



Study of Changes in Beijing's Urban Household Registration Policies from 1949 and Their Influence on City Impression and Belongingness of Non-native Populations

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Abstract. The paper discusses the evolution of Beijing's urban household registration policies since 1949 and their impact on the city impression and belongingness of non-native populations. The hukou system, integral to China's social management, significantly influences residents' access to education, healthcare, and employment. Over the years, Beijing has implemented increasingly strict household registration policies to control population growth and maintain social stability. These policies have made it difficult for non-native populations to integrate fully into the city, despite their contributions to Beijing's development. The study highlights the disparities in city impression and belongingness among different age groups and occupations. Younger, highly educated individuals are more likely to feel a stronger connection to Beijing, driven by career opportunities and the city's rich educational resources. In contrast, older individuals and those engaged in low-skilled occupations often view their stay in Beijing as temporary, with less sense of belonging due to barriers in accessing social services and the high cost of living. The research also reveals the challenges non-native populations face in acquiring Beijing hukou, which limits their ability to settle in the city long-term. The point-based household registration system introduced in recent years aims to attract highly skilled individuals yet remains competitive and difficult to achieve. The paper concludes with recommendations to reform the hukou system, enhance community integration, and promote a more inclusive urban culture to improve the sense of belonging among non-native residents in Beijing.

Keywords: Hukou System, Non-native Populations, Urban Integration

1 Introduction

China's hukou system, also known as the household registration system or residential registration system, is a population registration system administered by the public security organs to record and administer the general information of Chinese citizens such

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as personal identity, family relations and migrations. The hukou (household registration) system plays a crucial role in social management and public services, and has a significant impact on aspects such as residence, education, employment, and medical care of individuals. In China, household registration can be divided into agricultural household registration and non-agricultural household registration. The former generally means rural household registration, while the latter means urban household registration. Their differences mainly lie in household registration migration and social welfare, among others. Under the household registration system, every Chinese citizen has a fixed household registration place, also known as a place of registered permanent residence. The household registration place has an important effect on many aspects such as individuals' identity authentication and social welfare granting. The household registration migration is subject to certain procedures and reviews, and such migration will affect the social rights and interests of the person involved in his or her new household registration place.^[1]

Since 1949, Beijing has made significant changes to its urban household registration policies several times. Beijing had a permanent resident population of 2.03 million in 1949, while the number climbed up to 2.76 million in 1953 when the first demographic census was carried out. By the end of 2023, the permanent resident population in Beijing reached 21.729 million, with the non-native permanent population standing at 8.25 million, accounting for 37.8%. In the wake of prosperity brought by population aggregation, side-effects such as rising house prices, traffic congestion and shortage in per capita resources always appear. In this context, Beijing introduced more strict household registration management policies. From 2000 to 2022, a total of 2.519 million people (excluding newborns) registered their permanent residence in Beijing, representing an annual average of 110,000. The period from 2014 to 2017 witnessed the strictest household registration policy, with only an average of 63,000 people registering their permanent residence. After 2018, Beijing changed the orientation of its population policies. For example, it introduced the points-based household registration system, and promulgated the Measures for the Administration of Talent Introduction in Beijing (Trial). As a result, the number of people who registered their permanent residence in Beijing increased sharply and recovered to the level before 2013. In 2014, the central government highlighted that Beijing needs to have a clear strategic positioning, and maintain and strengthen capital functions as a "political center, cultural center, international exchange center, scientific and technological innovation center". To phase out non-capital functions and resolve specific mega-city issues, Beijing propelled the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and conducted special actions aimed at "phase-out and improvement". These efforts aim to reduce the population of Beijing's six districts, control the total population, lay emphasis on structure optimization, and strictly maintain the population warning line. By studying the historical evolution of Beijing's household registration policies and their influence on the impression and belongingness of non-native populations, we can understand how household registration policies in different historical periods shape the social structure and cultural landscape of cities, figure out how urban policies affect urban development and residents' perceptions, and enhance our understanding of social policies with Chinese characteristics.

Beijing, as the capital of China, shoulders a special political mission, so it controls its population more strictly than other cities. This is also a key point discussed in early studies. Qiu Naqing outlined the evolution and reforms of Beijing's household registration system in "An Analysis of Beijing's Household Registration System: Historical Process, Current Policies and Academic Research". As early as the First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957), Beijing had determined a clear direction of "curbing the blind increase of Beijing's population and reducing the urban population". In the process of population control, Beijing has always considered the household registration system to be an important institutional tool. The strict control of the household registered population is the most evident characteristic of Beijing's household registration system at that time. The non-household registered population in Beijing decreased because there were no necessary conditions for them to survive in Beijing, and a wave of "anti-urbanization" even rose in Beijing^[2].

Some studies suggested that Beijing should take flexible approaches to embrace the increasing migrant populations, while strictly controlling the number of household registered population. Some scholars such as Li Xiaozhuang^[3], Li Shimei and Shen Li^[4] discussed in their dissertations how to make the residence certification system an important means for Beijing to attract talent and investments. In the meantime, the household registration system became a significant approach to regulating population quality and structure. As the household registration system improves, it has gradually evolved into a diversified, indirect and guided tool for adjusting the population structure and distribution. It has developed from a simple policy carrier for population growth control into a supporting system that boosts healthy urban development.

Some other studies revealed that the factor of political stability. As indicated in Zheng Xinyu's report, the household registration policies introduced by the Beijing Municipal Government tended to attract groups with high personal quality, while ensuring such policies meet the urban requirements^[5]. Gao Xubo held that Beijing, as a national capital, boasts market and administrative resources, giving it double advantages that are superior to other mega-cities. In addition to many policy constraints and institutional limits caused by its status as a capital city, more socio-economic benefits are attached to Beijing's registered permanent residence. That's why the reform in Beijing's household registration system and relevant systems is exceptionally difficult^[6].

However, most of the above studies discussed the migrant population issue in Beijing from the top-down perspectives of experts, scholars and civil servants. They failed to explore the real attitudes and ideas of the migrant population, often known as "drifters in Beijing", when it comes to their city impression and belongingness to Beijing under different household registration policies. The in-depth research on the evolution of Beijing's urban household registration system and its influence on the city impression and belongingness of the non-native population in this study enables us to better understand how household registration policies in different historical periods have shaped the social structure and cultural landscape of Beijing, thus providing a useful reference for future urban development and policy making. The fieldwork method was used in this study, with Dongcheng District, Xicheng District, Haidian District, Fengtai District and Fangshan District in Beijing as the field points. Moreover, semi-structured

interviews were carried out with 14 non-native permanent residents of different ages and occupations about their city impression and belongingness to Beijing. This study intends to answer the following three research questions based on the first-hand data:

(1) How do changes in Beijing's urban household registration policies affect the city impression and belongingness of non-native populations to Beijing?

(2) What are the disparities in city impression and belongingness between non-native populations of different ages and occupations?

