



Definitions:

Children: According to the definition provided in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are persons below the age of 18, i.e. persons aged 0-17.

Ethnic minority groups: China is comprised of 56 different ethnic groups, including Han and 55 ethnic minority groups. China's ethnic minority groups are (in descending order by population size): Zhuang, Hui, Manchu, Uyghur, Miao, Yi, Tujia, Tibetan, Mongolian, Dong, Bouyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazak, Dai, She, Lisu, Dongxiang, Gelao, Lahu, Va, Shui, Naxi, Qiang, Tu, Mulam, Xibe, Kirgiz, Jingpo, Daur, Salar, Blang, Maonan, Tajik, Pumi, Achang, Nu, Ewenki, Jing, Jino, De'ang, Bonan, Russian, Yugur, Uzbek, Moinba, Oroqen, Drung, Hezhen, Gaoshan, Lhoba and Tatar.

Migrant children: Migrant children refers to those members of the migrant population who are aged 0-17 years. The migrant population refers to persons whose place of residence is different from the location (e.g. town/township or street committee) of their household registration (*hukou*), and who have left the location of their household registration for more than six months. It excludes the population whose current place of residence is different from that of their *hukou* registration, but is within the same city-level administration.

Left-behind children: Left-behind children refer to children who live in their original domicile, but do not live together with their parents, as either one parent or both parents have migrated. Rural left-behind children refer to left-behind children whose household registration locations are in rural areas.

Poverty-stricken area: Poverty-stricken areas include the original 592 "key poverty counties" identified by the Government of China for focused poverty alleviation efforts, and the 680 counties that form the 14 "poverty blocks" (11 blocks, along with the Tibet Autonomous Region, ethnically Tibetan regions in four provinces, and South Xinjiang), as defined in the new *Outline for Development-oriented Poverty Reduction for China's Rural Areas (2011-2020)*. There is an overlap of 440 counties between the list of "key poverty counties," and the updated "poverty blocks." Therefore, there are 832 distinct counties categorized as "poverty-stricken areas" for this factsheet.

Sex ratio: Sex ratio refers to the ratio of males to females in the population, and is an important indicator of sex composition. It is usually expressed as the number of males corresponding to every 100 females.

Sex ratio at birth: Sex ratio at birth refers to the number of live male births corresponding to every 100 live female births. In the absence of intervention, sex ratio at birth usually lies between 103 and 107.

Failure to receive or complete compulsory education: According to the *Compulsory Education Law* of the People's Republic of China promulgated in 1986, children of school age are subject to nine years of compulsory education. In this document, children who fail to receive or complete compulsory education include those who have never been to school, those who have graduated from primary school only, and those who have dropped out of primary school or junior secondary school.

Ethnic minority county: In this factsheet, ethnic minority county is defined as a county in which the ethnic minority child population accounts for over 50% of the total child population.

Data sources:

The data presented in PART I of this factsheet is mainly from the Sixth Population Census conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBS) in 2010, as well as from previous NBS censuses. The data source of PART II is the *China Household Ethnicity Survey* (CHES) conducted by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the School of Economics of Minzu University in seven Provinces/Autonomous Regions, including Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Guizhou and Hunan in 2011. The data in PART III is from the 5th National Health Services Survey (NHSS) conducted by the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) in 2013.

This factsheet has been developed on the basis of following two data analysis papers supported by UNICEF China Office: PART I, a paper prepared by Dr. Lv Lidan of Peking University during her consultancy with UNICEF China which has been published in the *Population and Development* (vol. 22, no. 1, 2016), using Population Census data provided by the Department of Population and Employment Statistics of NBS; PART II, a paper using CHES data co-authored by Dr. Lv Lidan during her consultancy with UNICEF China, Mr. Chen Xinzhi of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences during his internship with UNICEF China, and Ms. Xu Man of University of Minnesota during her internship with the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The paper is entitled "Language, education and health of children in rural minority areas of seven western provinces" and published as book chapter in *Chinese Household Ethnicity Survey 2013*.

