

# *Analysis of the Mechanism of Rural Population Change in the Context of Rural Revitalization*

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**Keywords:** Rural revitalization, rural population, population mobility, urbanization, rural development

**Abstract:** The rural revitalization strategy is the first strategic plan for China to solve the Three Rural Issues in the new era, and realize the modernization of agriculture and rural areas. To further clarify the impact of rural revitalization strategy on rural population changes in China and provide theoretical support for the promotion of rural revitalization strategy. This study analyzes the mechanism of rural population flow through field survey and literature analysis, and constructs a theoretical basis for the trend of “reduction and increase” of rural population flow. This study concludes that the problem of rural population decline in China will persist for a long time, but that “increasing the flow” of rural population is an important element in promoting rural revitalization. Cracking the population constraints of rural revitalization by alleviating the “reduction” and strengthening the “increase the flow”. Finally, this study proposes the following suggestions for further optimizing rural population development: (1) narrow the urban-rural gap and alleviating the “reduction” of rural population flow; (2) optimize the development environment and strengthen the “increase” of rural population flow; (3) enhancing service capacity to crack the rural elderly dilemma; (4) adjustment of administrative divisions and intensification of land use intensity.

## 1. Introduction

The rural revitalization strategy is an important deployment made by the Chinese government and is the primary strategic plan to solve the Three Rural Issues and realize the modernization of agriculture and rural areas in the new era. At present, China is in the initial stage of promoting a rural revitalization strategy, and the issue of the rural population is a practical factor affecting rural revitalization. In the twenty-first century, when China's economy is growing rapidly, the movement

of people between urban and rural areas has profoundly changed the social form of China and influenced the pattern of urban and rural economic development. However, with the advancement of industrialization and urbanization, the number, structure and distribution of the rural population have undergone significant changes, and the trend of hollowing out and aging of the population is obvious. There is obviously a gap between the supply of human resources in the countryside and the inherent requirement of realizing the rural revitalization strategy.

The study of urban-rural population mobility has been an important topic in social and economic development since the beginning of the 21st century. In recent years, the relevant research has mainly focused on the spatial pattern evolution and development trends of urban-rural population mobility [1-4]. The influencing factors of population distribution and outflow [5-9], and the characteristics of rural population migration [10-12]. The current population mobility pattern in China is showing a trend of moving from the central and southwestern regions to the coastal and border areas, with the concentration of the rural population continuously decreasing [1,2]; Economic factors are still the dominant factors affecting the distribution and mobility of rural population [8,9], while factors such as family support and national policies [5], family decision-making [6], labor and technology [7] all have a profound impact on population mobility. In terms of the characteristics of rural population migration, the occupational level, economic income, and other individual characteristics of agricultural migration populations are often proportional to the administrative level of urban migration [10]. Moreover, as economic growth and urbanization in China's central and western regions outpace those in the east, the traditional spatial characteristics of population migration flows have undergone a turning point [12]. In addition, some studies also involve theoretical exploration and explanatory model revision of urban-rural population mobility [13], rural population migration and rural residential land transformation [14], solving the contradiction between urbanization and rural revitalization [15], and regional differentiation characteristics of population aging [16]. With the release of the seventh population census data, some scholars have explored new trends and models of population mobility in China [17,18], and propose new suggestions and ideas [19].

In summary, China's current population issues are generally concerned about, the study of rural population mobility is also relatively rich, but it can also be found that the scale of the current study is too large, and there is a lack of theoretical investigation of rural population change under the influence of rural revitalization strategy. Therefore, this study integrates China's current socio-economic and rural population development situation, analyzes the mechanism of rural population change under the influence of rural revitalization strategy, and puts forward countermeasures and suggestions to optimize the development of rural population.

## **2. The Mechanism of the Action of Rural Revitalization Strategy on Rural Population Changes**

The main body of achieving rural revitalization is the rural population. In the process of promoting the rural revitalization strategy, the realization of various goals is achieved under the influence of the rural population. The rural population is the basic guarantee for achieving the goals of industrial prosperity, ecological livability, rural civilization, effective governance, and affluent living [20]. At the present stage, with the deepening of new urbanization and the implementation of rural revitalization strategy, the rural population is moving to both urban and rural areas, forming a trend of "reduced and increased flow". Based on the actual survey and the review of related literature, this study draws the mechanism of rural revitalization strategy on rural population change, as shown in Figure 1.

