to shoulder the due responsibility for solving work-family conflict. There was a time when the government placed its hope on the market to provide the basic public services. On the one hand, it encouraged the private sector to provide public services, yet the government's improper management led to the rise of the market service fees and poor quality, which restricted the access to public services by middle- and low-income families. On the other hand, it encouraged public service agencies to run public services in the same way as the market, and as a result, these public service agencies had to generate income to keep public services going because the government did not provide sufficient funds. Even so, such services fall behind the demand.

While "reducing the burdens on enterprises", the government transfers some responsibilities which the government should have assumed in the planned economic system to enterprises. Enterprises, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises, can hardly bear the burdens of, for instance, the childbirth insurance. When an enterprise does not understand its due social responsibility or does not have sufficient funds, one direct consequence is to refuse to recruit women workers.

The government is unable to alleviate work-family conflict, the market is unable to provide family service, enterprises are unable to provide friendly working conditions for staff members, and trade unions and women's organizations are unable to procure equal rights of work and family life for employees. All this, undoubtedly, has increased the burden of work and family life for workers, especially the double burden of women workers who are the major caregivers of their families.

(4) The traditional idea of gender has affected the design of related systems. With the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, equality between men and women has been clearly written into the Chinese law and embodied in the political, economic, social, cultural and family systems. Chinese women had their social status enhanced as never before. "Women can hold up half the sky" became a national pride and an example for other countries to learn from. Such a glory in the past has become, to some degree, an obstacle that prevents us from going ahead in gender equality: we ignore the stereotyped idea of traditional gender roles in "equality between men and women", and in institutional design, we stick to the traditional division of labour that men should be the bread-winners and women should do the housework, rather than advocating men and women to equally share social and family responsibilities. We do not understand the revolutionary significance of gender mainstreaming advocated by the international community, mistakenly believing that the policy of gender neutrality or the policy of not discriminating against women subjectively will naturally lead to equality between men and women, and ignoring the social division and the widening gap between men and women as a result of the market economy. We are accustomed to adopting the traditional way or the duality-opposition method to solve the various gender problems arising in the reform, including work and family conflict, without studying the successful experiences of the international community in time and combining with the Chinese reality for reformation and innovation.

Part 6: Conclusions and recommendations

The 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China, which convened in October 2007, laid out a grand blueprint for building a harmonious society in China. While continuing to strengthen economic construction, political construction and cultural construction, it emphasized the importance of “speeding up the social construction which focuses on improving people’s livelihood”, and pointed out that “social construction is closely associated with people’s happiness and well-being. Therefore, we must put more focus on social construction on the basis of economic development, make vigorous efforts to guarantee and improve people’s livelihood, promote the reform of the social system, expand public service, improve social management, and promote social fairness and justice, trying to make all people get education for learning, get payment for work, get treatment for illness, have pension for old age and have a house to live in, and thus building a harmonious society”. This decision lays a foundation for the Chinese government and society to coordinate the work-family conflicts of workers with family responsibilities. Therefore, we put forward the following recommendations.

(1) The government should assume the responsibility for alleviating the work-family conflicts of men and women workers with family responsibilities. The government should build up the awareness of “focusing on people first”, “caring for family” and “be good to the men and women workers who have family responsibility”; carry out the theory of “Three Represents” into practice; promote equal opportunity of employment and equal treatment for both men and women workers as an objective of government policies; take the responsibility of modifying family policy and promoting social service; and ratify the ILO’s Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156) as early as possible.

(2) The government should incorporate the awareness of gender equality into the mainstream of policy-making. As a member state of the ILO, a signatory nation of the Convention on Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the host nation of the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women, China should fully realize that “all people, regardless of race, religion and gender, have the right to pursue for materialistic welfare and spiritual development under the conditions of freedom and dignity, economic security and equality of opportunity” (*Philadelphia Declaration*, ILO, 1919), and that “it is really necessary to achieve a full equality between men and women and change men and women’s traditional roles in society and family” (Preface to the Convention on Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination against Women). Also, China should incorporate gender equality into the mainstream of macro-economic and social policy-making; eliminate all forms of discrimination against women with purposes and at different stages, guarantee equality of opportunity and treatment in employment, secure equality in remuneration and benefits, social security and welfare services connected to employment; promote men and women to equally bear social and family responsibilities; and ensure that men and women equally have the right to participate in economic, social development and family happiness.

(3) Bring the work of baby nursing, of providing for the aged and the work of family service into the category of public services as early as possible, and make vigorous efforts to develop different forms of service for family care. At present, the government has brought compulsory education, basic medical care, public health, unemployment insurance, old-age insurance, minimum living standard, social assistance and public employment service into the basic public service system. The government should further bring baby nursing and family service into the basic category of public service, especially for rural people and poverty-stricken people.

The government should play a leading role in the basic public service of reducing work-family conflict, especially policy support and financial support,²⁸ and shoulder the final responsibility of guaranteeing the supply of public services in cases of “market failure” or “the third party/the volunteers failure”.

Developing different forms of public services and “caring or care economy” is an important approach to resolving the work-family conflict of workers with family responsibilities, and it is also a new growth point to stimulate China’s employment and economic development. The government should mobilize the initiatives and resources of the market, the enterprises, the general public and the social organizations; guide and regulate the market; and make vigorous efforts to develop and promote different forms of family care services, providing available, humanistic, high-quality and affordable family care services and conveniences for men and women workers with family responsibilities in both urban and rural areas.

