

Analysis of the floating Elderly Population in Beijing

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Abstract: Based on the fifth census data and the results of the investigation of the floating elderly population in Beijing, this study analyzed the characteristics and causes of the floating elderly population and the problems they are facing both on individual level and the society aspects. It shows that the dominate determinant of the migration for the elderly population is to reunion with their children and grand children. The characters of the elderly themselves, the economic status of their children and the natural and human environment are the main factors for the elderly to make the decision of migration.

Key words: Elderly population, migration, floating

1. Background

Study on floating elderly population is quite few in China. This is because on the one hand, floating elderly population is not as much as other age groups, their floating rate is low; on the other, people think studying on floating labors, floating women and floating children are important since they may face employment, reproduction and education problems. People will normally think that floating elderly will not face such problems anymore, so why they need be studied too? But we think that floating elderly is also an important issue to study. Though the floating elderly population is still not so much now (it's 3% of total floating population in 2000), the number of floating elderly kept an increasing trend in last decade. The number of floating elderly in 2000 increased 4 times more than in 1990. It will continue increasing in the future alone with the increasing of the elderly population, the increasing of the single child family and the acceleration of urbanization. For both the scholar and the policy maker, it's important to know what are the characters, determines, and problems of the floating elderly? What should the society, community and family should prepare for the floating elderly to make them a better environment to live in? All the answers to these questions are significance for academic study of migration and floating population and policy making.

2. Data and method

The methods used in this research are census data analyzing, questionnaire investigation and focus groups. We first used the fifth census data to analysis the characteristics of floating and migration elderly to know the basic situation of the elderly migration and floating. After then we investigated 170 floating elderly in Beijing to get the detail and depth data about the floating elderly. We also conducted two times focus groups with the floating elderly to learn more about their situation and problems. The figure below shows how and where our investigation did. Though the age for elderly usually defined to 60 and above, we found that since women's retire age is 55. Many female elderly started their floating as soon as they got retired, so in this study, we define the age 55 for female elderly and 60 for male elderly.

