

Introduction to the Project of Household Survey of Floating Population in Beijing

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Part 1: Research background and purpose

In the process of urbanization and industrialization in China, more and more people flood the labor force as they swarm into the cities from the rural areas. At present, more than 100 million farmers are engaged in industrial activities and business in cities. Rural emigrant laborers account for 23% of the total labor in rural areas (data in 2003). Half of the migrant laborers float across provinces to eastern regions (data in 2003). Due to the influence of the management system for household registration, the employment system, and the social welfare system, the floating population becomes a special group under the macroscopic background of the tremendous change in the social structure in China.

Due to specific location advantage, the large number of employment opportunities and favorable mechanisms in the market, it is inevitable for Beijing to be the focal absorption area for the floating populations in China. The floating population in Beijing sharply increased from 264.9 thousand in 1979 to 4 million in 2005, which is close to half of the resident population. Among the floating populations there are 2.407 million workers, accounting for over one-third of the workers in the three industries in Beijing; there are 976 thousand families composed of purely floating family members, accounting for about one-fifth of families in Beijing city. The above statistics mean that there is a great number of “unfloating” populations existing in the floating groups that have actually become “new immigrants”. This is the main cause of the continuous increase of the capital’s population since the 1990s. The huge floating population has brought about dynamics for Beijing's economic growth resulting in great pressures and challenges in terms of urban capacity and public governance for the capital city.

The Chinese government is now taking a variety of measures to tackle the issues of agriculture, the countryside, and farmers. The main goal is to bring nationalized treatment given to citizens to floating populations by means of reformation and innovation of the systems in place, ensuring that they receive the same treatment as legal citizens with respect to employment, social security, child education and housing, etc.

Through questionnaire surveys administered to floating families and their gathering communities in Beijing, we provide the government with detailed, first-hand data for this large migration group in terms of family structure, relative networks, social networks, employment channels, occupational conditions, residence conditions, cost of living, migration trends, and backgrounds of communities where floating populations gather. We will provide valuable reference information to help the government to realize humanitarian service.

Part 2: The samples of floating population families well-represented the general features of pure floating population families.

Through this survey, we obtained 2,532 responses from interviewed floating persons and their family members in Beijing, including basic information from a total of 3,248 individuals. Meanwhile, we attained 104 pieces of background information from 11 streets, 10 towns, 44 community committees and 39 village committees.

The surveyed area covers two central districts of the city, four suburbs and five exurbs. Most communities surround the joint zones between city and countryside and are located in five districts in ring road belts (Changping, Shunyi, Tongzhou, Daxing, Fangshan) where floating populations are densely distributed, involving bungalow areas, building areas, institution dormitory yards, property plots, basements, relocation areas, processing industrial areas, greenhouse vegetable production areas, floating population streets and yards, etc.

The subjects of this survey are pure floating families. In order to assess the results of the samples, we drew 1% of the samples from the sample survey of Beijing city in 2005 for comparison. Most of the population's basic feature indexes are similar (including age, sex, educational background, and marital status) except a minor difference in the rate of agricultural and non-agricultural registered permanent residency. It proves that the surveyed samples well represent the general situation. The results of the survey basically reflected the general situation of the pure floating families in Beijing in 2006.

Part3: Social and Economic Characteristics for Family Households of Floating Populations

