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**AP** Associated Press

# China facing major gender imbalance

*57 minutes ago*

China will have 30 million more men of marriageable age than women in less than 15 years as a gender imbalance resulting in part from the country's tough one-child policy becomes more pronounced, state media reported Friday. Traditional preferences for sons has led to the widespread - but illegal - practice of women aborting babies if an early term sonogram shows it is a girl.

The tens of millions of men who will not be able to find a wife could also lead to social instability problems, the China Daily said in a front-page report.

China imposed strict population controls in the 1970s to limit growth of its huge population, but one side effect has been a jump in gender selection of babies.

"Discrimination against the female sex remains the primary cause of China's growing gender imbalance," Liu Bohong, vice director of the women studies institute under the All-China Women's Federation, was quoted as saying in a report from the State Population and Family Planning Commission.

Sex selective abortion is prohibited but the government says the practice remains widespread, especially in rural areas.

The report, carried in the newspaper, said China's sex ratio for newborn babies in 2005 was 118 boys to 100 girls, a huge jump from 110 to 100 in 2000.

In some regions such as the southern provinces of Guangdong and Hainan, the ratio has ballooned to 130 boys to 100 girls, the newspaper said. The average for industrialized countries is between 104 and 107 boys for every 100 girls.

The report predicted that by 2020 the imbalance would mean men of marriageable age — especially those with low income or little education — would find it difficult to find wives, resulting in possible social problems.

The problem is not just a rural issue, with the newborn gender imbalance also widening in cities. In the first 11 months of 2006, there were 109 boys born in Beijing for every 100 girls.

China Daily said one way to solve the problem would be to create a proper social security system so rural couples would not feel they needed a son to depend on when they get old.

Up to 800 million of China's 1.3 billion people live in the countryside.

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