9 Rural–Urban Migration:

Trend and Policy Implications (2008–2012)

Xin Meng

Over the past 20 years China has experienced unprecedented economic growth. During this period rural to urban migration has increased from 39 million in 1996 to 159 million in 2011 (NBS 2012). Migrants have contributed significantly to China's economic miracle. It is foreseeable that rural–urban migration in China will continue to grow, together with China's economic maturity in the next decades to come. A systematic record of the migration movement has, however, been lacking. As an exception, over the past five years the Rural–Urban Migration in China (RUMiC) project has been monitoring the changes in the rural–urban migration process. This chapter intends to present the dynamic progress of rural–urban migration in terms of migrant demographic composition, labour market outcomes and their access to social welfare.

The RUMiC survey was initiated in early 2008 and has since received five waves of data. The survey is conducted in 15 cities located in nine provinces. These cities include major exporting regions such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Shanghai, Wuxi, Nanjiang, Hangzhao, and Ningbo; as well as major cities in interior regions: Chengdu, Chongqing, Wuhan, Hefei, Bangbu, Zhengzhou and Luoyang. Between 2008 and 2010, two companion surveys of rural and urban households were also conducted. The rural survey was conducted in the rural areas of the provinces where the 15 cities are located, while the urban household survey was conducted in the same 15 cities as the migrant survey, plus four additional cities. The rural and urban surveys both used the National Bureau of Statistics Annual Household Survey sample. A comparison between the migrant survey and these two samples allows us to identify the distinctive features of migrants.¹ After 2010, due to lack of funding, the rural and urban household surveys were discontinued, but the city migrant survey has been continued.

RUMiC is designed to be a longitudinal survey, which follows migrants over time. In 2008 a random sample of 5,000 migrant households was selected from the 15 cities. The attrition rate in the 2009 wave was extremely high (63 per cent), however, due to the nature of the sample: frequent mobility and the effects of the global financial crisis, which reduced China's exports by 20 per cent

1 For detailed information on RUMiC, see <http://rse.anu.edu.au/rumici/> or Gong et. al. (2008).

and, as a result of which, many migrants returned home. The attrition rate has been reduced gradually since 2009 from 63 per cent to 35 per cent in 2012. To maintain the original sample size, each year we re-sample a number of new households. Thus, apart from 2008, in subsequent years the RUMiC city migrant survey has two sub-samples: one traces part of the previous year sample (labeled old sample) and one draws a new random sample (labeled as new sample). The new sample gives a representative picture of migrants in general, while the old sample presents a dynamic picture of migrant life and work.

Demographic Structure of Rural–Urban Migrants and China’s Future Labour Supply

Understanding the demographic structure of rural–urban migrants is an essential part of understanding China’s unskilled labour supply. Because of the introduction of the One Child policy in 1979, and the fact that the policy has been strictly enforced in urban areas but less so in rural areas, China’s future labour supply depends primarily on the rural *hukou* population. This can be seen clearly from the population pyramid in Figure 9.1.²

Figure 9.1 clearly indicates that China’s urban *hukou* population is shrinking. The urban ‘pyramid’ is a diamond shape. The rural *hukou* population has also reduced, but the absolute numbers are far larger than the urban population. Furthermore, the reduction in rural population is related to the famine that occurred during 1959–1961, which generates the zigzags in the pyramid, indicating future birth cohorts may increase again. Thus, the future city labour supply depends predominantly on the rural *hukou* population.

2 The same graph was presented using the 2000 Population Census data in Meng (2012).

Figure 9.1 Population pyramid by *hukou* status

Source: China 1% Population Survey, 2005.

The above figures, however, do not distinguish the extent to which some rural *hukou* population are already working in cities. To establish the size of the potential future additional labour supply to cities, it is necessary to understand the demographic structure of the current urban labour supply, including urban *hukou* population and rural–urban migrants in cities. This calculation must also include the size of the potential source of future supply: the current rural *hukou* labour force that has not yet migrated.