1. Trends over extended periods in Beijing, stable work and living with the immigration character

1. The floating population over 5 years accounts for 30 % of those living in Beijing. In pursuance of the census of the migrant population in 1997 and a sample investigation of 1 % of the population in 2005, we calculated that the floating population living in Beijing for more than 5 years (people whose permanent place of registration remained there more than 5 years) has increased from 240,000 in 1997 to 1,190,000 in 2005. That proportion increased from 24 % to 33.2 %, and the total amount has quadrupled compared to 8 years ago.
2. The proportion of the whole family movement has risen to 41.2 %. The net exotic family households account for nearly 1/5 the total households in Beijing.
3. The proportion of children who are born and go to school in Beijing is high and is rapidly increasing. Among all the minor children of the visited floating households (inclusive of the underage children in Beijing, origins in other places and less than 15 years' old), 22.4 % are born in Beijing, and 35.0 % underage children living in Beijing now were born in Beijing.
4. The floating frequency within Beijing is low, and the address for residence is very fixed. The investigation of the 2532 families being visited showed that nearly 60 % of them have never moved. At the time of this investigation, these families had lived an average of 53 months in their present places; among the other 40% comprising families who move, the last move interval on average is nearly 48 months.
5. The employment proportion is high; unemployment is less and jobs are stable. Among the investigation subjects, including the family members, the workers over 16 years' old account for 83.4 %, and the persons engaged in housework only account for 7.2%. From the frequency of changing jobs we can see that nearly 80 % of the people are only engaged in one job, and the interval for those persons who have changed jobs is 59.9-62.2 months. Among those persons who do not change jobs, the present jobs have lasted 67.2 months on average, which is over 5 years, so

the work stability is quite high.

2. Concentrated profession distribution, low employment levels, integral lack of social labor guarantee

1. The trend of concentration is to Commerce and Service Industries. From the seven kinds of occupations defined by the state we can see that the “commerce and service industry” and “production and transportation equipment handling” have most of the migrant workers: in 2005, the population was 1,827,000, which accounts for 75.9 % of the 2,407,000, total workers, increasing from 590,000 in 2000 and exceeding by 31 % the proportion of the registered population.

2. The traditional service industry and low-side industry expanded further. From the standard 46 kinds of occupations in the “commerce and service industry,” 44.87% of the floating workers are concentrated in “purchasing and selling,” “catering services,” and “social services and residential services.” From the increasing trends we can see that the increased range of the floating workers in “social services and resident services” is the highest, which is up to 3 % and obviously higher than that for registered populations.

From the floating population family household investigation in 2006, we further see that the top 20 occupations for floating workers (covering 80 % workers) are as follows: other purchasers (mainly pitchmen), salespersons, decoration staff, enterprise principals (mainly self-employed laborers and private enterprise bosses), hairdressers, physical labors, environmental porters, sewers, waiters/waitresses in hotels, waiters/waitresses in restaurants, property managers, mechanical maintainers, waste recyclers and users, road and transportation equipment handlers and staff, Chinese food chefs, shop employees, household servants and nurses, computer and application engineering technicians, carpenters, and administrative staff. This indicates that the floating population is mainly absorbed into occupations of low technical content that gives priority to physical labor.

3. Giving priority to the personal industrial and commercial entity and private enterprise, the rate of participation in insurance, signing labor contracts and handling licenses is very low. The 59.6 % of the visited persons working in personal industrial and commercial entities, plus the 22.3 % of the workers in private enterprises, together cover 81.9 % of the total subjects under investigation. The proportion of the visited subjects who do not have any social insurance is up to 86.5 %; among the visited subjects whose positions are employees, 67.9 % of them do not sign labor contracts with their employers; 37.6 % of employers and self-employed laborers do not have licenses, furthermore, 17.4 % of employers and self-employed laborers borrow business licenses from others.

3. As a whole, workers are not low income earners, but demonstrate the features of low consumption and high accumulation

1. The income of migrants as a whole is lower than that of registered residents, but the income level of workers divided according to local households in the second and third industries is higher than that of local residents.

2. As a whole, they are low in consumption and poor in lodging. Data from household questionnaires of migrant populations show that in consumption, the living expenses of a migrant population household is 1,753 Yuan per month, and average expenses of a person is 838 Yuan per

month, lower than 1,104 Yuan, which is the average expense of a Beijing downtown resident in a month in 2005.

Regarding living conditions, migrant populations mainly rent single-story houses, accounting for 69.7%, and 12.7% of them rent basements. Most houses are poor in construction quality with simple and crude internal facilities.

3. Accumulation rate is high, as subjects keep certain economic contacts with their hometown. Investigation into migrant households show that the interviewed subject saves on average 1033 Yuan per month in Beijing, accounting for 36% of the total income of their family. Additionally, over half of the migrant families send or have someone take money to their hometown (4,477 Yuan per year on average, which is 373 Yuan per month, accounting for over 15% of their family income).

