



AS IT IS

## Chinese Officials Ask Newlyweds: 'Where Is Baby?'

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After having a “one-child policy” from 1980 to 2015, China appears to be worried about dropping birth rates.

The number of births in the nation may drop below 10 million this year. That is lower than the year before and follows an 11.5 percent drop in 2020.

As a result, some newly married **couples** say they are getting phone calls from their local government asking if a baby is on the way.

That information made news around the world after an internet user posted a story about a friend on the social media service Weibo recently.

The writer of the post said a co-worker had gotten married last year. Shortly after, she got a call asking if she was taking the vitamin folic acid, which is supposed to help with pregnancies.

Later, another caller asked the woman if she was already pregnant.

“You are married, why are you still not preparing for pregnancy,” the caller asked. She was then told: “Take the time to have a baby.”

The writer said the calls had come from the **regional** government in Nanjing.

Thousands of people commented on the story on Weibo, saying they had received similar calls or heard from friends who had.

The post was then removed later in the day.

The story comes just one week after China's President Xi Jinping said the country would put in place a plan to raise birthrates and increase the population.

Some Chinese have been concerned about having babies because of the country's "zero COVID" policy. The policy permits the government to put strong controls in place to limit the spread of COVID-19. Experts say the restrictions have some people worried about raising children in a place where the government has such strong rules.

In addition, the comments from Chinese leaders at the recent Communist Party meeting in Beijing have women worried that they will not have the same rights as men in the future.

The National Health Authority said in August that China will **discourage** ending pregnancies that are not medically necessary. Also, a new law places a 30-day cooling-off period on a husband and wife seeking to legally end their marriage.

I'm Mario Ritter, Jr.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by Reuters.*

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## Words in This Story

**regional** -adj. related to a part of a country that is different or separate from the others for some reason

**couple** -n. two people who are married or who are together

**discourage** -v. to make something less likely to happen

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*We want to hear from you. Does your country express concern about the birth rate?*

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