To do so, we use RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys. Note that ‘migrants’ in the city migrant survey are defined as individuals with rural household registration (*hukou*), but who are currently living and working in one of the 15 cities included in the survey. The Rural Household survey also records the migration experience of any rural household members in previous years. In that survey ‘migrants’ are defined by the responses to the following three questions: a. Last year how many months did the person live out of his/her own village/township? (if less than one month, record as one month); b. If the person lived outside his/her own village for three or more months last year, where did he/she live? (1) rural areas within own county; (2) rural areas outside own county in own province; (3) rural areas in other provinces; (4) county town; (5) other city in own province; (6) city in

another province; (7) other (please explain); c. If the person lived outside his/her own village for three or more months, what was the purpose? (1) going to school; (2) joined army; (3) work; (4) visit relatives or friends; (5) other (please explain). We thus define a 'migrant' as a rural household member who spent three or more months working (Question C, answer (3)) in an urban area outside his/her own county of residence (Question B, answers (5)–(7)).

Figure 9.2 examines the age and gender distribution of migrant and non-migrant labour force (individuals aged 16 to 65 and are employed or unemployed) in urban and rural areas. The left figure in Panel A takes all urban *hukou* labour force as 1 and examines the share of each age and gender group in the total urban *hukou* labour force. Similarly, the right figure of Panel A takes the sample of migrant labour force in our 15 city sample as 1 and examines the age–gender distribution of the migrant labour force. Panel B takes the labour force in the rural survey (including non-migrants and migrants) as 1 and examines the age–gender as well as migrants–non-migrant distribution of the rural *hukou* labour force.

The figures in Panel A of Figure 9.2 suggest that majority of migrant workers in cities are aged between 16 and 30, and there are more males than females. Relative to the urban *hukou* labour force, it is clear that migrant workers are much younger than their urban counterparts.

The two figures in Panel B of Figure 9.2 indicate that migrants still account for a small portion of the total rural *hukou* labour force: 21 per cent in 2008 and 22 per cent in 2010. By including those who migrated to their own counties, this proportion increases to 24.3 per cent; by relaxing the restrictions on the length of migration last year from three or more months for work purposes to everybody who ever migrated for any length of time and any reason, the ratio increases to 29.2 per cent. Thus, no matter how we define 'migrant', it still only accounts for a small proportion of rural *hukou* labour force.

The figures show, however, that more than half of the young rural *hukou* workers (aged 16 to 30) have migrated to cities outside of their home county (the basic story stands if cities within the home county are included) and this is especially so for men rather than women. Nevertheless, the majority of the rural labour force between 16 and 64 years has not migrated, and this is true in 2010.

Figure 9.2 Age and gender distribution of labour force by *hukou* and migration status

Source: RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys.

It is important to note that many of the non-migrant workers at the time of the survey are in fact return migrants. For example, of the total rural workers who have ever migrated in 2010, 34 per cent had returned home at the time of the survey. Figure 9.3 present the age and gender distribution of the rural *hukou* labour force for migrants, return migrants and non-migrants separately. The figure clearly indicates that a significant proportion of rural labour force, of all ages, return home. This has an important implication for the urban labour supply, which is discussed later in the chapter.

Figure 9.3 Age and gender distribution of rural *hukou* labour force, 2010

Source: RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys.

The averages show that, in general, migrants are more likely to be male and are relatively younger than their counterparts who still live in rural villages and those with urban *hukou*. Panel A of Table 9.1 indicates that urban *hukou* labour force is on average around 40 years of age and 55 per cent of them are male workers. On average, the rural *hukou* non-migrated labour force is 43 years of age and 52 per cent of them are males. In contrast, migrants in cities are, on average, ten years younger (31 years of age) and 60 per cent are men.

The next question is whether the age–gender distribution of the migrant workforce in cities has changed over the past five years. Table 9.1 columns 1 and 2 in both Panels B and C present the average age and proportion of male

migrant labour force for the full sample and the new sample, respectively. The data for the full sample, which include individuals who are being tracked over the years, indicate that there is less than a one year increase in age in each subsequent years and the proportion of male workers has reduced slightly. The full sample, however, may provide misleading information regarding age changes as the age of the individuals examined annually will increase each year. When we examine the age change for the new sample, though, the increase in the mean age becomes very small. Over the five years the average age of migrants increased from 31.2 to 32.9 years, an average of 0.34 year increase annually. The most significant change seems to have occurred between 2011 and 2012.

