

A Qualitative Analysis Of Internal Migration To Beijing

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What limits the Chinese government's response to internal migration to Beijing?

CONTEXT

Over 245 million people are internally migrating in China, with over 50% of the population living in urban areas.

Urban centers are struggling to address limited resources, pollution, traffic congestion, and growing class inequality.

The Chinese *Hukou* (户口) System is integral to this problem as it aims to control the migration of Chinese citizens and their access to public goods and services.

Recent Government Reforms:

- New-type Urbanization Plan (2014-2020) – focuses on *hukou* and land reform of 2nd and 3rd tier cities
- 13th Five Year Plan(2016-2020) – emphasizes *hukou* reform for migrant workers
- Beijing Local Government – cracking down on illegal constructions and unlicensed markets pushing out the migrant worker population

EMPIRICAL PUZZLE

Why are people still migrating to Beijing despite the Chinese government's efforts to disincentivize internal migration?



METHODOLOGY

- 30 Semi-structured Interviews
- Focus Group
- Beijing National Library
北京国家图书馆



BEIJING POPULATION

Migrant Workers

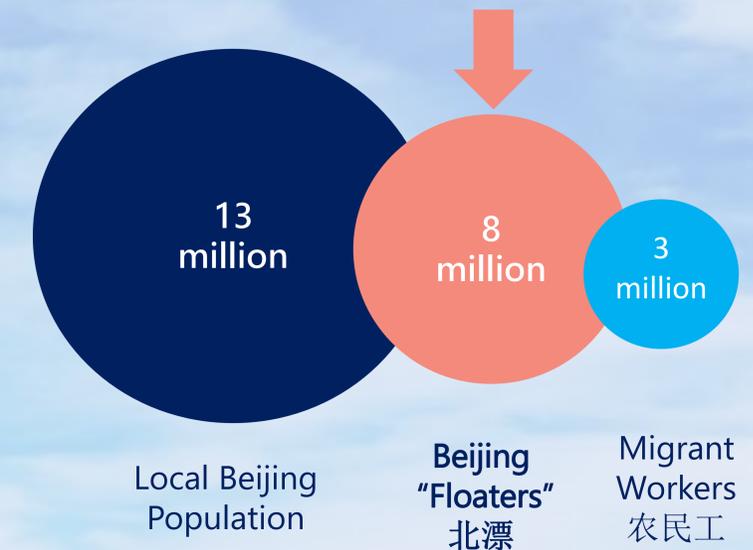
农民工

- Rural → Urban
- Uneducated
- Lower Class
- Labor Intensive Jobs
- No Beijing *Hukou*

Beijing "Floater"

北漂

- Urban → Urban
- Educated
- "Middle Class"
- White Collar Jobs
- No Beijing *Hukou*



KEY FINDINGS

Motivations for Migrating

- Education is top priority
- Perception of better job opportunities
- Status of Beijing

Key Takeaway: Rational decision-making, despite knowing that a struggle is inevitable due to their *hukou* status

Realities of Migration

- Generational differences in hardships
- Unsafe & Instable livelihood
- Rising housing costs and overcrowding

Key Takeaway: Identified need for belonging in Beijing, creating semi-hostile perceptions of migrant workers

Common Response to Government Reforms

- "Trust Beijing" – the government is already addressing this issue
- "It takes time" – change in China happens in stages
- "Paralyzed Situation" – nothing will change

ANALYSIS & CONCLUSIONS

Despite the popular narrative of migrant workers, this semi-skilled, educated population migrating to Beijing is significant to China's overall urbanization and urban planning apparatuses, and a comprehensive understanding of their expectations, realities, and interactions with current policies is a prerequisite to inform future government reforms.

In order to more effectively mitigate internal migration to Beijing, government responses must address the Beijing "floater" population by:

1. Incentivizing migration to 2nd and 3rd tier cities based on the motivations of this population
2. Recognizing the importance of establishing roots and a sense of belonging, not necessarily a local *hukou*, for long-term growth and stability of these cities
3. Creating a standard dialogue between local governments and Beijing populations during implementation of future policies