4. Non agricultural floating populations are remarkably different from agricultural floating populations

1. Ratio and absolute amounts of non-agricultural migrants are in a rapid growth trend. The growth rate of non-agricultural migrants is apparently greater than that of agricultural migrants, from 661 thousand in 2001 to 1.158 million 2005. The ratio of floating population members who have left registered permanent residences for over half a year increased from 25.8% to 32.4%. Although agricultural populations are still the main body of migrants in Beijing, there is a tendency toward non-agricultural populations outside of Beijing settling in Beijing and rapid increases in intercity population migration.

2. Advantages in education and employment ability. First, the degree of education is far higher for workers in agricultural household than in migrants and resident populations in Beijing. Second, from 7 major national occupational standards, the floating population family household investigation and the 1% sampled population investigation demonstrate that non-agricultural practitioners have apparent employment advantages over the agricultural floating population, even Beijing household practitioners, in the areas of “principal of state organization, party and mass organization, enterprise and facilities units, and professional and relative personnel.”

Thirdly, income and expenses are higher for non-agricultural workers than agricultural migrant families, and even Beijing’s downtown resident families.

5. High satisfaction of work and life, and strong desire to stay in Beijing for a long period

1. Most hold a positive and optimistic living attitude. The “low consumption and high accumulation” living style shows the “gold seeking” idea of most migrants. Their reason for moving to Beijing is only to achieve higher income than in other places, and then to lay a better life or further development. To a certain degree, Beijing meets their expectations. Whether for agriculture household migrants or non-agricultural migrants, their income has improved somewhat compared with that earned in their hometowns. The data in the investigation shows that nearly half (49.7%) of the interviewees are very satisfied or quite satisfied with their current jobs, only 12.3% of interviewees expressed dissatisfaction or low satisfaction. At the same time, in interviewees who have just changed jobs, over half (54.1%) of them obtained higher incomes.

Job satisfaction is a good indicator of positive living levels. When answering “Do you feel satisfied with your current life,” 34.2% of interviewees gave positive answers, 45.4% expressed average satisfaction, and 20.4% of showed dissatisfaction. Since we commented that migrants

suffer in poor lodging conditions, according to the answers to the questionnaire, this opinion was not selected very often. For the question “what is your greatest difficulty in Beijing,” for either agricultural household migrants or non-agricultural household migrants, only 6.1% of them on average expressed one difficulty, and 24% of them select “no difficulty.” Under the conditions of low consumption and poor living conditions, only a few of the migrants showed dissatisfaction with their current life, which is quite a unique phenomenon. But considering the major motive for migrants to move (obtaining higher expected income) and the reference group who made the comment (compared with their hometown, but not with registered population), the phenomenon is not hard to understand.

2. A large number of households have less and less contact with relatives in their hometowns. Because a lot of migrants live in Beijing for long periods, and many of them have migrated there with their whole families with quite stable work and life, contact with their hometowns is getting weaker. Among all interviewees, 37.7% of them did not go back to their hometowns last year, and 18.4% of them go back every two or five years. During visitation interviews, some young or middle aged interviewees expressed that at present, they even feel unfamiliar with their hometowns, and they are more familiar with and adapted to their present communities and employment environments. Their children have never gone back to their hometowns.

3. The desire to live in Beijing permanently is strong. The data from migrant families shows that migrants’ desire to stay in Beijing permanently is quite strong. When asked, “If the current situation is kept unchanged, do you intend to stay in Beijing permanently?” 48% of interviewed subjects clearly expressed the desire to stay in Beijing permanently. Migrants’ lineal relative status is an important factor influencing their stay in Beijing. With the flowing interval of family members of migrants, the increase in number of migrants in Beijing, the shorter interval before following family members migrate, and with the major members of a family going to Beijing, the “whole family moving” of migrants appears to be increasing. The special investigation conducted by the State Bureau of Statistics in August 2005 also shows the same result. According to the investigation, although the income is low and lodging and medical conditions cannot be guaranteed, over half of farm workers still wish to develop and settle in a city and embrace the hope of a better life.

