surveys in the 1980s and 1990s. The exception is that the overall ratio of 1.18 we found for Anhui prior to 1980 is significantly higher than the ratio of 1.07 reported for all of China during that period.

The sex ratio for last-born children was high (1.32–1.79) regardless of family size (Table 2). By contrast, for families with three children, the sex ratio was slightly less than one for the first two children; for families with four or five children, the sex ratios were even lower before the last child. This illustrates that families with many daughters continue to have children until a son is born and then end childbearing, a phenomenon that has been attributed to the government control of family planning. An analysis of Hebei and Shaanxi provinces has found a similar pattern.

We also examined sex ratios for the last child by both family size and sex of prior children. The sex ratio for only children (1.58) was significantly higher than expected (1.06) regardless of the sex of the prior child. However, while the sex ratio for the last child was exceptionally high among couples with a total of two or three children when the prior children were girls (3.94 and 3.79, respectively), it was not significantly elevated if the prior children were all boys.

The sex ratios for two- and three-child families presented in Table 3 are higher than those reported from a 1990 survey in Anhui. However, the 1990 data were based on women who may have gone on to have more children. When we included couples who had additional children, we also found lower sex ratios (not shown).

### Treatment of Children

Overall, girls were breastfed for a significantly shorter period than boys, a practice that has also been documented in other studies. Since women stop breastfeeding when they become pregnant, this finding may be because the women in our sample tended to become pregnant sooner after the birth of a girl than after the birth of a boy.

The difference in breastfeeding duration between girls and boys increased with parity. For firstborn children, boys were breastfed for significantly longer than were girls, but the difference in the median durations was only one month (15.5 vs. 14.5). However, girls with only an older sister were breastfed for a significantly shorter time (14.9 months) than boys or girls with only an older brother or than boys with only an older sister (18.2–18.5 months). The greatest difference in the duration of breastfeeding was for third-born children: Girls with two older sisters were breastfed for 14.9 months, whereas boys with two older brothers were breastfed for 23.9 months. Third-born children with a brother and sister were breastfed for 18.8 months.

The mean duration of breastfeeding for girls with one older sister and no brothers (15.7 months) was very similar to that for girls with only two older sisters (16.3). The duration of breastfeeding in families with two or three boys and no girls was not significantly different from that in two- or three-child families with both boys and girls.

Firstborn children who were delivered in hospitals had high sex ratios before 1980 (1.33) and in 1987–1993 (1.32), but not in 1980–1986 (1.02). The sex ratio also was high for firstborn children delivered at home before 1980 and in 1987–1993, and ratios among infants delivered at home were not significantly different from those of infants born at a hospital. This finding contradicts the notion that Chinese couples who know the sex of their unborn child seek hospital care for the delivery of boys, but not girls. However, it may also indicate that girls born at home are underreported.

During 1980–1986, the sex ratio for third-born infants delivered at home was significantly higher than expected (1.31). Couples who had a third child during this period of tight family planning control probably did not have a permit and delivered clandestinely.

### Waiting Time to Next Birth

Couples whose first child was a girl were significantly more likely to have a second child, and were likely to have their second child sooner, than couples whose first child was a boy (Table 4). Couples with two girls were significantly more likely to have a third child than were couples with two boys or a boy and a girl. For instance, 75% of those with two girls had a third child within 44 months after the previous birth. By contrast, 25% of couples with two boys had a third child within 34 months after the second, but fewer than 50% had a third birth. Thus, the sex of a couple’s children apparently affects subsequent childbearing. Furthermore, there is no evidence of a desire to have at least one daughter, because couples with two boys appeared to be less likely to have a third child than were couples with a boy and a girl, although the difference was not statistically significant.

Before 1980, families with one boy did not differ from those with one girl with respect to the interval between first and second births (Figure 1). However, in 1980–1986 and 1987–1993, couples with one girl had a second child in a significantly shorter time than couples with one boy. For example, in both periods, 75% of couples with one girl had a second child after three years, whereas 75% of those with one boy had a second child only after more than four years.

For third-born children, the difference in waiting time was even more pronounced and was significant for all three periods. After 1980, couples with two girls waited substantially less time to have a third child than did couples with either two boys or a boy and a girl. For example, in 1980–1986 and 1987–1993, at least 75% of those with two daughters had a third child within four years after the previous birth, compared with 25% or fewer of those with two sons. In fact, the proportion having a third child was not significantly different between couples with two boys and couples with a boy and a girl, suggesting that couples do not make a particular effort to have a girl once they have had a boy. Couples with larger families have a higher prevalence of girls at low parities, reflecting the differences in the sex ratio among the various childbearing periods.