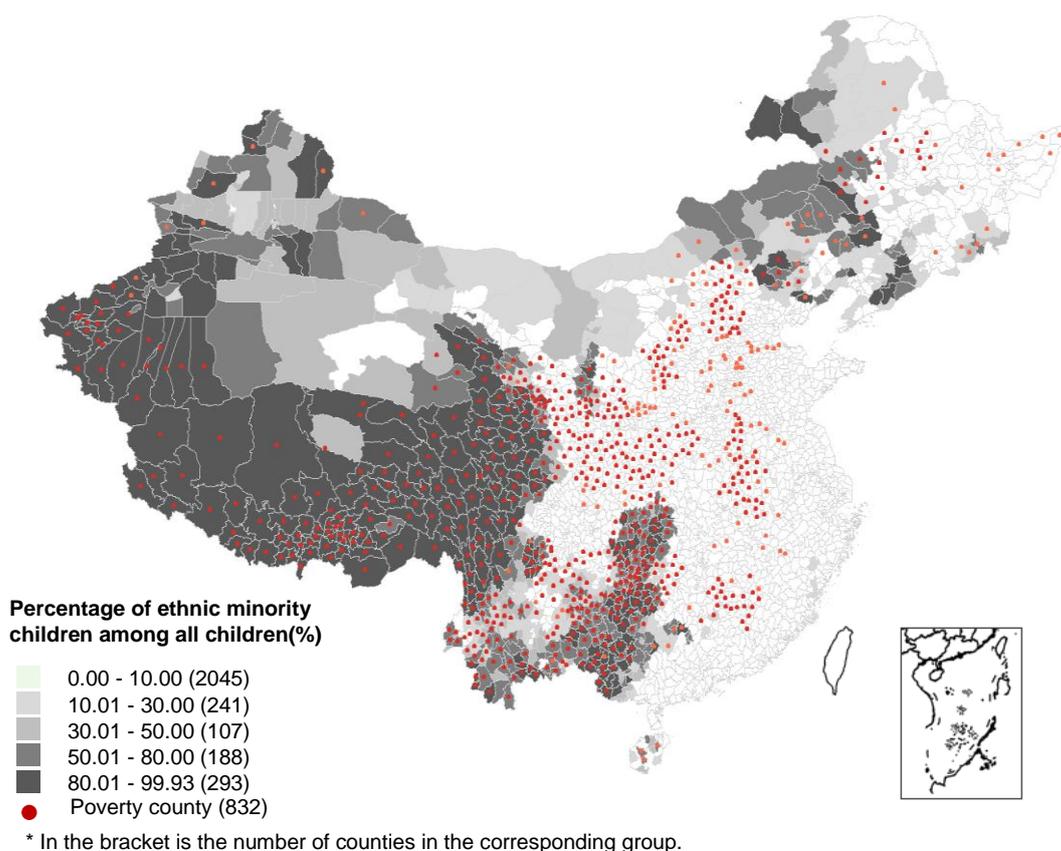
PART I: Demographics of ethnic minority children, based on 2010 Population Census

Basic Information on Ethnic Minority Children

- In 2010, there were 30.63 million ethnic minority children aged 0-17 in China, accounting for 27.4% of the overall ethnic minority population, which is higher than the percentage of children in the overall population of China (21%). The population structure of ethnic minority groups is relatively younger.
- In 2010, ethnic minority children made up 11% of the overall child population in China. This percentage was 7.6% in 1982, and has been increasing over time as a result of the relatively higher total fertility rate of ethnic minority groups and the preference for children from interethnic marriages among other factors. Interethnic marriage has also given rise to the number of mixed-ethnicity households; in 2010, 2.5% of the total households in China were mixed households of Han and ethnic minority groups.
- In 2010, there were nine ethnic minority groups with over 1 million in child population, including Zhuang, Uygur, Miao, Yi, Hui, Tujia, Manchu, Tibetan and Mongolian. The number of children in these ethnic minority groups totaled 23.76 million, representing 77.6% of all ethnic minority children in 2010.
- In 2010, among all ethnic minority children, there were 10.23 million aged 0-5, of which 5.03 million were aged 3-5 (pre-school age group); 14.89 million were aged 6-14 (compulsory education age group); and 5.51 million were aged 15-17 (senior secondary education age group).
- In 2010, among all ethnic minority children, 16.10 million (52.6%) were boys and 14.53 million (47.4%) were girls. The sex ratio of ethnic minority children was 111.
- In 2010, a total of 21.86 million or 71.4% of ethnic minority children lived in rural areas, compared with only 53.4% Han children in rural areas, reflecting lower urbanization rates for ethnic minority children.

- In 2010, there were 19.18 million ethnic minority children living in the 832 poverty counties, accounting for 62.6% of all ethnic minority children, and 27.4% of the total child population in the poverty counties.
- Following the distribution pattern of the overall ethnic minority population, ethnic minority children were also mainly located in the south western provinces in China in 2010. About 61% of ethnic minority children lived in five provinces, namely Guangxi, Guizhou, Yunnan, Xinjiang and Sichuan. Nationally in 2010, there were 481 counties with over 50% of its child population being ethnic minorities, of which 372 were poverty counties (see map below). Nationally 15.49 million or 51% of ethnic minority children lived in rural areas of the poor counties. Children living in rural areas with a high density of ethnic minority groups and high incidence of poverty are confronted with multifarious development challenges.

Map¹: Geographic Distribution of Ethnic Minority Children in China, 2010



Sex Ratio of Ethnic Minority Children

- In 2010, the sex ratio of ethnic minority children was 111 males per 100 females, which is higher than the normal range, but less so in comparison with the national average of 116. The sex ratio at birth (SRB) of ethnic minority population was 114, lower than the national average of 118, but still outside the normal range (SRB lies between 103-107 male births per 100 female births in the absence of interventions).
- Under the influence of various social and cultural factors, the SRB and the sex ratio of children from different ethnic minority groups vary widely. The sex ratio is severely imbalanced for some ethnic minority groups, while for other groups it is within the normal range or experiencing slight adverse imbalance.
- Since the Government of China adopted a more flexible family planning policy towards ethnic minority groups, nearly half of all ethnic minority families with children had 2-3 children in 2010. The tendency of SRB to increase with the birth order is also observed among ethnic minority groups. The SRB of the first

¹ The boundaries and the map scale are only for the purpose of presenting data.

born in ethnic minority families was 109, which is close to the natural level, whereas the SRB of the second child and the third child were 120 and 129 respectively, showing an apparent growing trend. Some studies have shown that there may be competition in families with two or more children for access to limited family resources, which could lead to children dropping out of school, and lower parental expectation on children's educational attainment.

Ethnic Minority Children Affected by Migration

- In 2010, about 14% of the ethnic minority population were migrants, lower than the percentage of all migrants of the national population (16.5%), which reflects lower mobility of ethnic minority groups compared with the national average. Correspondingly, it is less likely for ethnic minority children to become migrant or left behind children compared to Han children. The reasons for low mobility generally has to do with ethnic cultures and traditions, as well as general Mandarin proficiency.
- In 2010, nationally, there were 3.18 million migrant ethnic minority children, and 6.58 million left-behind ethnic minority children in rural areas and 500,000 in urban areas. A total of 10.26 million, or 1/3 of ethnic minority children were directly affected by migration.
- In 2010, 72.4% ethnic minority children lived with both parents, 14.3% lived with one parent, 6.8% lived with grandparents, and 3.7% lived with siblings or alone. The percentage of living with both parents among ethnic minority children is 3 percentage points higher than that of the national average.
- Migration is the major reason that keeps children from living with both parents. In 2010, among 8.44 million ethnic minority children who were not able to live with both parents, 90% were children affected by migration, including 7.08 million left-behind children and 1.12 million migrant children.

Education of Ethnic Minority Children

- The literacy level of ethnic minority groups has been improving significantly in the past three decades. In 1982, the adult illiteracy and semi-illiteracy rate of ethnic minority population was 42.5%, whereas in 2010, the adult illiteracy rate of ethnic minority population aged 15 and above was reduced to 8.2%. However, compared with the national average, the literacy levels of ethnic minority groups are still lagging behind: the illiteracy rate of ethnic minority adults was 1.8 times that of Han adults. Due to universalization of nine-year compulsory education, the youth (15-24 years old) illiteracy rate was only 0.4% in 2010 nationally. However, the rate was relatively higher for ethnic minority youth at 1.8%.
- In 2010, there were evident gender disparities in terms of literacy levels of ethnic minority populations. The adult illiteracy rate of ethnic minority women was 11.4%, which was 2.3 times that of men. The illiteracy rate was 2.3% for female ethnic minority youth, one percentage point higher than that for male ethnic minority youth.
- In 2010, school attendance rates among ethnic minority children were lower than the national average at all age groups. It should be noted that with the increase of age, and especially at the senior secondary stage, the rate drops drastically. School attendance rates of ethnic minority children was 94.1% in the 6-11 (primary school) age group, 92.7% in the 12-14 (junior secondary school) age group, and only 68.2% in the 15-17 (senior secondary school) age group. The school attendance rate for senior secondary school stage was 12 percentage points lower than the national average.
- Urban-rural disparities in school attendance rates are observed among ethnic minority children at all age groups, and such disparities are increasingly evident with the increase of age. School attendance rate of ethnic minority children in senior secondary education in urban areas was 23 percentage points higher than that in rural areas.

