

Baby woes

	CHINA	JAPAN	SINGAPORE	SOUTH KOREA
Total fertility rate (2018)	1.65	1.42	1.14	0.98
Contributing factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China's one-child policy curbed population growth in order to speed up economic development. • The government relaxed its one-child policy in 2013, and it became a full two-child policy in 2016. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The burst of the economic bubble in the 1990s resulted in school leavers who could not secure regular employment. • Many find providing for themselves a challenge, let alone starting a family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Singaporeans are marrying later in life and need help to conceive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are delaying or avoiding marriage. • Other reasons include the high cost of raising a child, and high youth unemployment.
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some provinces have offered free delivery for second-time mothers, while others are handing out bonuses and subsidies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New parents are entitled to leave of up to a year, and are paid up to 80 per cent of their wages through government benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marriage and Parenthood Package includes a Baby Bonus cash gift, Child Development Account, personal income tax relief and rebate, as well as enhanced paternal and maternal leave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government has spent 135 trillion won (\$\$157 billion) since 2005 to boost the birth rate, providing child subsidies to parents and launching campaigns to encourage young South Koreans to wed and have children, without success.

NOTE: Total fertility rate refers to the average number of children a woman has in her lifetime.

STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS