

# Unmarried youths in China: Understanding the contemporary gender issues

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## **Abstract:**

*The term “leftover women” or (Sheng nü) is an urban phenomenon in China. The term is used for single women with higher qualification and higher income. Chinese society is also witnessing a phenomenon called “bare branches” or (guanggun). The term is for those men of a certain age who remain unmarried. These men have been unable to find a spouse and remain single for the lifetime. China’s surplus male population leads to a large number of bare branches. Women from the rural areas seek to change their fortune by migrating to the cities and marrying someone from a higher social class. As a result, there is a marriage squeeze in rural China. With increasing bride price, many men in the rural areas are unable to pay bride price and thus remain unmarried. As research suggests, the reason for shortage of girls in China is not poverty. There are many reasons like son preference among Han Chinese and some minority communities. Low fertility and sex selective abortions are also to blame for rising gender gap. A study conducted by jiajun.com in 2013 reveals that while “leftover men” are more likely to be uneducated and poor, the “leftover women” are highly educated and well established. There are major ramifications of gender imbalance, many males will be unable to marry causing social instability. Out of China’s 1.4 billion population, there are 34 million more males than females. This paper will use present literature, media reports and open data to analyze the phenomenon of “leftover women” and “Bare branches” in China. The paper discusses government’s effort to tackle the problems and suggests policy measures.*

## **Understanding “Leftover Women”**

“Leftover women” is a relatively new phenomenon in China. It refers to those women who are highly qualified and unable to find a match. In Chinese the term “Sheng” refers to something that is left out. These women are unmarried and are in willing to get married. In Chinese social media people generally use the synonym “3S” for “leftover women”. Single, stuck and seven (born in 70’s). And some mention them as Holy women ( sheng nü) .

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