

Family Life

The traditional vision of family life in China is one of a strong family unit led by the father and husband, who largely has absolute rule and control of the family. Religion plays a major part in defining the roles and responsibilities of family members. Confucianism taught social order and behavior. This control also extended to selection of marriage partners, which was often arranged for the children.

Much has changed today in the family make-up. The father still remains the strong family leader and decision maker. At a minimum, he influences the major decisions of the children. But, normally he no longer exerts absolute control. The father no longer arranges the marriage, although this still exists in some of the most traditional families and in less developed areas. Children select their career fields, again strongly influenced by the father.



Dating does not usually begin until the early twenties. Typically, young adults will date just a few people, perhaps only one, before choosing a partner. The average age for marriage is 25 to 30 years old. The bride will usually wear a long white wedding gown. The bride will not change her name. As in any country, there are strong traditions around the entire process, from selecting partners to proposing to planning the wedding to the wedding itself. Chinese Wedding Customs is an outstanding guide to the process from start to finish.

Children typically live with the parents until marriage. After a brief honeymoon, the newlyweds will move into an apartment. But, it is not uncommon for newly married couples to remain in one of the parents' homes for a short period after the marriage. The newly married couple then move into a small apartment with one or two bedrooms, a bath and cooking/living room.

The couple are allowed by Chinese law one child. There are exceptions to the one child rule, the most common being minority groups, and in areas

where there is labor shortage (rural areas and farms).