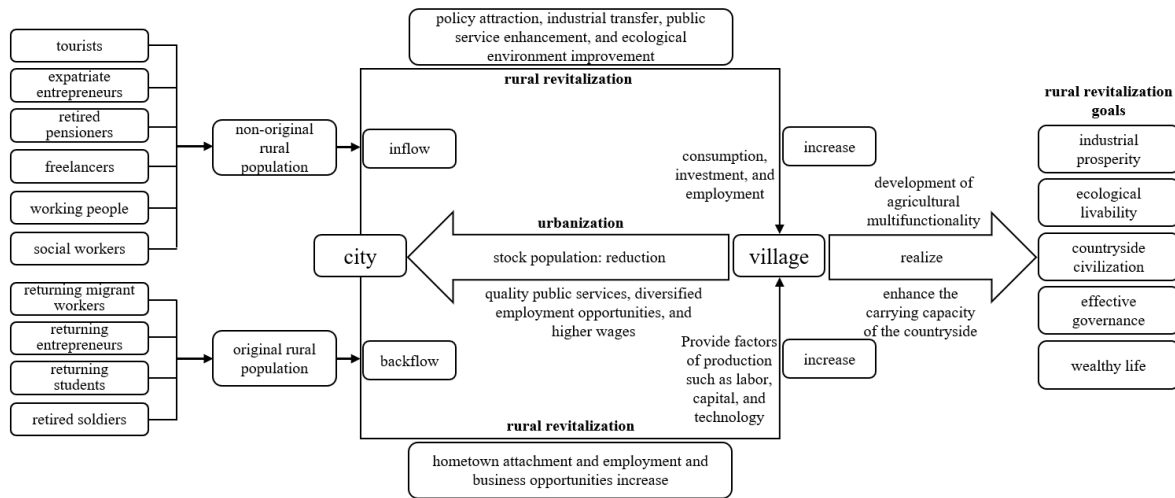


Figure 1: Mechanism of the Effect of Rural Revitalization Strategy on Rural Population Change

## 2.1. Rural Population Reduction under Rural Revitalization Strategy: The Siphon Effect of Cities and Towns

China's urbanization process is gradually accelerating, and cities and towns are better than rural areas in terms of economic development, quality of public services, employment and entrepreneurial environment, and income levels. Young adults in rural areas are migrating to cities on a large scale, which is of great significance for the development of new urbanization. At this stage and in the longer term, an important element of China's socio-economic development will continue to be the promotion of rural migration to cities and towns, which will lead to a higher level of urbanization.

At the same time, with the in-depth promotion of the rural revitalization strategy, the main position of the rural population becomes more and more important. However, rapid urbanization has also brought about an exodus of young and middle-aged people from the countryside, a yearly decline in the size of the rural population, and a hollowing out of the countryside. Currently, the main drivers of the gradual rural-urban migration originate from the following areas respectively: Firstly, the rapid development of cities has brought abundant and diverse employment opportunities, forming a spiral rise and forming a large siphon capacity for the rural population. Secondly, the income gap between urban and rural areas is also one of the main driving forces of population outflows. The relatively high income in urban areas forms the attraction, while agricultural production exhibits diminishing marginal returns and higher risks, which pushes the rural exodus. Driven by a combination of both, resulting in an outflow of population. Thirdly, the differences in the level of public services between urban and rural areas also form a population push and pull force between urban and rural areas. The core lies in the supply of public services for education and healthcare. Although the cost of obtaining public services in rural areas may not necessarily be higher from the perspective of obtaining public services, the significant differences in quality and standards also drive people to be forced into urbanization.

## 2.2. Rural Population Increase under the Rural Revitalization Strategy: Rural Attachment, Ecological Environment, and Development Opportunities

Although urbanization is still one of the main trends in the short term, with the continuous promotion of rural revitalization strategy, the gradual realization of urban-rural integration, and the strengthening of urban-rural connectivity. The strong local attachment, good ecological environment

and the development opportunities brought by rural revitalization are driving the rural population to “increase flow”, which will become the main trend of rural population change in the future. It can be predicted that in the process of deepening the rural revitalization strategy, the main source of the increase in rural population flow comes from two aspects: Firstly, the return of the rural population of origin, mainly including returning migrant workers, entrepreneurs, students, retired soldiers, etc. The second is the non-native rural population, mainly including tourists, foreign entrepreneurs, elderly retirees, freelancer, working people, social workers, etc.

First of all, for the non-native rural population, the driving force for increasing flow mainly comes from four aspects: Firstly, due to the special natural and economic conditions of some rural areas, urban tourists are attracted to rural areas for leisure, health, and labor. Secondly, relevant policies within the framework of rural revitalization strategy form economic attractiveness, promoting urban population to invest, start businesses, and obtain employment in rural areas, and forming a permanent population. Third, some urban residents are jointly affected by the thrust of urban environmental degradation and the pull of better ecological environment in rural areas, in the meantime, they have a certain degree of tolerance to the differences in urban and rural public services, thus living in rural areas for a long time. In some areas, “non-conversion to agriculture” has begun to appear at the registered residence population level; Finally, a group of social workers and rural assistance workers have formed a long-term presence in rural areas to assist.