Table 9.1 Summary statistics of different samples

	Panel C: Rural, urban, and migrant sample: 2008 survey				No. of obs.
	Age (1)	Males (2)	Year since first migration (3)	Schooling (4)	
Urban <i>hukou</i>	40.24	0.55		10.28	7,813
Migrant in cities	31.18	0.60		8.83	6,749
Rural hukou non-mig	42.96	0.52		6.89	15,352
	Panel B: Migrant full sample				No. of obs.
	Age	Males	Year since first migration	Schooling	
2008	31.18	0.60	7.81	8.99	6,749
2009	32.19	0.58	8.59	9.05	7,399
2010	32.50	0.58	8.54	9.15	7,155
2011	33.12	0.56	9.60	9.01	7,793
2012	34.32	0.56	10.55	8.96	8,068
	Panel C: Migrant new sample				No. of obs.
	Age	Males	Year since first migration	Schooling	
2008	31.18	0.60	7.81	8.99	6,749
2009	31.57	0.59	7.96	9.12	4,594
2010	31.20	0.58	6.67	9.30	3,308
2011	31.78	0.56	8.09	8.97	3,083
2012	32.88	0.57	8.95	9.02	2,647

Source: Calculated based on Rural, urban, and migrant sample: 2008 survey.

Figure 9.4 The change in age and gender distribution of migrant labour force: 2008 vs 2012

Source: RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys.

Figure 9.4 presents the age–gender distribution of the migrant labour force for the years 2008 and 2012. The new sample panel shows that, over the past five years, the proportion of migrant workers over 40 years old has increased, while the proportion of under 20 years old has declined. This is particularly true for the female labour force. This may suggest an interesting trend: perhaps the young generation of rural *hukou* population are more likely to go to school now than five years ago, and those who are aged 40 and over are now more likely to move to the city. Labour force pyramids alone, however, will not provide the answer to these questions.

To examine this issue, we turn to data for those who are new arrivals. In the RUMiC migrant survey, we ask each migrant worker the year in which they first migrated. Using this information we can identify individuals who migrated in the period 2006–2010,³ and examine whether the change in aggregate age structure is due to the change in age structure of the migrant inflow or not. Table 9.2 presents the results. It shows that since 2006, the proportion of newly

³ The number of migrants who migrated in 2011 and 2012 is small (<200 observations for each year). To avoid the problem of lack of representative, we do not include data from these years.

arrived migrant workers who are aged between 16 and 25 years has increased year by year, from 57 per cent in 2006 to 78 per cent in 2010, whereas the proportion of those aged 36 and above has reduced year by year. This trend does not coincide with the picture observed from the cross-section comparison presented in Table 9.1 and Figure 9.4. One possible explanation for this inconsistency is that migrant workers are staying in the city longer than before. Thus, those we observed in cities are gradually getting older.

Table 9.2 Proportion of each age group among the new arrivals by year

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Aged 16–25	56.54	63.14	66.64	68.91	77.53
Aged 26–35	21.4	15.32	13.64	14.39	8.49
Aged 36–45	13.9	13.55	9.97	9.76	7.31
Aged 45–55	6.02	5.02	6.8	5.86	4.93
Aged 55–65	2.14	2.96	2.95	1.08	1.74
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys.

Employment and Wages

Migrants' employment and wages are affected mainly by market conditions. Given that they have no, or very limited, access to minimum living allowances and unemployment benefits, migrants who lose their jobs normally go back to their rural home. Thus, the measured unemployment rate for migrants in cities is very low. In the five years of our survey, the unemployment rate for migrant workers has never exceeded 1.8 per cent. This, however, does not mean that migrants do not lose jobs, but is simply an artifact of data collection and migrant geographic mobility. Had we able to track down all the migrants surveyed, we would have observed a larger proportion who returned home or changed cities due to unemployment. In this subsection we focus mainly on hours worked and wages.

Hours Worked

Migrants have very limited work protection and they do not see a future in settling down in cities due to the various institutional restrictions that they face there. Thus, they come to cities and work as hard as they can to make money and then go home. As a result, while in cities, they work extremely long hours. In 2008, for example, the average number of hours worked by migrant wage-salary workers was 60 hours per week, while the number for urban *hukou* workers was 43 hours, a difference of 17 hours. Figure 9.5 presents the weekly

working hours distribution for the two groups. It shows that while the majority of urban workers worked 40 hours a week, more than half of the migrants worked above 50 hours weekly.

Figure 9.5 Weekly hours worked for urban and migrant wage-salary workers, 2008

Source: Calculated based on Rural, urban, and migrant sample: 2008 survey.