(3) What is the connection between non-native populations' need to register their permanent residence in Beijing and their personal circumstances, such as age, family status, and work status?

2 Formation and Evolution of Beijing's Urban Household Registration Policies

2.1 The Most Valuable Hukou

The value of China's household registration system does not lie in the system, but in the attached resource configuration and distribution of benefits. A lot of social security and public service policies are formulated based on "hukou". This connects "hukou" with legitimate rights and interests and resource allocation for household registered populations. The most closely related aspects include education, medical care, labor employment, housing, social insurance and social welfare. There is no doubt that having a registered permanent residence in Beijing is highly valuable as it is a hub of diverse educational, medical and employment resources.

To start with education, Beijing boasts the most educated population in China. The completion rate of nine-year compulsory education in Beijing reached 82.86% and college education 41.98%, with a per capita schooling length of 12.64 years, higher than the national averages of 65.06%, 15.47% and 9.91 years and ranking 31st across China, according to the census communique data during the period from 1982 to 2020. The economic development in Beijing lags behind the education level of its population, resulting in a relative surplus of talent supply. Thanks to the most abundant and best educational resources in Beijing, the education level of its population is higher than that of other regions in China. Taking higher education as an example, Beijing is home to many high-quality colleges and universities, including 8 universities in Project 985 and 26 universities in Project 211, as well as an array of scientific research institutions. Beijing leads the entire country in terms of both quality and quantity of higher education resources and college students. In 2019, Beijing had 843,082 undergraduates and graduates, while the educational funds expenditure for each student was RMB 6,373.24, compared to the national average of RMB 22,245.81 in the same period. This signifies that the higher education resources in Beijing are well above the national average level^[7]. In 2023, the national average rates of admission to key universities, universities in Project 211 and universities in Project 985 were approximately 22.90%, 7.14% and 2.24%, respectively, while the admission rates of students with registered permanent residence in Beijing were 46%, 22% and 7.10%, ranking first in China^[8]. Beijing sets

higher thresholds for non-native populations who want to access high-quality educational resources in Beijing than students with registered permanent residence in Beijing. The children of non-native populations are subject to complex procedures such as submitting five certificates, including the Temporary Residential Permit, Employment Permit, labor contract, social security certificate and family planning certificate, and vacancies are also necessary conditions for them to receive compulsory education in Beijing. The children of non-native populations who meet certain conditions are only allowed to participate in the entrance examination for higher vocational schools in Beijing.

Beijing also enjoys the best medical resources in China. According to the statistics of the Statistical Communique of China's Health Development, Beijing had 135 third-grade medical organizations in 2021, accounting for 8.18% of the entire country; every 1,000 registered permanent residents were assigned 5.6 certified (assistant) doctors, which was much higher than the national average of 3.04 certified (assistant) doctors^[9]. Besides, Beijing offers multiple special medical policies for native household registered populations, such as free physical examination for the elderly and special medical subsidies for patients with chronic diseases. These policies have further improved the medical care level for household registered populations in Beijing. Although Beijing has made extensive efforts in terms of medical security in recent years, non-native populations face great challenges in this aspect. Some non-native residents did not purchase basic medical insurance for urban workers or urban and rural residents for reasons such as job instability and higher job mobility. Due to the complicated reimbursement procedures for medical treatment received in places other than the household registration locations, they have to receive medical treatment at their own expense, resulting in a heavy burden of medical costs for them.

Beijing is also evidently advantageous in old-age security. Beijing divides its social old-age insurance system into basic old-age insurance for urban workers, basic old-age insurance for urban and rural residents, and old-age insurance for government departments and public institutions. It has a wide coverage and high-level security. Beijing also offers a well-established community-based system of elderly care services, as well as city-wide community-based day care centers and senior citizens activity centers. The close integration between the medical and old-age security systems leads to improved life quality among the elderly. The elderly with a registered permanent residence in Beijing are allowed to live in any nursing institution for the elderly. They are also eligible for basic old-age insurance, supplementary old-age insurance, and pension adjustments. They can apply for the Privilege Card for the Elderly and receive free or discounted rides on buses and subways. In 2021, the Beijing Municipal Government unveiled the "Implementation Plan for Establishing and Improving the Elderly Health Service System in Beijing", which put forward 15 key tasks such as health education, prevention and health care, disease diagnosis and treatment, rehabilitation nursing, long-term care and hospice care for elderly health services, establishing a health security level that was a challenge for most other provinces, regions, and municipalities^[10]. Thanks to this, the average life expectancy of registered permanent residents in Beijing reached 82.47 years old^[11], higher than the national average of 78.2 years old^[12]. Non-native populations still face significant challenges in terms of access to old-age security,

despite remarkable achievements made by Beijing in this regard. Many non-native residents did not purchase basic medical insurance for urban workers or urban and rural residents for reasons such as job instability and higher job mobility. As a result, they are not available for community services for the elderly, and face complicated reimbursement procedures for non-local social security.

In the meantime, Beijing, as China's political, cultural, technological, and financial center, is the headquarters of many state organs, public institutions, central government-owned enterprises, private enterprises, and foreign enterprises, offering diversified employment positions and development spaces. Some organizations may give priority to candidates with registered permanent residence in Beijing during recruitment. This barrier is difficult to overcome for non-natives. In addition, the salaries in Beijing are fairly high, particularly in finance, technology and other sectors, which is a major draw for individuals who desire to work in Beijing. According to statistics, in the spring recruitment season of 2023, the average annual salary of fresh graduates in Beijing is RMB 183,000, ranking first in China^[13]. Beijing offers a great deal of job opportunities. The household registered population in Beijing has certain advantages when looking for jobs, particularly in the jobs of civil servants, public institutions, and state-owned enterprises. Some positions have requirements for household registration and will give priority or be limited to those who have a registered permanent residency in Beijing. Non-native populations typically engage in private sectors, service sectors, and certain labor-intensive industries. These positions have few restrictions on household registration but are more competitive.

2.2 Historical Development of Beijing's Urban Household Registration Policies

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese government has always regarded the household registration system as one of the most important social management systems. Through household registration management, the government gathers, confirms, and records general population information like birth, death, family relations, and legal addresses of citizens in accordance with law. Beijing's status as the capital has increased its duties to ensure political stability and national security. That's why it persists with strict population control as a long-term strategy for urban development. In other words, Beijing's household registration management system is closely integrated with this basic strategy. Divided by periods, Beijing's household registration system experienced the following three strict control models.

First of all, in the thirty years from the initial post-liberation period after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1950) to 1980, the government adopted the management model of strictly controlling household registration. Beijing Municipal Government associated household registration management closely with production factors and living materials to make it a foundation system for macro control. During the First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957) period, Beijing determined a clear direction of "curbing the blind increase of Beijing's population and reducing the urban population". Moreover, the government also took measures such as imposing restrictions on household registration of non-native populations in Beijing and charging fees for the increase

of urban capacity to control urban population. The urban food rationing system and coupon-based supply system for daily necessities were implemented in urban areas. The issuance of coupons was closely associated with household registration, so it was almost impossible for non-household registered populations to gain materials for survival.