6 . “Compact communities” of floating populations

(1) In the 83 communities surveyed, the number of floating populations in 26 of these communities surpasses that of residents with Beijing registration—these are called “compact communities of floating populations.” “Compact communities of floating populations” are mainly village committees. 24 of the 26 compact communities are established by village committee. However, cultivatable land is limited. The land per capita of 24 villages is 0.6 acres, among which 7 villages have no cultivatable lands at all.

(2) Compact communities of floating populations are mainly located at the edge of the Beijing downtown area, especially areas near transport-convenient fifth-ring roads, the subway, airport and Beijing expressways.

(3) The rent of houses is the primary financial source of villages and local residents in compact communities of floating populations.

- In the 24 compact villages of floating populations, the main forms of collective economy includes the rent of village-owned houses, village-owned enterprises, and the rent of collective lands. Villages with rented houses as their main and most stable collective

income source account for 70% of the total villages surveyed.

- 54% of local residents rent houses. The ratio in some villages reaches 80%.
- Facilitated by the rent-economy, the compact villages can provide handsome collective welfare to local residents; 80% of villages surveyed provide pensions and medical subsidies, more than 50% of villages provide festival allowances and 1/3 of villages grant educational subsidies and provision subsidies.
- The average monthly income of residents renting houses is from 500 yuan to 3,000 yuan, equal to more than 1/3 of their total income.

Part 4: Discussion

1. Population floating - inevitable trend of social transformation and urbanization

1. Goal of the government—the urbanization ratio to reach 56% to 60% by 2020 (the ratio for 2005 was 42.9%), urban populations to get a net increase of 200 million to 300 million based on the current 560 million to 800 million—making the urban population surpass the rural population.
2. Persistence—the huge rural population creates the inevitable persistence of the phenomenon of floating populations as well as the problems it causes—it took Britain nearly 70 years to increase its urban population proportion from 1/4 to 1/2 and another 40 years to increase it from 1/2 to 3/4. The long process of urbanization is accompanied by the migration of rural populations to urban areas all the time.

2. Problems

1. Double-edged sword—large-scale population floating gives unprecedented impetus to the economic development of China, but at the same time brings overall challenges to China's Household Registration System, public services in urban areas, the social security system and social welfare policies.
2. On one hand, there emerges the problem of safeguarding the rights and interests of migrant workers - most of them do not have regular employment, earn low income, do not have social security, and thus do not enjoy real urbanization.
3. Populations staying in rural areas are mainly women, children and the elderly, namely the so-called “386199” population. About half of the women staying in rural areas cannot enjoy the love of their husbands, 23 million children left at home lack the care of their parents, and the old have no support without children around them.
4. On the other hand, there are problems with the capacity of cities, public management and social integration—disadvantaged groups form in cities, while migrants are economically admitted but socially excluded. They are separated from urban residents, although they are necessarily needed for the latter.
5. The problem of dual social management in urban areas mainly lies in floating population management.
6. System barriers
 - Educational system—compulsory education is administered by local finance. At present, floating children in primary schools and junior middle schools can enjoy equal treatment with registered children, but generally they have to return to their places of registration to

- take part in the entrance examinations to senior middle school and university;
- Housing system—originally houses were allocated in terms of units where the staff work; after the reform of commercial houses, one who wants to buy a house needs, in addition to the ability to afford it, local household registration;
 - Employment and social security (endowment insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance and housing fund)—all are managed by local authorities in the unit of the local urban registered population.

3. One Solution - Win-Win Strategy

1. Bringing the management of housing, employment, training and social security of migrant workers into the urban population management system.
2. First, safeguarding the rights and interests of floating populations to grant them fair treatment.
3. Second, enhancing the rationality of labor costs, the order of population floating and the effectiveness of population control in Beijing—which means that the government will be confronted with huge challenges.