Studies have found that working long hours is bad for mental health. Our data certainly indicates such a correlation (Figure 9.6, also Frijters, Johnston and Meng 2011). In particular, migrants who worked over 50 hours clearly have a higher incident of mental health problems. This, in the long run, may have significant implications not only for the human capital of China's most important workforce, but also for China's future healthcare costs.

The good news is that there seems to be a slight reduction in hours worked. In 2008 the average wage and salary workers worked 60 hours per week. Since then, this total has reduced slightly and, in 2012, the average was 58 hours. The reduction, though, has been very slow.

Figure 9.6 Relationship between hours worked and mental health problems

Source: Calculated based on Rural, urban, and migrant sample: 2008 survey.

Wages

Over the past five years, wages of migrant workers have increased significantly. This may reflect, to some extent, the tightening of the unskilled labour market, and it may also be a result of government policy.

The increase in monthly and hourly earnings for wage-salary earners between 2008 and 2012 is 12 and 14 per cent per annum, respectively. In particular, between 2010 and 2011, the real hourly earnings increased by 23 per cent. During the same period, minimum wages also increased dramatically. For example, between 2010 and 2011, the average minimum wage in the 15 sampled cities increased by close to 19 per cent. For cities located in Pearl River Delta and Yangzi River Delta, the average increase is around 20 per cent (data for minimum wages in the 15 cities are from various city government web pages). This may indicate that many local governments are using minimum wages to influence the industrial structure. In recent years, cities in the more developed regions have been talking about the importance of moving up the value-added chain and trying to reduce labour intensive industry. Perhaps, instead of directly picking industry winners, they are trying to use minimum

wage as a policy device to achieve the objective of pushing the low profit industries out of the cities. This, however, requires more in-depth research to confirm.

It is interesting to note, though, that wage growth of such significant magnitudes seems to have stopped in 2012. The real hourly wage growth between 2011 and 2012 is only 3.7 per cent (see Figure 9.7).

Figure 9.7 Monthly and hourly real wages, 2008–2012

Source: RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys.

The above mentioned wage-growth data do not take into account that for each additional year migrant workers work in the city, they accumulate more work experience and, hence, become more skilled and earn more. The issue may be handled by estimating an earnings regression to control for individual human capital and other wage-related characteristics and include the year dummy to examine the wage changes arising mainly to the change in market price for the same quality workers. To do this, earnings data can be used in two different ways. In addition to the monthly earnings of current employment, the RUMiC survey also asks migrants to report the year when they first migrated and the earnings they received in the first month of the first job. This variable increases the time period under review and it directly teases out the wage increase due to the accumulation of work experience. The earliest year of migration is restricted to 2000 and the real first month earnings equation is estimated by controlling for age, education, city of employment and a gender dummy variable. The result of the estimated two different earnings equations for wage-salary earners is reported in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3 Results from earnings regressions

VARIABLES	Log real monthly earnings	Log real hourly earnings	Log real monthly earnings for 1st month of 1st job
Age	0.033*** [0.002]	0.047*** [0.002]	0.021*** [0.004]
Age squared	−0.001*** [0.000]	−0.001*** [0.000]	−0.000*** [0.000]
Years of schooling	0.024*** [0.001]	0.040*** [0.001]	0.028*** [0.003]
Dummy for males	0.195*** [0.005]	0.162*** [0.007]	0.054*** [0.011]
Years since first migration	0.019*** [0.001]	0.014*** [0.002]	
Years since first migration2	−0.000*** [0.000]	−0.000*** [0.000]	
2001			0.055** [0.025]
2002			0.076*** [0.024]
2003			0.116*** [0.023]
2004			0.142*** [0.023]
2005			0.228*** [0.023]
2006			0.319*** [0.024]
2007			0.304*** [0.024]
2008			0.450*** [0.027]
2009	0.196*** [0.008]	0.223*** [0.010]	0.569*** [0.031]
2010	0.329*** [0.008]	0.362*** [0.010]	0.639*** [0.037]
2011	0.523*** [0.008]	0.564*** [0.010]	0.868*** [0.050]
2012	0.569*** [0.008]	0.611*** [0.010]	0.885*** [0.068]
City dummy variables	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	6.224*** [0.031]	0.459*** [0.039]	5.787*** [0.078]
Observations	23,522	23,449	12,864
R-squared	0.394	0.341	0.167

Source: Author's own estimations.