(4) Through legislation, eliminate discrimination against workers with family responsibilities, and ensure that both men and women workers have the basic rights to pursue equal opportunity of employment and equal treatment. By means of laws, regulations, collective contracts, arbitrations and court decisions, and other means, ensure that men and women workers who have family responsibilities in both urban and rural areas have the right to choose a job freely without being discriminated against, labour standard, equal income and social security, break time and leaves, vocational guiding and training, and returning to the labour force after absence from work as a result of family responsibilities. Nobody should be allowed to discriminate against women workers, and nobody should be allowed to refuse, dismiss or neglect women for the reasons of family responsibilities and childbirth. Specific issues to be addressed in law and practice include:

- the Labor Law should explicitly prohibit discriminatory recruitment practices and dismissal of women workers due to pregnancy, maternity and family responsibilities;
- laws and/or regulations prescribing different obligatory retirement ages of men and women should be abolished;
- the existing maternity protection provisions and arrangements require substantial improvements to allow for wider and more effective coverage.

(5) Carry out policies/regulations on maternity protection effectively and protect the maternity rights of labourers. The government should take major responsibility for the maternity protection of women by revising and improving relevant laws/regulations so that maternity protection covers not only female staff, but also all female labourers in informal sectors. Maternity protection of women workers should include health protection during pregnancy, obstetrical and nursing period; maternity leave entitlement and protection; medical subsidies of maternity; breastfeeding time of mothers; provide various types of childcare facilities; not being discriminated against in employment because of pregnancy; and so on. The government should also take effective measures to change the situation that

²⁸ Along with its fast economic development, China’s financial revenue has increased significantly. The national financial revenue was 6.2 billion yuan in 1950, and it took 28 years to break the 100 billion yuan mark (113.2 billion yuan in 1978). It took 21 years to increase from 100 billion yuan to 1 trillion yuan (1.1444 trillion yuan in 1999). It took four years to increase from 1 trillion yuan to 2 trillion yuan; it only took two years to increase from 2 trillion yuan to 3 trillion yuan. In 2006, China’s financial revenue approached 4 trillion yuan [*China Statistical Digest 2007* (China Statistical Press, 2007). Now is the best time for the government to adjust the structure of financial expenditures and pour more money into basic public services (Wang Yiming, 2007).

the maternity insurance fund cannot be used effectively; even though the system of maternity insurance is established, the fact that women are still refused entry in the labour market has not changed yet.

(6) Establish and improve the family policy of “caring for family” and “focusing on people first”, which suits the market economic system. In China’s social policy framework, there has never been the concept of “caring for family” in family policy.²⁹ We suggest that the government should learn from the useful experience of the international community, develop and improve a policy system specifically targeted at family’s special needs, and encourage society to bear different forms of family responsibilities. For example, introduce a personal income tax support policy for special families for the purpose of reducing their burdens of looking after the old and bringing up the young; expand the scope of family welfare policy to include children, old people, disabled people and people with special difficulties by starting with family needs; expand the current pre-school education policy to cover education and upbringing, develop the public facilities of nursery schools and kindergartens, and reduce the family burden of bringing up children; introduce the policy of “vacation for parents to look after the baby” and encourage the father to take the baby-nursing responsibility; combine community construction with family services and build the social support system for families in order to help male and female family members to maintain a balance between work and family life.

(7) Enterprises and work units equally have the responsibilities to improve the working conditions of workers who have family responsibilities, and should try to provide the convenience of work and family care for men and women workers. In the new situation, enterprises should draw on international experience; increase their awareness and capability of social responsibilities; respect and protect workers’ right of labour and right of life; guarantee a reasonable work time and income for workers; protect their right to take rest, vacation, holidays and maternity leave; and try to provide flexible forms of employment and convenience of daily life and transportation for men and women workers who have family responsibilities, in order to build up a balanced and harmonious labour-management relationship, stimulate workers’ enthusiasm, increase enterprises’ competitiveness and enhance enterprises’ image.

(8) Build up a good social order of “caring for family”, “being good to men and women workers with family responsibilities”, “gender equality”, and “men and women share social responsibilities and family responsibilities together”. Through mass media and different forms of education, advocate the culture of respect for women, respect for basic human rights, respect for family values and gender equality, and the culture of men and women sharing family responsibilities and social responsibilities together in the whole society, especially among public servants and male citizens. The deep-rooted and old-fashioned idea that “men in charge of external affairs and women in charge of internal affairs” should be eliminated.

(9) Strengthen statistics and studies in relevant fields. In the process of writing this report, we found that the statistics and studies related to the work-family conflict for men and women workers with family responsibilities are very limited in China. This affects our analysis of problems and policies in this field. Therefore, we should strengthen statistics and studies of work and family issues in relevant administrative departments, including

²⁹ Family-related laws and policies, such as the Marriage Law, the Law on Healthcare for Mother and Baby, the Law on Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests, the Law on Protection of Minors, and the Law on Population and Family Planning, are mainly oriented at the rights and duties of some groups and individual citizens, and yet without the support for and the protection of family.

information about the enforcement of laws and policies, in order to promote the improvement of relevant policies and the development of relevant undertakings.

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