Second, migrant populations were under strict control from 1980 to 2010. In 1980, the No. 75 central document admitted the legitimacy of population mobility. The loosening of population mobility policies at the national level imposed greater pressure on population control in Beijing. Since then, the migrant population has become the major control object of Beijing's household registration system. The large influx of non-native populations has resulted in a population explosion in Beijing. According to population sampling data, the migrant population in Beijing increased from 660,000 in 1986 to 3 million in 1997, and to 8 million in 2014. The surging population was followed by strict means of population control. While imposing strict restrictions on household registration of non-native populations in Beijing and controlling the household registration quota, Beijing adopted management measures such as "Referral System", "Temporary Residential Permit" and "Blue Stamp Hukou". The management function of the household registration system changed from an "iron gate" that blocked migrant populations to a "filter mesh" that screened migrant populations (Table 1).

Table 1. Measures Taken to Implement Beijing's Household Registration Policies from 1985 to 2004^[2].

Years	Document name	Regulation direction	Regulation idea
1985	Regulations on the Household Registration Management of Temporary Residents	Household registration management	Migrant populations were required to apply for a Temporary Residential Permit
1995	Measures for the Trial Implementation of Household Registration Management in Urban Areas for the Pilot Construction of Small Towns in the Suburbs of Beijing	Spatial distribution, population size	Controlled the number of populations transferring their registered permanent residence to Beijing
1995	Regulations on the Household Registration Management of People from Outside Beijing	Population management	The Temporary Residential Permit became the basic basis for other social welfare benefits
1997	Measures for the Trial Implementation of Household Registration Management in Urban Areas for the Pilot Construction of Small Towns in the Suburbs of Beijing	Spatial distribution, population size	Controlled the number of populations transferring their registered permanent residence to Beijing

1999	Interim Measures for Talent Introduction and Handling of Work & Residence Permits in Beijing	Talent introduction	Talent attraction
2000	Implementing Measures for Several Regulations of Beijing Municipality on Encouraging Overseas Students to Start Businesses and Work in Beijing	Introduction of talent and capital	Attraction of talent and investment
2001	Implementing Measures for the Registration of Permanent Residence in Beijing by People from Other Places to Start Private Businesses	Capital introduction	Investment attraction
2004	Implementing Measures for Several Interim Regulations of Beijing Municipality on Encouraging and Attracting Outstanding Cultural and Sports Talent to Start Businesses and Work in Beijing	Introduction of talent and capital	Attraction of talent and investment
Data source: Documents about Beijing's household registration policies (1985-2004)			

In the third stage, Beijing began to alleviate the population pressure in the urban area. After 2010, with many years of reform and development, Beijing was positioned as China's "four centers", namely the political center, cultural center, international exchange center, and scientific and technological innovation center. What followed was the concentration of resources and the large influx of non-native populations, as well as the appearance of "mega-city diseases" such as traffic congestion, environmental degradation, and resource constraints. To address these "mega-city diseases", the government first controlled the population size by means such as household registration quota, housing and employment. As the population growth accelerated, the government shifted focus to the adjustment of economic and spatial structures, decentralization and suburbanization of population in core areas. In 2012, Beijing released the "Planning of Main Functional Areas in Beijing", where the development orientation, development goals and development principles of the main functions of the 16 districts were clarified. The "Guidelines for the Coordinated Development of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region" promulgated in 2015 further elevated Beijing's population control from an urban planning to a national strategy. It was clearly stated in the Guidelines that the population of Beijing should not exceed the red line of 23 million in 2020, and that the population of the six districts should be decreased by 15% compared with 2014. In 2017, the state decided to establish a state-level new area, Xiong'an New Area in Hebei Province. In 2018, Beijing Municipality deliberated and approved the "Detailed Regulatory Plan for the Sub-Center of Beijing (Draft)". In the context of stable household registered populations, the focus was shifted to regulating non-native populations. Policy-based approaches such as "controlling populations through industries, houses, schooling and certificates" were adopted to drive the spontaneous outflow of non-native populations so as to control population growth rate, reduce population size, and decentralize them.

These approaches, other than “controlling populations through industries”, were all household registration management means. With regard to the approach of “controlling populations through schooling”, non-household registered populations in Beijing were required to provide materials such as employment certificates and residential permits if they wanted their children to be enrolled in schools in Beijing. Many migrant parents have to return their children to their hometowns for education due to difficulties in preparing documents or failure to meet the conditions. “Controlling populations through certificates” was an approach to control non-native populations via registered residential permits. In effect, these approaches have caused the contradiction of differentiated treatment for different household registration statuses.

2.3 Current Urban Household Registration Policies and Major Models in Beijing

At present, the point-based household registration system is the main way for non-native populations to obtain Beijing's household registration. Other ways of household registration include talent introduction, employment, investment and family reunification. The point-based household registration system and talent introduction policies have played an important role in attracting high-quality talent and boosting economic development; family reunification and investment-based household registration policies have made great contributions to social stability and economic growth.

First, with regard to the point-based household registration system, the qualification for household registration is determined based comprehensive assessment of the applicant's years of residence, social insurance payment, educational background and age, among others. Groups who registered their permanent residence in Beijing through the point-based household registration system are mainly highly educated young and middle-aged people with stable professions. In 2022, the average age of such groups was 35 years old, and more than 80% of them obtained bachelor's degrees or above. Since the system was officially implemented in Beijing in 2017, more than 100,000 have registered their permanent residence in Beijing, playing an effective role in guiding population flow, attracting a mass of highly competent people and enhancing the whole competitiveness of Beijing. However, point-based household registration is very difficult and competitive. A total of 130,111 people applied for household registration in 2021, but only 6,054 of them were approved, with a success rate of 4.6%. A total of 122,219 people applied for household registration in 2022, but only 6,006 of them were approved, with a success rate of 4.91%. A total of 106,772 people applied for household registration in 2023, but only 6,003 of them were approved, with a success rate of 5.62%^[14].

Second, with regard to talent introduction, a series of policies are introduced to attract high-level talent and professionals in shortage, including national and municipal experts, overseas returnees and high-tech industry talent, among others. A large number of high-level talents at home and abroad have been attracted by talent introduction policies, and most of them are professionals and senior management personnel. Beijing's scientific and technological innovation capacity and enterprise competitiveness are thus enhanced, laying a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the capital's

economy. In recent years, thousands of people aged 30–45 on average have registered permanent residence in Beijing each year through this policy. Most have been married and hold master's degrees or above, with stable occupations and high incomes.

Third, the family reunification household registration policy allows people to realize household registration transfer through family relationships such as spousal relationships and parent-child relationships, so as to maintain family reunification and social stability. This policy has been introduced since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, but specific details will be subject to adjustments as the society develops. This policy is more suitable for the elderly and minors. It is of great significance for maintaining family integrity and social stability and harmony, and advocating humanitarianism, despite little impact on economic development.