The resulting average annual increase over five years (2008–2012), using the current monthly earnings data as the dependent variable, is 9.7 per cent per annum, but the for 20011–2012 is much lower, at 4.6 per cent. Using the first month of first pay data, the annual average increase over the 13 year period is five per cent per annum. If we only examine the period of 2008–2012, the annual change is 7.5 per cent. Figure 9.8 presents the year-to-year wage change in the first month of the first job, and the data confirm that the period after 2008 has had a high wage growth, but, between 2011 and 2012, the growth rate has dropped to 1.7 per cent. It is important to note, however, even in 2010 (the last year for urban household survey data), migrant wage-salary workers were only making 52 per cent of the hourly earnings of the urban wage-salary workers.

Figure 9.8 Annual change in real wages for the first month of the first job

Source: Calculated based on RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys.

The substantial reduction in real wage growth may be an indication of the slowdown of the Chinese economy.

Social Welfare Access

Inability to access social welfare is one of the most important remaining deterrents for migrants to stay in cities. Due to the lack of social insurance for health, pension, work injury, and unemployment, migrants cannot sever their connections with rural villages. Whenever they are sick, injured at work,

unemployed, or become old, it is necessary for them to return to their rural hometown. This, to a large extent, reduces the duration of migration, which, in turn, puts significant strain on the migrant labour supply. Thus, improving migrant social welfare access not only benefit migrants themselves, it is an important measures to lift the pressure on the migrant labour supply.

During the past five years, some improvements have been made on this front (Figure 9.9). For example, the proportion of migrant workers with unemployment insurance increased from 11 per cent in 2008 to 21 per cent in 2012. Similarly, those with health, pension, and work injury insurance increased from 13, 18 and 17 per cent in 2008 to 27, 31 and 23 per cent in 2012, respectively. The large majority of migrant workers, however, still work in cities without any financial or health protection. In addition, in recent years, the proportion of migrant workers with some type of contract seems to have reduced sharply. There was significant improvement in this regard during the period 2008 to 2010, but, since then, the proportion has dropped from 66 per cent in 2010 to 59 per cent in 2012. This trend can be observed in both total sample and new sample.

Figure 9.9 Migrant social welfare access: 2008–2012

Source: Calculated based on RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys.

Duration of Migration and its Impact on Migrant Labour Supply

Part of the reason for the recent significant increase in migrant wages is the tightening of the migrant labour market. This, to a large extent, is related to the issue of duration of migration. The lack of access to social welfare significantly reduces migration duration. If migrants stayed in cities for a longer period, migrant labour supply would increase by the same amount.

In a normal case scenario, a healthy worker starts working in their late teens or early 20s, and retires in their late 50s to early 60s. Thus, a normal working life is around 35 to 40 years. Due to restrictions on migration, however, migrants on average currently only work in cities for eight–nine years.

Column 3 of Table 9.1 shows the average number of years since our sample migrants first came to the cities (see column 3 of Table 9.1). This measure may overstate the duration of migration, as it does not take into account whether migrants have returned to their rural hometown for a substantial period since they first migrated to cities, which happens very often. It does, however, give a rough indication of the trend. The more reliable measure is from the new sample, as the total sample includes people who have been tracked over time, and their ‘year since first migration’ is supposed to increase over time. The new sample data indicate that the average years since first migration has increased from 7.8 years in 2008 to almost nine years in 2012. Imagine, if cities are becoming more welcoming to migrant families and the average duration of migration increases from nine years to 18 years, this will be equivalent to double the current supply of migrant workers. If this happens, any foreseeable tightening of the migrant labour market should disappear.

Human Capital Accumulation

In addition to the gain in increase in labour supply, the increasing duration of migration is extremely beneficial for human capital accumulation and, hence, for productivity gains. Using the regression results reported in column 1 on Table 9.3, a city work experience – earnings profile is plotted (Figure 9.10). The figure shows that for each additional year migrants work in cities, their earnings increase by two per cent, controlling for other characteristics. This indicates that through learning-by-doing and on-the-job training, migrants are accumulating significant productivity improvements. Such gains peak in the 24th year since migrants first migrated to cities. Only after that year does the productivity gain begin to wear out. In every wave of our survey, however, less than three per cent of the migrants have stayed in cities for 24 or more years. That the current

average duration of migration is approximately nine years, which is far from the maximum return the economy can receive from its labour force, suggests a significant waste of human capital.

