

# A Review of Research on the Impact of Lifting Household Registration Restrictions on Nanjing

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**Abstract**—Under the macro background of increasingly aging population and decreasing working age population, how to attract highly skilled labor force and even introduce and retain high-level talents has become an inevitable choice for many cities to achieve innovation driven and high-quality development, while deepening the reform and innovation of registered residence policy has become an unavoidable important path. At the same time, from the original intention of the registered residence restriction policy, the most important thing is to control the inflow of large-scale population and prevent the excess of the city's carrying capacity, especially the crowding out of scarce public services. This concern may still exist in many cities today. Therefore, this paper focuses on the literature review of the impact of deregulation of registered residence registration restrictions on economic growth, public services and the implementation path of registered residence policy reform. Among them, in terms of economic growth, it covers income, consumption, investment and other contents in the macroeconomic framework; In terms of public services, we will start from aspects closely related to the pursuit of a better life, such as housing, medical insurance, children's education, and urban infrastructure construction. The research summary of this paper will help to understand the registered residence system more comprehensively, provide a theoretical basis for the study of the impact of the cancellation of settlement restrictions on Nanjing, and provide a path reference for the design of registered residence policies.

**Keywords**—registered residence restrictions, economic growth, public services, path selection

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, China's economic development has shifted from pursuing speed to pursuing high-quality development, accompanied by a new historical stage of new urbanization. Although the reform of the registered residence system has made historic progress for a long time, the registered residence system, as the basic system of China's urban-rural dual structure, still constitutes the main obstacle to the in-depth promotion of urbanization, which should be the core breakthrough of China's urbanization development and comprehensive deepening of reform.

For Nanjing, the provincial capital, the registered residence system has also become a hindrance to the deepening of urbanization. Although the urbanization rate of the permanent population and the urbanization rate of the registered residence population have reached 86.90% and 67.66% respectively, both higher than the national level, the gap between the two is 19.24%, higher than the national level. In order to improve the quality of new urbanization construction, the Key Tasks for 2022 New Urbanization and Integrated Urban and Rural Development insist on taking the citizenization of agricultural transfer population as the primary task of new urbanization, and will continue to

deepen the reform of the registered residence system. Cities with urban permanent population below 3 million will cancel the restrictions on settlement in all aspects. According to statistics, there are 6 cities in China with urban populations exceeding 10 million, 17 cities exceeding 5 million, 30 cities exceeding 3 million, 11 mega cities between 5–10 million, and 13 cities between 3–5 million. Shijiazhuang, Jinan, Kunming and other cities have already achieved open household registration, and as of now, only more than 20 cities still have household registration thresholds.

So, for Nanjing, is the time ripe to completely lift the restrictions on household registration? What impact will the complete lifting of household registration restrictions have on various aspects of the city, such as economic growth, urban infrastructure, public healthcare, housing prices, etc? What risks may it bring, especially? How should we respond? This series of questions constitutes the logical starting point and foothold of the research. Furthermore, before conducting feature analysis, empirical research, and policy simulation, it is necessary to systematically sort out the mainstream viewpoints, research ideas, and conclusions in the current academic community, in order to provide a theoretical basis and path reference for studying the impact of lifting household registration restrictions on Nanjing.

## II. THE IMPACT OF DEREGULATION OF REGISTERED RESIDENCE RESTRICTIONS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

### A. Releasing Registered Residence Restrictions to Promote Economic Growth

Xia and Wang (2002) believed that the reform of the registered residence system in China was determined by the endogenous economy. By analyzing the relationship between the reform of the registered residence system in small towns and economic changes, the study found that the gradual liberalization of household entry restrictions had revitalized the local economy. Yang and Gong (2017) empirically studied the impact of floating population on economic growth in the central provinces based on the panel data of "Five Popularization," "Six Popularization" and 2002–2012. They found that the inter provincial population outflow in the central region has a weak negative impact on the overall economic growth of the central region, and at the same time, it has hindered the transformation and upgrading of the industrial structure of the central region to a certain extent. They proposed to liberalize registered residence restrictions to absorb talent inflow and alleviate the brain drain in the central region, which indirectly implies the meaning of promoting growth. Lu (2021), based on the registered residence population loss measurement data of 36 prefecture

level cities in Northeast China from 1999 to 2018, used the system GMM method to basically identify the scale effect and structural effect of registered residence population loss on economic growth in Northeast China. The study found that economic underdeveloped areas and resource-based cities generally show a loss of registered residence population net flow, and registered residence population loss has a significant inhibitory effect on total output and per capita output in Northeast China.

From the perspective of the spatial dimension of research focus, some studies focus on a certain region, while others focus on the impact of registered residence policy on national economic growth. Zhang (2016), based on the 12-year panel data of 248 prefecture level cities in China, studied the power transformation mechanism of China's economic growth, and concluded that human capital dividends have replaced population dividends as a new source of power for China's economic growth. At the same time, through the reform of the registered residence system, the accumulation of human capital instincts has effectively improved labor productivity and overall economic efficiency. Zhang *et al.* (2021) built a general equilibrium model that included the impairment of institutional utility, analyzed the mechanism of the registered residence system affecting urban productivity, studied the data of major cities in China, and found that reducing registered residence restrictions significantly reduced factor mismatch and improved urban productivity. Among them, the productivity of large cities with a population of more than 5 million was the highest, and that of small cities with a population of less than 2 million was the lowest. Shi *et al.* (2022) used the endogenous economic growth model to analyze population migration and the threshold regression model to explore the impact of population migration on economic growth in all regions of the country. Based on the empirical analysis of panel data from 31 provinces in China from 2002 to 2019, the study found that registered residence migration generally has a dual threshold effect on economic growth, that is, there is a threshold value for registered residence management. Below this value, the positive effect of population migration on economic growth is obvious with the improvement of registered residence management, but above the threshold value, the promotion effect is no longer significant.