- There are no significant gender disparities in terms of school attendance rates at primary and junior secondary stages. However, at senior secondary stage, the percentage of boys in schools was 3.7 percentage points lower than that of girls.
- In 2010, the percentage of out-of-school ethnic minority children in the 6-17 age group was 13.0%, or about 2.65 million. Even excluding the 320,000 children aged 6 who were not yet enrolled in school, there were still 2.33 million ethnic minority children aged 7-17 out of school, mainly older children aged 15-17 (1.7 million). About 80% of older ethnic minority children who dropped out of school have joined the work force, while 20% or nearly 400,000 were unemployed.
- In 2010, 7.2% of ethnic minority children aged 6-17 failed to receive or complete compulsory education as required, which was over 2 times that of the national average for the same age group. That gives an estimation of 1.47 million ethnic minority children not receiving or completing compulsory education, and 87% of them living in rural areas. Even excluding the 320,000 children aged 6 who were not yet enrolled in school, there were still 1.15 million ethnic minority children aged 7-17 who failed to receive or complete compulsory education.
- Studies have indicated that delayed school entry is a major factor that causes school-aged children to drop out. There are cases of delayed school entry among both Han and ethnic minority children at all age groups, yet there is a higher prevalence of such cases among ethnic minority children. The percentage of delayed school entry at primary, junior secondary and senior secondary stages in 2010 among ethnic minority children were 18%, 43% and 39%, respectively.

Marriage and Childbearing Practices of Ethnic Minority Youth

- In 2010, the proportion of married ethnic minority adolescents aged 15-19 was 3.7%, significantly higher than the proportion among Han adolescents (1.1%). There were 340,000 married ethnic minority adolescents aged 15-19, accounting for 1/4 of all married adolescents nationwide.
- In 2010, most married adolescents aged 15-19 were women. There were 270,000 married ethnic minority women aged 15-19, accounting for 4/5 of the entire married ethnic minority population in that age group.
- In 2010, the adolescent fertility rate of ethnic minority women aged 15-19 was 15 births per 1,000 women, which was 3 times that of their Han counterparts. However, this is equivalent to the average level in the Asia Pacific region, and is still at the low-end globally.

Ethnic Minority Children with Pending *Hukou* Status

- In 2010, there were 1.67 million ethnic minority children aged 0-17 with pending *Hukou* status (not yet with a registered residence), accounting for 88.8% of the entire ethnic minority population with pending *Hukou* status (1.88 million), and 5.5% of all ethnic minority children.
- Compared with Han children, ethnic minority children are more likely to encounter pending *Hukou* status. There were 12.36 million children with pending *Hukou* status across the country in 2010, accounting for 4.4% of the total child population in China. This proportion is lower than that of ethnic minority children.
- In 2010, 84.5% of ethnic minority children with pending *Hukou* status lived in rural areas.
- Most ethnic minority children with pending *Hukou* status are young children, 60% of whom were aged 0-2 in 2010. With the increase of age, some ethnic minority children are registered to access education among other reasons.
- Compared with Han population, the proportion of school-aged children with pending *Hukou* status is higher among the ethnic minority population. In 2010, there were 19.9% ethnic minority children aged 6 and above with pending *Hukou* status, 6.3 percentage points higher than that of Han children. Because *Hukou*

status is closely linked with access to various social services, ethnic minority children are facing more challenges in equal access to education, health and other services compared with Han children.

- Among all ethnic minority children with pending *Hukou* status, 839,000 were boys and 835,000 were girls, which makes the sex ratio at 100 males per 100 females, significantly lower than the sex ratio of the overall ethnic minority child population (111 males per 100 females). Meanwhile, the sex ratio of ethnic minority children with pending *Hukou* status is decreasing with the increase of age, such that the sex ratio was below 90 males per 100 females for age 6 and above, lower than 80 for age 16-17, and below 60 for adults. This indicates that among all ethnic minority children with pending *Hukou* status, girls are more likely to suffer from long-term or even life-long impact than boys.