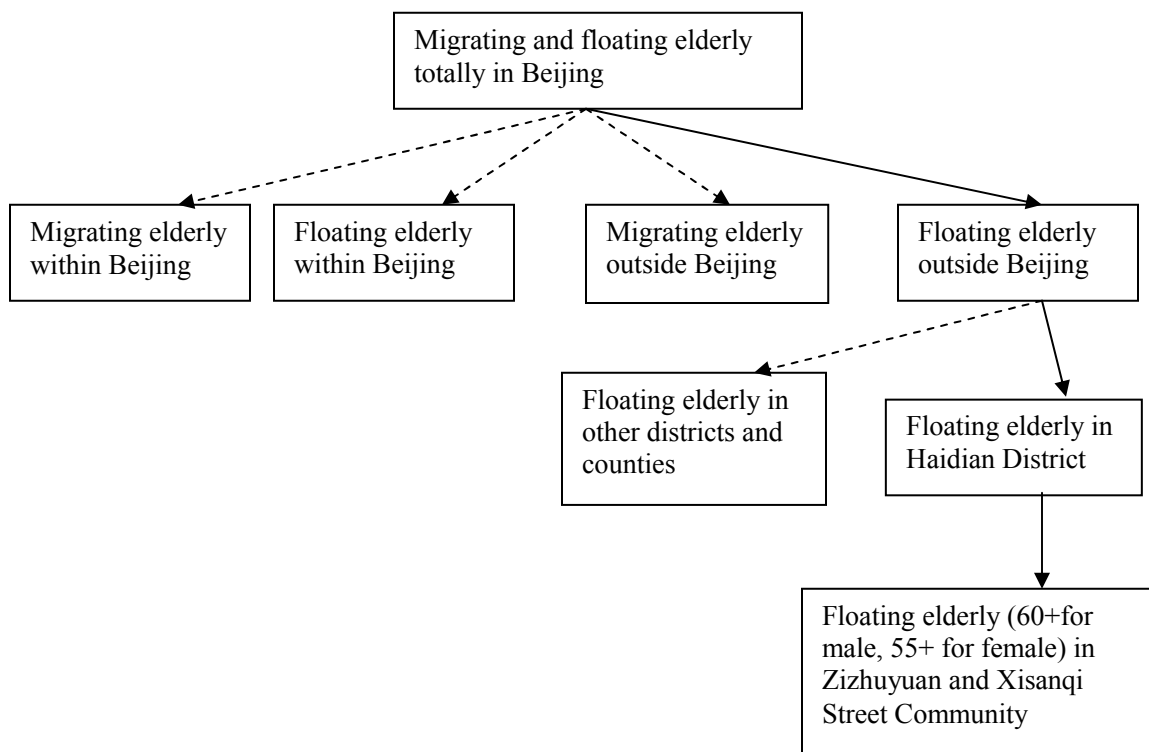


Figure 1. Investigation places and investigated groups

3. Analysis

3. 1 Basic population characteristics

3. 1. 1 Sex and age structure

Among the 170 floating elderly, females are 59% and males are 41%. It means that more females in floating elderly than males. For age, floating elderly are mainly young elderly. 57% floating elderly are below 65, the percentage of floating elderly above 75 is only 3%. See table 1 and figure 2.

Table 1. Age distribution of floating elderly

Age	Frequency	Percent
55-59	43	25.3
60-64	54	31.8
65-69	41	24.1
70-74	27	15.9
75-79	3	1.8
85-89	1	.6
90+	1	.6
Total	170	100.0

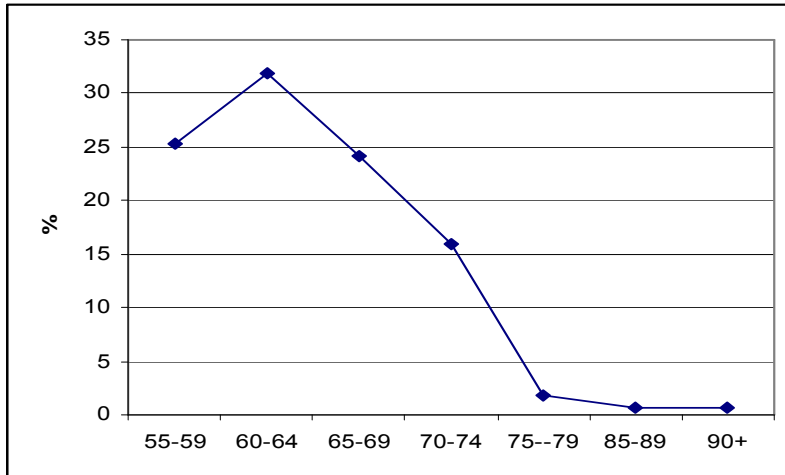


Figure 2. Age structure of floating elderly

3.1.2 Education

The investigation shows that floating elderly has quite high education level. Illiterate elderly are only 7.6 percent, percentage of junior college and college above floating elderly are 35. The proportion of floating elderly with college degree is much higher than the non-migration elderly in Beijing.

Table 2. Education situation of floating elderly

Education	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	13	7.6
Primary School	24	14.1
Middle School	28	16.5
High School	46	27.1
Junior College	21	12.4
College and above	38	22.4
Total	170	100