Fourth, the employment-based household registration policy allows fresh graduates to register permanent residence in Beijing by signing labor contracts with Beijing's enterprises and public institutions and paying social insurance in Beijing. In the past years, about 5,000 to 10,000 graduates registered their permanent residence in Beijing every year through this policy. About 70% of them are aged 22 to 25. Master graduates are the main group applying for household registration, accounting for about 60%. This policy helps attract high-competent personnel to work in Beijing, providing strong talent support for Beijing's economic and social development.

Last but not least, the investment-based household registration policy allows entrepreneurs and investors who invest a certain amount of capital in Beijing to register their permanent residence in Beijing. This policy is most suitable for applicants aged 30 to 50 with strong economic strength and certain social influence but with varying educational levels. It played an important role in attracting outside investment and promoting local economic development in the early 2000s, but the tightness of this policy has resulted in a decrease in the number of individuals who have registered their permanent residence through it in recent years. This policy, to some extent, has contributed to the rapid development of Beijing's economy, especially the development of high-tech industries and financial services.

2.4 Household Registration Chaos Under Strict Control in Beijing

As mentioned above, the diverse advantages of Beijing hukou have attracted many applicants. Some of them may commit a crime to acquire Beijing hukou. Some intermediaries and applicants registered their permanent residence in Beijing through illegal means such as enhancing points through forged documents. For example, in 2019, one applicant submitted a forged Certificate of Doctor's Degree to apply for Beijing hukou, which was found during the review. The applicant involved was eventually disqualified and held legally responsible. Some applicants attempt to register their permanent residence through investment by falsifying companies and investment contracts; some even forge employment certificates. In 2020, the Beijing Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, together with public security organs, cracked a case in which an intermediary provided applicants with false employment certificates and social security payment records through forged company names to help them obtain eligibility for point-based household registration.

Beijing boasts unique advantages in terms of politics, economics and culture, bringing numerous resources for the survival and development of the local population. However, limited by space, the population size needs to be controlled through household registration management, leading to conflict in the demand and supply of household registration and preventing non-native populations from integrating into Beijing.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Literature Research

A systematic analysis was conducted in this study based on extensive access to literature, regulations and academic thesis on Beijing's household registration policies since 1949, and news reports on major social events involving household registration management. The emphasis was placed on literature such as Qiu Naqing's "Analysis of Changes in Beijing's Household Registration System", Li Xiaozhuang's "Preliminary Measurement and Analysis of the Scale of Household Registration based on Residential Permit and Points: A Case Study of Beijing", "Reform of Residential Permit System and Household Registration System: Policy Interpretation and Comparison between Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen" by Li Shimei and Shen Li, and Zheng Xinyu's "Minor Adjustments to Beijing's Household Registration Policy to Seize Talent Dividend".

In addition, as part of this study, we looked up journals and newspapers related to philosophy and humanities, social sciences, information science, and management science through CNKI, and conducted research analysis and references.

3.2 Fieldwork

Fieldwork is generally applied to research in humanities. The author has collected first-hand data in fieldwork to understand the nature of research. Research encourages the pursuit of truth from facts, and the ultimate goal is to discover truth and law, and set up humanistic thoughts in the reflection of "self" through the observation of "the other", realizing the dialectical unity of science and value, and commonality and individuality^[15].

Beijing was taken as the field point in this fieldwork. Beijing stands as the capital of the People's Republic of China, a municipality directly under the central government, a national central city, a megacity, as well as China's political, cultural, international exchange, science and technology centers approved by the State Council. Covering an area of 16,410.54 square kilometers, Beijing has jurisdiction over 16 districts, namely Dongcheng District, Xicheng District, Chaoyang District, Fengtai District, Shijingshan District, Haidian District, Shunyi District, Tongzhou District, Daxing District, Fangshan District, Mentougou District, Changping District, Pinggu District, Miyun District, Huairou District and Yanqing District. By the end of 2023, the permanent resident population in Beijing was 21.858 million, of which 8.24 million were permanent non-native populations, accounting for 37.7% of the permanent resident population, and 19.198 million was the urban population, accounting for 87.8% of the permanent resident population; the birth rate of the permanent resident population is 5.63‰, the death rate

6.13‰, and the natural growth rate -0.5‰. The annual new urban jobs were 28,1000, and the average surveyed urban unemployment rate was 4.4%. By age, there were 2.625 million permanent residents aged 0-14, accounting for 12% of the city's permanent resident population; 14.285 million permanent residents aged 15-59, accounting for 65.4%; 4.948 million permanent residents aged 60 and above, accounting for 22.6%. By urban and rural areas, the urban population was 19.198 million and the rural population was 2.66 million. The urban population accounted for 87.8% of the city's permanent resident population.

In 2023, Beijing's annual GDP reached RMB 4,376.07 billion. Considering the permanent resident population, the per capita GDP was RMB 200,000, ranking at the top level among provincial regions across China. The per capita disposable income of residents in Beijing was RMB 81,752, of which the per capita disposable income of rural residents increased by 7.5%, 2 percent points higher than that of urban residents. About 40% of Beijing's general public budget was spent on education, social security, employment, and health. More efforts were made to ensure adequate housing. In 2023, Beijing provided 82,000 suits of affordable rental housing and completed 93,000 suits of various types of affordable housing. Beijing commenced the renovation of 355 old urban residential communities, and completed the renovation of 183 old urban residential communities. Beijing had 12,518 medical and health organizations with 139,000 beds and 343,000 health workers. There were 1,991 kindergartens in total, with the coverage rate of inclusive kindergartens reaching 93%. A total of 1,772 elderly dining service centers were built, covering more than 2.8 million people in nearly 5,000 urban and rural communities. A total of 20 public libraries and 226 museums were available in Beijing.

It is of great significance to investigate Beijing's household registration policies. First of all, Beijing, as a mega city, has a significant proportion of non-native populations. The city impression and belongingness of non-native populations matter to their quality of life, and their degree of integration into the whole society affects the social harmony in Beijing. Second, the household registration policy of Beijing is a significant example for other cities in China, as it is the capital. Thus, examining the changes in Beijing's household registration policy can offer valuable experience and references for other large cities to handle the issues of non-native populations.

3.3 In-Depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were adopted in this study. This interview method is not limited by the order and keywords of questions. The order of questions can be adjusted in time according to the situation to better control the interview contents and rhythm of conversation. Most importantly, researchers can guide the interviewees to state their ideas in depth on the topic of the interview. ^[16]

Non-native residents who have lived in Beijing for 3 to 20 years were selected from 6 districts of Beijing as the respondents of in-depth interviews in this study. The respondents consist of males and females aged 20 to 73 from the Han nationality and minorities. They come from different regions, and have different education levels, work

experiences, marriage status and family economic status. To sum up, a total of 14 non-native residents (numbered 1-14) were interviewed in this study.