Water and Sanitation Facilities in Ethnic Minority Households

- There are still gaps between Han and ethnic minority population in access to safe water, but it mainly exists in rural areas. In 2010, only 36.3% of ethnic minority households in rural areas had access to piped water in the house, which was lower than the figure of Han rural households (42.3%). In urban areas, however, the coverage of piped water in the house for both ethnic minority and Han households has exceeded 80%.
- Gaps between Han and ethnic minority populations in terms of sanitation facilities still exist in both rural and urban areas, and is more evident in rural areas. In rural areas, more than half (56.7%) of ethnic minority households did not have latrines in the house, which was 19 percentage points higher than that of Han households. Even in urban areas, there were still 22.7% of ethnic minority households with no latrines in the house, 7 percentage points more than that of Han households.
- The overlapping of ethnic minority status and poverty status has compounded the lack of safe water and sanitation facilities. Take latrines as an example, in ethnic minority poverty counties, 48.8% of households had no latrine facilities in the house, whereas only 36.9% and 42.5% of households had no latrine facilities in the house in ethnic minority non-poverty counties and non-ethnic minority poverty counties, respectively.
- Under the influence of different ethnic cultures and social traditions, the access to sanitation facilities within different ethnic minority groups also varies. In 2010, the percentage of households with no latrine in the house of different ethnic minority groups ranged from 13.6% to 90.8%.

PART II: Additional information on child health and education from *China Household Ethnicity Survey (CHES)* in seven provinces, 2011

In 2011, the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the School of Economics of Minzu University conducted the CHES in seven provinces/autonomous regions including Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Guizhou and Hunan, which looked into the health and education status of children.

Health

- In the seven surveyed provinces/autonomous regions with high proportion of ethnic minority groups, when parents are experiencing physical and psychological health problems, the children are more likely perceived to be in a poor health. The percentage of adolescents perceived with poor health is higher than that of young children.
- The absence of migrant parents has significant influence on the physical or psychological health of children. The percentage of children perceived to have physical or psychological issues are the highest among mother-absent families.

- On average, the number of days that an ethnic minority child cannot live a normal life or attend school due to injuries and sicknesses was 1.7, less than the average 2.6 days of a Han child.
- If the parents drink or smoke regularly², children would be more likely to follow such habits. The influence of mothers in this regard is especially evident.
- 13.2% of Han youth and 15.2% of ethnic minority youth aged 15-24 had at least drink per week. 22.7% of Han youth had at least one cigarette per day, compared to 21.2% of ethnic minority youth. In general, the percentage of drinking and smoking among young men is much higher than that of young women.

Education

- In the seven surveyed provinces/autonomous regions, most ethnic minority children attend public schools at the compulsory education stage. Thanks to the "Two Exemptions and One Subsidy" Policy launched by the national government, school fees do not pose financial burden on families in general. In western rural areas with high proportion of ethnic minority population, however, 8.3% of ethnic minority children were still attending fee-charging schools for compulsory education.
- Among rural ethnic minority children, 33.2% were attending ethnic minority schools, a unique education system in ethnic minority regions in China. Uyghur had the highest percentage of over 90% children attending ethnic minority schools, and Tibetan children rank second with 84.4%. For Yao, Tujia, Hui and Salar, less than 10% of their children attended ethnic minority schools.
- The percentage of boarding students among Mongolian, Tujia and Yao children was above 60%. Non-boarding students of all ethnic minority groups, except for Salar, spent less than 25 minutes on average to travel from home to school.
- Most families, whether they have one or more children, hope to support their children to complete undergraduate education, and even further higher education. The percentage of families with such aspirations was lower among ethnic minority groups. However, there seems to be no gender disparities. The expected educational level which parents willing to support their children to attain decreases when the number of children in the family increases. This inverse relationship is more evident for ethnic minority families.
- The proficiency of ethnic minority children in their ethnic languages has much to do with the vitality of the ethnic language and the influence from the parents. Ethnic minority children's listening and speaking skills in their ethnic languages are better than reading and writing, which is the same case for both boys and girls. However, the reading and writing skills of ethnic minority girls in Mandarin are stronger than boys.
- The proficiency in one's ethnic language is correlated with the following factors: the teaching language in primary and junior secondary education, the availability of ethnic language curriculum in primary and junior secondary education, and the parents' ability to converse in the ethnic language. Bilingual teaching had been proven to be more effective in promoting children's competency in local ethnic languages than only using the ethnic language for teaching. However, over 70% of ethnic minority children at compulsory education stage were only taught in Mandarin in school.

² Here drinking regularly is defined as having at least one drink per week, and smoking regularly is defined as having at least one cigarette per day.