Then, part of the rural population of origin continues to return home in the context of rural revitalization. This segment of the population forms the driving force for increased flow mainly in: Firstly, due to the iteration of urban industrial renewal and other reasons, hidden invisible unemployment is caused, making the urban-rural income difference not significant, and this type of population is forced to return to their hometowns. Secondly, those who have achieved economic success in the city and have lived in the city for a long time, due to their attachment to the countryside, the rural revitalization strategy has become a driving force to push this group of people to return to their hometowns to invest and build. This is mainly manifested as entrepreneurs returning to their hometowns or village sages returning to their hometowns. Thirdly, under the promotion of rural revitalization strategy, students and ex-soldiers of their origin, on the basis of acquiring corresponding knowledge, form a group of people who are willing to actively return to their hometowns for construction.

The above different types of people constitute different flow mechanisms of the rural population, forming the current situation of “reduce and increase flow” of the rural population, promoting the development of rural industries, boosting the multi-functional development of agriculture, enhance the carrying capacity of the countryside and ultimately achieve the goal of rural revitalization.

### **3. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations**

#### **3.1. Conclusions**

This study analyzes the mechanism of rural population flow through field survey and literature analysis, and constructs a theoretical basis for the trend of “reduction and increase” of rural population flow. The main research findings are as follows: China is facing long-term and complex rural population problems currently, such as a continuous decrease in the rural population, deepening of rural aging, and insufficient supply and quality of rural labor. In the coming period of time, the rural population “reduction” is the trend, but “increase the flow” is to promote the revitalization of the countryside is an important issue. Cracking the population constraints of rural revitalization by alleviating the “reduction” and strengthening the “increase the flow”.

## **3.2. Policy Recommendations**

### **3.2.1. Narrow the Urban-rural Gap and Alleviating the “Reduction” of Rural Population Flow**

The gap between urban and rural areas in terms of economic income, facility conditions, and resource allocation is an important reason for rural population outflow. Only by fundamentally narrowing the urban-rural gap, adhering to the concept of urban-rural coordination, urban-rural integration, industry-city interaction, and harmonious development, can we effectively meet the talent needs of rural revitalization. First, the government should continue to invest in rural infrastructure construction, unblock the traffic network, improve the layout of water and electricity, and strengthen network communication. The second is to enhance the supply of rural public services, increase resource allocation for rural education, medical care, and other aspects, and continuously improve the well-being of farmers; Thirdly, The government should vigorously develop rural cultural and sports undertakings to meet farmers’ cultural needs for a better life.

### **3.2.2. Optimize the Development Environment and Strengthen the “Increase” of Rural Population Flow**

At this stage and even in the longer term, urbanization is still an important part of China's development, and the reduction of the rural population stock is inevitable. Under the dual goal of continuously promoting urbanization and rural revitalization, “increasing the flow of rural population” is necessary. The first step, the government should activate rural industries, develop rural-featured agriculture, leisure culture and tourism, health care, and other industries according to local conditions, and encourage the development of township and village enterprises to increase the supply of rural jobs. Second, optimize the rural industrial environment, the establishment of employment and entrepreneurship incentive system to go to the countryside and return to the countryside, to attract foreign populations to the countryside to start businesses and encourage the return of rural talent. Thirdly, stick to the bottom line of rural ecological environment, strengthen the potential of rural green development, retain the native environment, adhere to the concept of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets”, and transform ecological advantages into economic advantages.

### **3.2.3. Enhancing Service Capacity to Crack the Rural Elderly Dilemma**

Under the characteristics of deep aging in rural areas of China in the future, the issue of “having access to medical care for the elderly and providing for them” in rural areas may be one of the main contradictions in the future. In the face of the irreversible trend of hollowing out and aging rural population, it is imperative to strengthen the township-level nursing homes, and at the same time, it is necessary to enhance the service capacity and awareness of the village-level two committees. In the meantime, due to some villages are remote and the population is even more sparse, so it is practically difficult to form a centralized elderly care institution at the village level. Therefore, on the one hand, it is necessary to assist in establishing a local mutual assistance and mutual assistance elderly care mechanism within the village area, and on the other hand, elderly people in peripheral areas should be encouraged to go to township-level elderly care institutions for elderly care. Finally, in some areas where conditions permit, mobile medical systems, such as mobile health centers and mobile medical teams can be gradually explored to strengthen village-level medical service capabilities.

### **3.2.4. Adjustment of Administrative Divisions and Intensification of Land Use Intensity**

At this stage, some of the towns close to the central city have already formed a contiguous area with the city, and the main income of villagers in such towns has long been removed from the primary industry, and such villagers are in fact already “residents” Meanwhile, such towns often have certain



industries and a large population, and there are obvious land and land conflicts. The existing standards may restrict the development of such towns. Such areas should be adjusted promptly to include them within the urban scope, improve the public service standards for residents. At the same time, it coordinates the adjustment of the land occupation of this type of town and reinforces the intensity of land use in this type of area to meet the needs of regional development.

## Acknowledgment

This work was supported in part by a grant from the Seventh National Population Census Project of Fujian Province, Social Science Planning Research Project of Fujian Province (FJ2022C096) and Natural Science Foundation of Fujian Province (2021J05184).

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