The interviews were conducted in February 2024 and each took between 40 minutes to 1.5 hours, with an average duration of 1 hour. The interviews aim to understand the respondents' reasons for living in Beijing and their living conditions, as well as the influence of their educational background, housing situation and family life on their city impression and belongingness towards Beijing. The researcher would inform the topic of the interview, the time required for the interview and relevant matters of the interview process in advance. Any personally identifiable information of respondents will be anonymized (Table 2).

Table 2. General Information of Respondents.

No.	Gender	Age	Educa- tion	Occupation	Mar- riage status	Household regis- tration and man- ning quotas	Household registration location	Years of living in Beijing
1	Male	27	Doctor- ate	Enterprise engineer	Unmar- ried	Registered per- manent resi- dence in Beijing, with manning quotas	Transferred from Inner Mongolia	3 years in Dongcheng District
2	Female	28	Doctor- ate	Doctoral student	Unmar- ried	No registered permanent resi- dence in Beijing, no manning quo- tas	Shandong Province	10 years in Haidian Dis- trict
3	Male	30	Master's degree	Researcher in an R&D institution	Unmar- ried	Registered per- manent resi- dence in Beijing, with manning quotas	Zhejiang Province	6 years in Haidian Dis- trict
4	Male	33	High school	Caregiver based in hospitals	Wid- owed, with 2 children	No registered permanent resi- dence in Beijing, no manning quo- tas	Henan Prov- ince	5 years in Fengtai Dis- trict
5	Female	34	Master's degree	Middle school teacher	Married, 1 daugh- ter	No registered permanent resi- dence in Beijing, with manning quotas	Henan Prov- ince	12 years in Haidian Dis- trict and Xicheng Dis- trict

6	Male	35	High school	Delivery man	Married, 2 daughters	No registered permanent residence in Beijing, no manning quotas	Shanxi Province	17 years in Fangshan District
7	Female	36	University	Network information staff	Married, 2 daughters	No registered permanent residence in Beijing, no manning quotas	Shanxi Province	14 years in Fangshan District
8	Male	48	High school	An employee of an enterprise	Married, 2 daughters	No registered permanent residence in Beijing, with manning quotas	Shandong Province	20 years in Dongcheng District
9	Female	50	Junior high school	Housekeeper	Married, 2 daughters	No registered permanent residence in Beijing, no manning quotas	Hebei Province	8 years in Xicheng District
10	Male	52	Master's degree	Enterprise management	Married, with children	Registered permanent residence in Beijing, with manning quotas	Transferred from Hebei Province	30 years in Xicheng District
11	Male	49	High school	Restaurant owner	Married, 3 children	No registered permanent residence in Beijing, with manning quotas	Zhejiang Province	20 years in Xicheng District
12	Female	50	Master's degree	Civil servant	Married, with children	Registered permanent residence in Beijing, with manning quotas	Transferred from Hunan Province	22 years in Xicheng District
13	Female	55	Junior high school	Caregiver based in hospitals	Married, with children	No registered permanent residence in Beijing, no manning quotas	Heilongjiang Province	3 years in Fengtai District
14	Female	73	University	Judge	Married, with children	No registered permanent residence in Beijing, no manning quotas	Henan Province	10 years in Xicheng District

The interview method is a good choice because it allows us to adjust the questions based on the respondents' responses and deeply explore their genuine emotions and opinions. In the interview process, this study emphasizes the importance of direct communication with respondents in building trust and obtaining more authentic and in-depth information. The in-depth interview method is important because it allows researchers to obtain in-depth information. Unlike questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews allow researchers to adjust questions during the interview based on the respondents' answers, and learn more about their feelings and views, thus obtaining more comprehensive and accurate information. Information acquisition is more flexible because the interview time and locations can be arranged as required.

Respondents for this study were mainly selected from the following groups:

(1) Migrant workers who live in Beijing for a long time without registered permanent residence: They have a direct feeling for urban belongingness and living conditions.

(2) Highly educated non-natives working in Beijing: They have unique insights into Beijing's household registration policies and city impression.

(3) Social scholars: They shared their views and suggestions on household registration policies.

4 Research Results

4.1 Non-Native Population Pyramid Under the Influence of Policies

According to the 7th demographic census of Beijing in November 2020, Beijing had a permanent resident population of 21.893 million, including a non-native population of 8.418 million, representing 38.5%.

(1) By age, most non-native permanent residents were between 30 and 34 years old, reaching 1.3782 million, followed by the age groups of 25-29 years old (1.2546 million), 35-39 years old (980,900), and 20-24 years old (816,100), successively.

(2) By proportion of non-native population against the permanent resident population, the age group of 25-29 years old ranked top, representing 65.87%, followed by the age groups of 20-24 years old (60.43%) and 30-34 years old (55.06%). The non-native permanent resident population aged 15-64 accounted for 87.83% of the entire permanent resident population, indicating that the working-age population was the main force of the non-native permanent resident population. However, the labor force population aged 15-64 only accounted for 45.11% of the non-native permanent resident population, while this proportion in Shanghai has exceeded 50%.

(3) The proportion of women of childbearing age (15-49 years old) in the non-native permanent resident population was 48.90%, which was close to that proportion of 51.20% in the household registered population. However, there were few non-native populations aged 0-14, which may have to do with the household registration-related enrollment policy implemented in Beijing. The non-native permanent resident population dropped after peaking at the age group of 30-34 years old. This means that non-native permanent residents tend to leave Beijing with age. ^[17]

From the above data, we can find several key features of Beijing's population structure. The first one is the young non-native population. Most non-native permanent residents are between 20 to 34 years old, indicating that Beijing is highly attractive for young labor. The high proportion of young groups also reflects that the enormous potential of employment and development in Beijing is the major drive for non-native populations to come to Beijing. The second one is the unevenly distributed population proportion. The working-age population aged 15-64 accounts for 87.83% of non-native populations, indicating that non-native populations are dominated by the working-age group. However, compared to China's first-tier cities such as Shanghai, the proportion of the non-native working population in Beijing is relatively low. Apparently, the reason is that Beijing's household registration policy is rather stringent, which restricts the long-term settlement and development of non-native populations. The proportion of women of childbearing age among the non-native permanent resident population is close to that among the household registered population. This indicates that non-native populations have similar activation to native household registered populations. However, the low proportion of non-native populations aged 0-14 reflects the restrictions imposed by Beijing's household registration system on the education of children of non-native populations. As a result, it is impossible for non-native populations born in Beijing to live in Beijing for a long time if they cannot acquire household registration status. The data also reveals the population mobility pattern in Beijing, particularly the spike in native populations aged 30 to 34 and subsequent decrease. Non-native populations tend to leave Beijing with age. Major reasons for their leave may include career development bottleneck, marriage and children's education, among others. In general, Beijing's non-native population is mainly composed of young people capable of labor, but tends to leave Beijing with age, which is closely associated with Beijing's strict household registration policies and children's education. Analyzing the causes of these problems is crucial for stabilizing and optimizing Beijing's population structure.