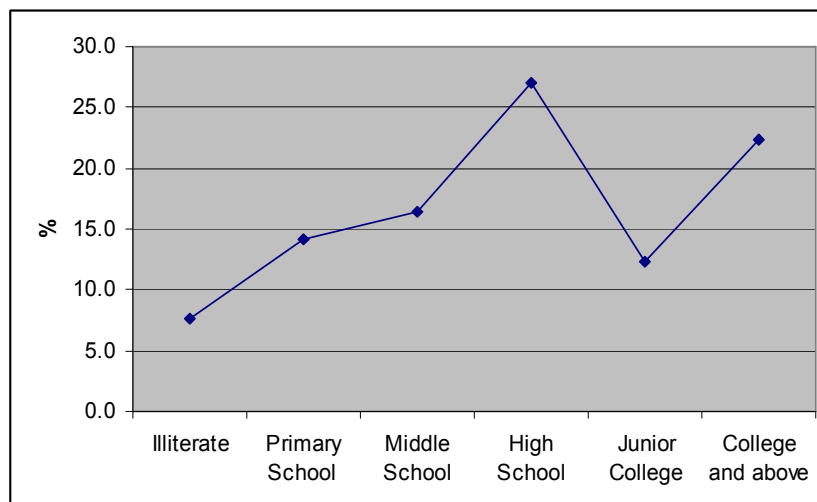


Figure 3. Education situation of floating elderly

3. 1. 3 Marriage Status

Most of the floating elderly has married. 67.6 percent floating married elderly live with their spouse together while 11.2 percent elderly live alone and separate with their spouse. 17.1 percent elderly are widowed. Percentage of unmarried and divorced elderly is quite low.

Table 3. Marriage Status of Floating Elderly

Marriage Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Unmarried	4	2.4	2.4
Married and live with spouse together	115	67.6	68.0
Married but separate with spouse	19	11.2	11.2
Widowed	29	17.1	17.2
Divorced	2	1.2	1.2
Total	169	99.4	100.0
Missing	1	0.6	
Total	170	100.0	

3.1.3 Household type and occupation

Most of the investigated floating elderly are non-agricultural household. Agriculture household elderly are only 18.2%. 35 percent floating elderly worked in governments or academic institutions before their retirement. Another 35 percent elderly worked in national enterprises.

3. 2 Characteristics of floating

3.2.1 Living time in Beijing of the floating elderly

The 170 floating elderly came from all over the country. There have no obvious area difference. Data shows that 15.9 percent elderly has lived in Beijing for 2 to 3 years, 13.5 percent elderly has lived in Beijing for 1 to 2 years, and 10 percent elderly has lived in Beijing for 3 to 4 years. 7.1 percent elderly has lived in Beijing for 4 to 5 years and 16.4 percent elderly lived in Beijing less than one year and 35 percent elderly has

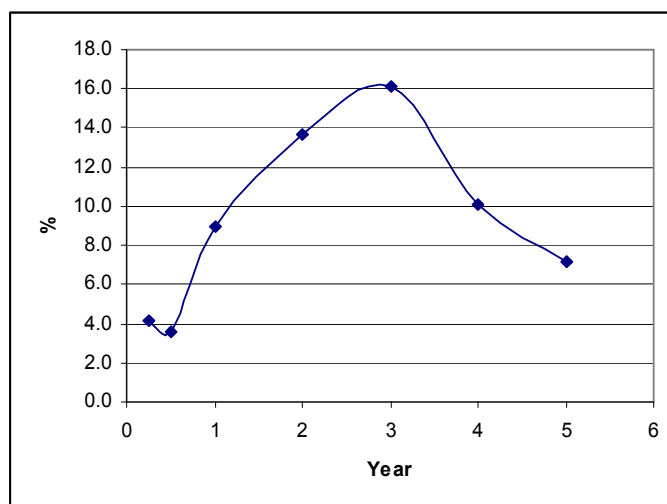


Figure 4. Living time in Beijing of the floating elderly

lived in Beijing for more than 5 years.

3.2.2 Reasons for floating

Reunion with their children is the first reason for floating elderly. Half of the elderly moved to Beijing for looking after their grandchildren and helping housework for their children. 15.3 percent elderly came to Beijing for getting the sprit comfort by reunion with their children and grand children. 14.7 percent elderly came to Beijing for seeking care from their children since their health is not in good condition. 8.8 percent elderly said that they came to Beijing because they like the capital city and want to live there. The percentage of the elderly came to Beijing for business is quit low. There are some elderly came to Beijing because they are born in Beijing and returned to their hometown after they got retired. Usually they also have children worked in Beijing. So moved elderly and their children can help each other when they live together. Usually the children and the elderly will discuss the moving together and decided the action together. By this way, most of the elderly are willing to live with their children and vice verse.

3. 3 The family situation of the floating elderly

In the 170 floating elderly, only two elderly have no children.40.6 percent elderly have 2 children, 26.5 percent elderly have 3 children, 16.5 percent elderly have more than 4 children and 15.3 percent elderly only have single child. (See figure 5).