Figure 9.10 Rate of return to city work experience

Source: Calculated based on RUMiC 2008 samples of Rural Household, Urban Household, and City Migrant surveys.

The other side of the human capital accumulation is related to formal schooling. Migrants on average have 8.8 years of schooling, which is two years more than the rural *hukou* non-migrated workforce, which has only 6.9 years. Migrants, however, are less educated than their urban *hukou* counterparts who, on average, have 10.3 years of schooling (see column 4 in Panel C of Table 9.1).

Over the past five years, the average education level of migrants has not changed significantly. Column 4 in Panel B of Table 9.1 indicates that the average education level of migrants only increased very slightly from nine years to 9.02 years.

Table 9.3 also shows that rate of return to education for migrant workers is low. The highest estimate is obtained when estimating an hourly earnings equation in which a four per cent return is observed for each additional year of schooling. This rate of return has not changed substantially over the past five years. Using urban household survey data, it is found that the rate of return to years of schooling is 7.2 per cent, more than 80 per cent higher than returns to years of schooling for migrants. The significant difference in rate of return

to education may be the result of a lower quality of education obtained from the rural areas. It could also be related to the fact that migrants are denied better paid jobs, in other words, a result of labour market discrimination.

The low rate of return to education, in turn, may deter rural children from obtaining a higher level of education.

The issue of the large disparity between the quantity and quality of education between rural and urban areas is a considerable concern for China's future labour supply. As noted earlier, in the next few decades, the main labour supply in Chinese cities will come from the rural *hukou* population. If rural education does not improve, the quality of Chinese future labour supply will drag down economic growth.

Conclusions

Using RUMiC survey data 2008–2012 and the 2005 one per cent Population Survey data, this chapter presents important features of the rural–urban migration during this period. These features have long-lasting policy implications for China's future labour market development.

In the next few decades, the main addition to the labour force of Chinese cities will come from the rural *hukou* population. Less than 30 per cent of the rural labour force has migrated to cities to work. Hence, there is still large proportion of them who could potentially migrate. Whether they will do so, however, depends largely on government migration policy. Currently, the lack of social welfare for rural migrants has deterred many people from migrating to cities, or remaining there for long periods. On average, migrants stay in cities for eight–nine years. If this duration can be doubled, migrant labour supply in cities could be doubled. In addition, we find, based on the current rate of return to migrant city work experience, that migrant productivity improvement reaches a peak at the 24th year. The current average duration of migration, however, is far from the productivity peak, indicating a significant productivity loss due to the short duration of migration. Once again, duration of migration to a large extent depends on migration policy.

As a result of the restrictions on migration, the shortage of migrants in cities is apparent when the economy is doing well. For example, between 2010 and 2011, there was a 23 per cent increase in the monthly earnings for migrant wage-salary workers. During the same period, however, minimum wages also increased by 20 per cent. It is possible that the sharp increase in wages in this period is partially due to government policy, and wage increases seem to have

come to an end in 2012. Between 2011 and 2012, raw monthly earnings growth was only 3.7 per cent, down from 23 per cent in the previous year, suggesting perhaps an economic downturn.

Some long-term and unintended consequences of migration, due mainly to institutional restrictions, are also observable. Because of these restrictions, migrants do not have long-term expectations and they regard themselves as temporary workers in cities. The objective is to earn as much money as they can over a short period and then build a life for themselves when they return to their rural hometown. Thus, while in cities, they work extremely long hours, which also indicates the lack of work protection for migrant workers. The long work hours are identified as related to migrant mental health problems.

References

- Frijters, P., Johnston, D. & Meng, X., 2009, 'The Mental Health Cost of Long Working Hours: The Case of Rural Chinese Migrants', unpublished manuscript, Australian National University.
- Gong, Xiadong, Kong, Sherry Tao, Li, Shi & Meng, Xin, 2008, 'Rural–Urban Migrants: A Driving Force for Growth', in Ligang Song and Wing Thye Woo (eds), *China's Dilemma*, ANU E Press and Asia Pacific Press, Canberra.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2012, *China Yearbook of Household Survey*, China Statistics Press.