4.2 Influence of Age on City Impression and Belongingness

It can be seen from the fieldwork and interviews that age has a significant impact on the city impression and belongingness of non-native populations to Beijing. For example, their willingness to acquire Beijing's hukou, or household registration status, duration of working in Beijing, and daily lifestyle will be affected. The city impression and belongingness of respondents to Beijing vary greatly from one age group to another.

"I have studied and lived in Beijing for 10 years and I got my bachelor's degree and doctorate during this time. I have been very familiar with Beijing and accustomed to the lifestyle here. I am looking for a job now. I want to find a job in a college or university. Beijing has many colleges and universities that provide a good scientific research environment. So, I have sent my resume to some colleges or universities in Beijing and participated in some interviews. What I am considering now include household registration, remuneration, scientific research environment and development opportunities." (Respondent 2, 28 years old)

"I majored in artificial intelligence abroad, and Beijing offers more opportunities to use and improve my professional ability. I chose the central enterprise because it can give a household registration status in Beijing, although I also got offers from large-scale private enterprises and foreign-funded enterprises. So I am eligible to buy my house and car, which is a guarantee for the life quality. Many of my colleagues came from other provinces, and we all feel good to work and live here. I will settle down in Beijing and my parents will also come here to live with me after they retire. Beijing offers better social security for the elderly than Inner Mongolia." (Respondent 1, 27 years old)

"I was born and raised in Shanxi, and I have worked in Beijing for 17 years. I worked as a construction worker and a pastry cook, and now I am a delivery man. Although I am tired from work, I earn a decent income that is much higher than that in my hometown. I love Beijing. There are many working opportunities, and you can make a fortune as long as you work hard. I don't have a Beijing hukou, so it is inconvenient for me to receive medical treatment and I have to rent a house in Fangshan, which is 50 km away from where I work. Although I'm tired here, I don't want to return to my hometown, because I don't think I can adapt to the slow pace of life in my hometown, and there are few job opportunities." (Respondent 6, 35 years old)

"I come from Hebei Province, and I have been engaging in household services in Beijing for eight years. I came to Beijing because I can earn more here, and I need the money to put my kids through college." My employer is good to me, and I don't feel stressed at work. I speak with a strong accent, so it's not easy for me to communicate with others. During the holidays, I would always go home to see my family. I don't know much about Beijing. The city is too large, and it's not convenient to go anywhere. I will return home when I am too old to work." (Respondent 9, 50 years old)

"I have retired and came to Beijing to babysit my grandchild. I'm at an old age now, so I have to live with my children. I don't have any friends in Beijing, as I have previously lived and worked in other places. I often dance to music in a square, but don't have too much communication with others. My daughter is busy at work and my grandchild attends school. I would call my relatives and friends in my hometown and browse some news on my mobile phone when I feel lonely." I think living in a small city is more convenient. I have other children, so I am not eligible for household registration in Beijing through the family reunification policy. In addition, I cannot enjoy the preferential policies such as medical examinations and riding for the elderly in Beijing. Reimbursement procedures for medical insurance purchased in other places are still complex. (Respondent 14, 73 years old)

The review data shows that the city impression and belongingness of native populations in Beijing vary greatly from one age group to another. Their duration of employment in Beijing, daily lifestyle and other aspects have a direct effect on their willingness to obtain a Beijing hukou. In particular, the city impression and belongingness of the young people mainly derive from two aspects: education and career development; job opportunities and economic motive. The young people, like the 28-year-old Respondent 2, receive education in Beijing and wish to serve as a teacher in a college or university. Beijing is a cluster of colleges and universities, and offers a favorable scientific environment, which are the major reasons for them to stay there. They are familiar with

Beijing and adaptable, and actively seek opportunities to work in Beijing for a long time. Eligibility for household registration, remuneration, research environment and development opportunities are the main factors they consider. The 27-year-old Respondent 1 who majored in artificial intelligence chose to serve in a central enterprise, because the enterprise can award him a Beijing hukou, which will help to improve the life quality. Many of his colleagues who came from other provinces have gotten used to the pace of work and life in Beijing and plan to settle down and take care of their parents in Beijing. The 35-year-old delivery man (Respondent 6) said Beijing offers more job opportunities, and hard work is key to making money. Even though he faces many inconveniences in medical treatment and living conditions without a Beijing hukou, he still has a strong sense of belonging to Beijing and doesn't want to go back to his hometown to lead a slow life. The city impression and belongingness of the people in the old age groups mainly derive from two aspects: temporary residence and working motive; forced choice and inconvenience in daily life. The 50-year-old housekeeper (Respondent 9) came to Beijing mainly for high salaries, because she needs the money to put her kids through college. Although she doesn't feel much stressed at work and her employer is good to her, she knows little about Beijing's urban culture, has a weak sense of belonging, and just lives there temporarily for economic purposes. The 73-year-old senior (Respondent 14) came to Beijing to babysit her grandchild after retirement. She doesn't have a social circle and a sense of belonging in Beijing, as she has previously lived and worked in other places. She complains about the high living cost and inconvenience in daily life, and believes that living in a small city is more convenient. She also faces the trouble of complex reimbursement procedures for medical insurance purchased in other places, as she is not eligible to apply for household registration in Beijing.

It can be observed from the above interviews that Beijing boasts advantages in productive resources, and is highly attractive to the working population aged 18 to 60. Young people are more inclined to embrace urban culture. They have advantageous conditions, and actively seek ways to integrate themselves into the city. They have long-term life plans, and some eligible individuals want to acquire a Beijing hukou. On the other hand, the old-age group holds the view that they just live there temporarily, and has a low sense of belonging to Beijing. Returning home is still the final goal of the upper part of the working age group. The group of people who babysit for their children or live with their children due to their old age was forced to move to Beijing, so they are more inclined to express passive emotions.

4.3 Influence of Family on City Belongingness

"My boyfriend has been employed in Beijing and awarded a Beijing hukou. I will strive to stay in Beijing, and we will get married as soon as I find a stable job in Beijing. Household registration won't make much difference in my life, but it is one of the important treatments offered by the employer, and one of the significant factors in my career." (Respondent 2, unmarried, female)

"After graduation, I found a job in Beijing and was awarded the Beijing hukou. The social environment in Beijing is favorable for me to engage in scientific research, but

there are also advantageous opportunities for this industry in Shanghai. I am not married now. If my job or family requires it, I can also work in Shanghai, but I will keep my Beijing hukou. After all, it is not easy to get it.” (Respondent 3, unmarried, male)

“I am an administrative staff in a private enterprise. I have worked and lived in Beijing for 20 years. I have been purchasing social security in Beijing, although I don’t have a Beijing hukou. I got married in Beijing and gave birth to two daughters. My wife also worked in Beijing. My eldest daughter finished her primary school life in a key primary school in Beijing. She had a good time in the school and participated in the school’s symphony orchestra for free to learn to play violin. She also came out top in terms of academic performance. When it was time for middle school, I decided to let my wife and two children return home in Shandong Province, fearing that she would be limited in taking the college entrance examination. She is in her second year of high school now, and they have come back every holiday in recent years. We all love Beijing. My two children study hard and want to go back to Beijing for college.” (Respondent 8, married, 2 daughters, male)