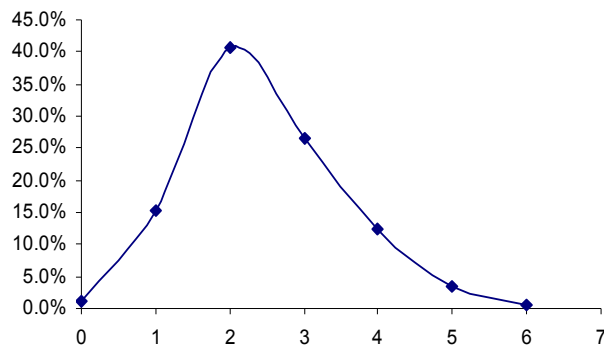


Figure 5. Number of the children of the floating elderly

In the investigated elderly, 14.1 percent live alone.

38.8 percent elderly live with their son and 45.3 percent elderly live with their daughter. It means that more elderly live with daughter together. It contradicts with the traditional son preference. The rank of the children has no obvious effect on the elderly floating. 68 percent floating elderly family have grandchildren.

The children of the floating elderly lived with usually have good economic condition. Nearly half of them earn more than 4000 yuan one month. They also have a nice job. Most of them are professional person and most of them got the high education. 76 percent have college above degree. Most of houses the floating elderly lived are bought by their children. Most of the elderly have their own room.

4. Problems of the floating elderly facing

4. 1 The loses of the benefits in the original place

Usually the elderly will lose some welfare or benefits in their original place or unit. For example, the elderly can get free body check in their original working place. But in Beijing they will not get that benefit. Many elderly wonder if the community can organize such kind of body examine.

4.2 How to get the pension and medical expenses in Beijing

Now many banks have connecting by net in the whole country, so most of the elderly can get their pension in Beijing also, usually they need not go back to their original place to get their pension. But for the medical costs, they usually can not get their medical insurance fees or public health pension in Beijing. Some organization asked they must get their medical pension by themselves, so for get the pension, they must came back themselves. For the medical insurance, usually the insurance company asked they can only get the pension in limit hospitals. So if the see doctors in Beijing, they cannot get any money from the insurance company. For ID card, passport or some other affairs, the floating elderly can not get the service in Beijing since they have no Beijing household. For such things, they must go back to their original place now matter how far away their hometown is. It' s not convenient for the elderly.

4.3 How to get the benefits in the destination place

Now there are many benefit policies for the elderly in most of the cities, such as taking bus, seeing the doctors, park tickets, movie tickets, etc. But in Beijing, many floating elderly cannot get the same benefits as the Beijing local elderly since they have no Beijing elderly certificates.

4.4 How to adapt themselves to the new environment

When the elderly move to a new place, they face the problem how to adjust themselves to the new environment. They should get used to the food, the climate in the destination place and should adapt the relations with their family members and their new neighbors, etc. Sometime they will miss their other children and friends in their hometown.

5. Suggestion

5.1 Accelerate the medical reform, built up the social security system

Only when the countywide social security system has been built up, the medical problems the floating elderly facing can be resolved completely.

5.2 All the elderly should have the same right to get the benefits for the elderly wherever they live in.

The benefits for the elderly should be equal for all the elderly no matter if they have the local household or not.

5.3 Issue the household for the floating elderly, especially for the old elderly

The floating elderly will do no harm to the destination place and actually they will benefit for the economic and social development in the destination place. So the government should widen or eliminate the limit for the transforming their household to the local household if they want.

5.4 Community should provide more services to help the floating elderly to adapt the new environment

6. Questions need further study

6.1 Types and characteristics of the floating elderly in other kind cities and places

Due to the limitation of research funds and strengths, we only investigated the floating elderly in Beijing this time and couldn't do more investigation and research in other cities and places. So the results of this research can only indicate the situation of floating elderly in Beijing. We couldn't compare the difference between some other cities situation. We will do more study if we have another chance.

6.2 We only investigated the floating elderly live in Beijing now. We may ignore some elderly they once came to Beijing but returned back to their hometown. So what is the reason for their returning back? How the floating elderly's decision will change along with the change of their body situation, their marriage, their economic and their age growing? We can follow up some of the elderly to do more in depth study.

6.3 For elderly's psychology adapt, family relationships adjustment and sprit needs, should do more in detail research.

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