“I moved to Beijing with my husband. After giving birth to two children, I quit my job and stayed at home to take care of them. Sometimes I earn some money via the Internet. My income is not much, but it is enough to support the family with my husband. We live in Fangshan District, and our two children attended primary school and kindergarten nearby. Beijing has a favorable education environment. My family believes in Buddhism, and we are all vegetarians. Teachers at schools respect the living habits of our children and try their best to offer catering convenience for them. I often take my children to visit museums, participate in parent-child activities organized by the community, and attend temple fairs. They once asked me if they were Beijingers. I don’t how to answer them. They are born and raised here, so it is difficult for them to understand why they are not Beijingers, and someday they will have to leave here. I hope the government will issue a policy to give them the same education opportunities as the household registered population in Beijing.” (Respondent 7, married, 2 daughters, female)

“I was introduced to Beijing as a caregiver. I work in hospitals all day long to take care of patients, and have few opportunities to contact other people. I feel that people in Beijing are very polite, but not that close to us. I went to Tiananmen Square to see the flag-raising ceremony the other day, and sometimes went shopping during my break time. I don’t even feel that I am in Beijing. Despite being tired as a caregiver, I make a decent income. In my hometown, I can’t even earn half of my current income. My daughter works in Guangzhou. A bird told me that the income of caregivers in Guangzhou is also high, and the living cost there is lower than that in Beijing, so I also have a plan to go to Guangzhou. (Respondent 13, married, 3 children, female)

The city belongingness of unmarried people is mainly affected by their career development and marriage plans. An unmarried woman (Respondent 2) said that her boyfriend has been employed in Beijing and awarded the household registration status, which motivates her to stay in Beijing, and that they plan to get married as soon as she finds a stable job. She thinks that household registration is an important treatment offered by the employer and a significant factor she will consider during job hunting.

Another unmarried man (Respondent 3) was employed and awarded household registration status in Beijing after graduation. He stated that Beijing can offer favorable conditions for scientific research, but also consider taking opportunities in Shanghai. If his job or family requires it, he also accepts to work in Shanghai, but he will keep his Beijing hukou since it is not easy to get it.

The belongingness of married people with children depends on the children's education and family life, as well as the family's economic condition and life quality. A male working in a private enterprise (Respondent 8) has lived in Beijing for 20 years, and he got married and gave birth to two daughters in Beijing, although they don't have a Beijing hukou. His eldest daughter finished her happy primary school life in Beijing, but his wife brought two children to their hometown in Shandong Province to avoid being restricted from taking the college entrance examination. At present, his two daughters come to Beijing to spend their holiday. They all love Beijing and wish their children to be admitted to universities in Beijing in the future. A female who moved to Beijing with her husband (Respondent 7) stated that she is responsible for taking care of her two children at home, and that Beijing offers a favorable educational environment. They don't have Beijing hukou, but hope the government will issue a policy to give them the same education opportunities as the household registered population in Beijing.

A female caregiver in Beijing (Respondent 13) expressed that although she earns more in Beijing than in her hometown, she feels lonely due to the hard work and lack of interaction with the outside world. She is considering going to Guangzhou because of the lower living cost than that in Beijing and a decent income.

The interviews with the above several non-native residents show that marriage and family have an impact on their sense of belonging to a city. Individuals with their family members not in Beijing tend to have a weak sense of belonging to Beijing. Even though they have been in Beijing for many years, they still think that people are indifferent to each other in Beijing and they have no sense of belonging to the city. Bearing a mind of "just working here", they are not inclined to accept Beijing's urban culture and willing to go to places offering higher incomes. The white-collar workers who have just stepped into the workplace and are not yet married among non-native populations value the career prospects brought for them and are willing to move to other places for better development. On the other hand, people living together with their family members in Beijing among non-native populations generally have a strong sense of belonging and a feeling of dependency on Beijing. The household registration system has more influence on them, so they tend to pay more attention to treatments within its influence. Families with children who are receiving basic education are more eager to acquire Beijing hukou or treatments that are identical to the household registered population, and tend to reflect on the fairness of systems. Moreover, females among non-native populations are more family-oriented. Although their income is lower, they work together with their families in the city to support each other.

4.4 Influence of Educational Background, Occupation, Income and Social Group on City Belongingness

"I was born in a rural area and began to work away from home after graduating from high school. My wife passed away from illness. I am working as a caregiver in Beijing, and earn more than RMB 10,000 a month. I like Beijing, because one can find a job easily here and the people here are very kind. My wife passed away from illness. The only friends I have are my workmates, but they change often. Some quit to do something else, and some go back home. I am just a passer-by in this city. I plan to return home to start a small business with my savings and have a steady life when my children are grown up." (Respondent 4, graduated from high school, a caregiver based in hospitals)

"I joined the army after being graduated from high school. I have been in Beijing for about 20 years. I work hard and have a stable job. Plus social security payments, I can earn more than RMB 16,000 a month. It has been a challenge to rely on me to stay in Beijing. I hope my children can work in Beijing and acquire the Beijing hukou in the future, so I can also stay in Beijing after retirement. If it doesn't work, I will return to Shandong Province, where I have a house and living expenses are inexpensive. (Respondent 8, graduated from high school, an employee in an enterprise)

"I got my master's degree at Peking University. I have my classmates, teachers and colleagues here. There are only some relatives left in my hometown. I have entrenched myself in Beijing. I didn't realize the importance of household registration when I graduated, so I didn't choose to work for government organs. Now I realize that everything, including car purchasing, house purchasing, children's education and medical security, is limited by household registration. I am working hard to raise my points, expecting to register permanent residence through the point-based household registration system. I bought my place in Daxing District, which is far away from my workplace, but the subway is convenient. Buying a house in the suburbs can add to my point, and I am also planning to study for my doctorate to increase my points. My kid is in kindergarten now. As long as there are no policy changes, my points will be enough when she starts middle school." (Respondent 5, master's degree, middle school teacher)

"I have worked and lived in Beijing for 30 years. I set up a family here. In a sense, I am a builder of this city, but I never regard myself as a Beijinger from the inside, just like the non-native people around me who stay in Beijing. When you ask them where they are from, they will tell you their hometown. It is the household registration system that classifies us as Beijingers. But our children believe themselves to be Beijingers, because they have no idea what the hometown means. Beijing is an inclusive city. I identify with Beijing's culture and have gotten used to the way of life here. My family and friends are here, and I will also live my later life here." (Respondent 10, master's degree, an executive of an enterprise)

"I came to Beijing to run a restaurant, and it gradually developed into a chain restaurant with generous profits. Later, my children went to school in Beijing. We bought a house in Beijing, and we all settled in here. Beijing has a rich cultural atmosphere, and it is convenient to live here. Household registration is not important for us. My children go to international schools, and we bought international medical insurance for

them. I have many friends, home folks, and business partners here, as well as family friends made in children's study activities." (Respondent 11, graduated from high school, boss of a chain restaurant)

"Our friends in Beijing are mainly Buddhist fellows. We eat vegetarian food and worship Buddha together. We meet and chat regularly. We are happy and often help each other. Kids about the same age in the community play together and sometimes go to school together." (Respondent 7, university, full-time mom)

Education background, occupation, income and social group have a significant impact on the city belongingness of non-native populations in Beijing, according to the interview data. Among the respondents with a high school education or below, a respondent with a high school education (Respondent 4) said that they mainly work for low-skilled industries, such as caregivers, and that although they have a decent income, they have a lower sense of belonging to Beijing and consider themselves as a passer-by for this city because of the limited and unstable social circle. Another respondent with a high school education (Respondent 8) also expressed a limited sense of belonging to Beijing. He hopes that his kids can live in Beijing in the future, but he intends to return to his hometown after retirement. Respondents with higher degrees are in stark contrast with them. The respondent with a master's degree (Respondent 5) mentioned that he has established a stable social relationship during his study and work in Beijing, and is striving to live in Beijing for a long time through the point-based household registration system. According to another respondent with a master's degree (Respondent 10), he identifies with Beijing's culture and lifestyle and plans to live his later life in Beijing, although he does not consider himself a Beijinger from the inside.

Occupation also plays a vital role in the formation of city belongingness. Among people engaging in low-skilled occupations, the respondent working as a caregiver (Respondent 4) has a low sense of belonging to the city and tends to choose to return to her hometown after retirement due to the job category and limited social circle, despite having a decent income. Among the medium- and high-income people, the employee of an enterprise (Respondent 8) and the middle school teacher (Respondent 5), for instance, have a high sense of belonging. They hope to live in Beijing for a long time through the efforts of their own and their children. Among the high-income people, the executive of an enterprise (Respondent 10) and the owner of a chain restaurant (Respondent 11) have a strong sense of belonging to Beijing. They have established themselves in Beijing, and their life is less restricted by household registration, which allows them to adapt more easily to life there.

From the perspective of education level, the above interviews show that graduates from universities in Beijing have a stronger sense of identity with the city, that non-native populations with bachelor's degrees or above have higher expectations of staying in Beijing and tend to choose to settle in Beijing for a long time, and that non-native populations graduated from high school and below tend to return to their homes of origin. From the perspective of occupation type, it can be seen that most non-native populations from rural areas engage in low-skilled work with poor income in the secondary labor market. Without the ability to establish themselves in big cities, they tend to focus more on their income and are less inclined to settle down in cities. Economic

development and income levels in Beijing are greater incentives for white-collar workers to strive for the opportunity to live in Beijing for a long time to pursue better career development and life. Non-native populations with incomes higher than general families show greater willingness to settle in Beijing. Household registration has little effect on their life, and they can better adapt to life in Beijing. Non-native populations will actively or passively establish social support networks connected through friends and business connections. Non-native blue-collar workers live in a circle of acquaintances dominated by fellow townsmen or relatives featuring frequent mobility. This leads to more uncertainties, and a weak sense of belonging and attachment among them, lowering their intention of living in the city. Non-native white-collar workers of new generations can easily blend themselves in their job relations, and establish social support networks through job relations. It can be seen that group activities are beneficial for non-native populations to integrate themselves into city life in Beijing.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

This investigation provides us with a comprehensive landscape of changes in Beijing's urban household registration policies and their influence on the city impression and belongingness of non-native populations. First of all, Beijing, as a megacity, boasts advantages in resources and is highly attractive to non-native populations. Beijing's household registration status is more advantageous than that of other places, whether it is for social security such as education and medical security, or for buying cars or houses. Beijing, as a capital is endowed with more functions to ensure political stability and national security. Thus, Beijing has been persisting in strict control of population size as a long-standing urban development strategy, and using household registration policies as an important means to manage the society and control the population structure. Second, "non-native populations" in this study include "people without household registration status in Beijing", and people who transferred their household registration from other places to Beijing (i.e., the first generation of "Beijing neo-migrants"). Beijing features a high proportion of non-native populations. By the end of 2023, the non-household registered population has reached 37.8% of the total population. Some of them have been working in Beijing for many years, and some stay in Beijing due to marriage, becoming "non-floating" non-native populations. Although there are no official statistics on the number of "Beijing neo-migrants", their contributions to the development of science, technology, and humanities in Beijing are undeniable. Working-age individuals constitute the majority of non-native populations in Beijing. Important factors that affect their city impression and belongingness towards Beijing include age, family status, occupation, income, education level and participation in social activities. Third, the development and stability of Beijing are directly affected by how non-native populations live, how they perceive it, and how they integrate into it. On the other hand, the household registration system has a direct impact on whether non-native populations can receive fair treatment and opportunities for survival and development in Beijing.

Based on the previous findings, the researchers have offered the following recommendations to enhance the city impression and belongingness of non-native populations.

(1) Make more efforts in reform and adjustment of the household registration system

Extend the limitations for awarding a household registration status. It is suggested to properly relax the restrictions and provide more opportunities for non-native populations to register their permanent residence in Beijing, especially for those who have worked and lived in Beijing for a long time.

Optimize the point-based household registration policy. It is suggested to add items such as years of working, educational background and social contributions for the point calculation to enhance the possibility for non-native populations to be awarded the household registration status.

Guarantee the basic rights and interests of non-native populations. Non-native populations should be given the same basic rights and interests in terms of education, medical care and housing as the household registered population before they are awarded the household registration status.

(2) Optimize the community-based management

Offer better community-based services. We suggest improving the quality of community-based services, and building a convenient and efficient community-based service system to provide all-round support for native populations in terms of medical care, education and employment, among others.

Promote integration into communities. More community activities should be organized to boost interaction and understanding between native residents and non-native residents, foster community integration, and improve the belongingness of non-native populations.

Build support networks. Social support networks should be built for non-native populations to help them integrate into community life through voluntary services, supporting groups and other forms.

(3) Strengthen cultural publicity

Promote urban culture. Cultural publicity campaigns allow non-native populations to better understand and identify with Beijing's urban culture and values, and thus enhance their cultural identity with Beijing.

Carry forward diversified cultures. A cultural background with respect and inclusiveness for non-native populations should be built, and diversified cultural exchanges should be encouraged to enrich the cultural atmosphere in the city.

Make greater efforts in publicity and education. Actions should be taken to publicize the household registration system and urban policies in schools and communities to help non-native populations better understand and adapt to Beijing's management policies and social environment.

The measures above can enhance the belongingness and life satisfaction of non-native populations while maintaining its resource advantages and population management strategies, laying a solid foundation for the sustainable development of the city.

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