#### *B. Releasing Registered Residence Restrictions Restricts the Narrowing of Regional Economic Growth Gap*

Li and Hong (2013) studied the registered residence system and economic growth in the east, middle and west of China, analyzed the impact of deregulation of registered residence registration restrictions on the steady level of urban per capita output using classic economic growth theory, and found that when the steady level is sufficiently sensitive to changes in the registered residence system, deregulation of registered residence restrictions may slow down the convergence rate. Peng (2015), using the matching theoretical model, found that labor mobility will expand the regional economic gap because the eastern economically developed regions absorb high-tech talents, while the full liberalization of registered residence restrictions will only allow the labor force in the central and western regions to further flow into the eastern region, and then the regional gap

will continue to expand. Lu and Zhang (2016) based on panel data of large and medium-sized cities, empirical research found that the registered residence registration system in China's large and medium-sized cities is rigid, registered residence system reform in megacities is the weakest driving force, and lowering the registered residence threshold in megacities has a negative impact on local per capita output. At the same time, from the perspective of institutional change and based on the concept of development, they analyzed the reasons why China's registered residence reform process is slow and difficult to break through, and found that registered residence reform has a negative impact on local economic growth or fiscal revenue and expenditure.

#### *C. Releasing the Registered Residence Restriction Is Conducive to Improving the Income Level and Narrowing the Income Gap*

Chen *et al.* (2009) divided China into the eastern region and the mainland, and took the political composition of family ancestors as a tool variable. They analyzed that local registered residence is conducive to workers entering high-income industries, especially in the eastern region with a high degree of marketization. At the same time, they suggested that breaking the barriers to industry entry in the labor market can control the expansion of the income gap between urban and rural residents. Jin (2009) studied the income gap of the employed population with different registered residence in the labor market, found that the per capita income of the urban employed population is significantly higher than that of the rural migrant workers, and proposed that reducing the degree of differential treatment of workers due to registered residence is of great significance for narrowing the urban-rural income gap. Li *et al.* (2011) conducted a questionnaire survey on regular employees in Chengdu, and compared the income of migrant workers with that of urban registered residence registered workers. They found that the income gap between migrant workers and urban registered residence registered workers was relatively obvious, and further used the principal component analysis method to determine that the income gap came from the lack of work and life security for migrant workers due to registered residence registration restrictions. Yang (2018) investigated the impact of non-agricultural registered residence registration status conversion on income, and found that registered residence registration status conversion to some extent improved the economic income of agricultural transfer population in the urban labor market. Qu and Hu (2022) studied the impact of the registered residence registration threshold on labor mobility, and found that "the higher the registered residence registration threshold in urban cities, the higher the average wage of local migrants." The reason for this phenomenon is that the high registered residence threshold increases the willingness of migrants with low human capital to leave, the labor supply decreases accordingly, and the wage premium is retained in the city. On the one hand, it reduces the operating efficiency of the labor market, on the other hand, it is not conducive to sharing development achievements and achieving common prosperity. This shows the necessity of liberalizing registered residence restrictions.

At present, there are few academic literatures directly

studying the relationship and interaction between registered residence registration status and income, and most of them focus on registered residence registration discrimination as an explanatory variable. Zhang *et al.* (2014) decomposed the wage difference between urban workers and migrant workers, and empirical research showed that there has always been wage discrimination against migrant workers due to registered residence registration discrimination in China's labor market, and with the improvement of registered residence threshold in large and medium-sized cities, income discrimination in the labor market has further strengthened. Liu Jindong, Qin and Kong (2020) took the income in economic growth as an entry point to study the "riddle of reverse discrimination," that is, the income of foreigners is significantly higher than that of local people. The test shows that foreigners have not been given preferential treatment or even are still discriminated against in terms of wage income. In other words, the floating population does not enjoy wage premium because of registered residence, and the illusion of wage premium of foreigners is only the result of passivity brought by traditional registered residence discrimination to improve productivity in order to compete with local people, that is, forced competition under registered residence discrimination has increased the income level of inflow population. Nian (2022) used China's family tracking survey data to analyze the impact of the registered residence registration system on the income level of workers. Research shows that the registered residence registration system reform has weakened the total wage income gap caused by registered residence discrimination. Yu *et al.* (2022) used a bilateral stochastic frontier model to study the impact of mobility effect and registered residence registration discrimination effect on the wage income of migrants. They found that the stronger the registered residence registration discrimination is, the lower the income of workers is, the lower the wage premium is, and the final real wage is lower than the reserved wage. In solving the problem of registered residence registration discrimination, the liberalization of registered residence registration restrictions is a very important step. After the liberalization, the relevant supporting public service system is also an important policy focus.

#### *D. Releasing Registered Residence Restrictions Significantly Improves Consumption and Investment*

In classical macroeconomic analysis, the majority of people's wages and labor income are used for consumption and investment. First, the liberalization of registered residence restrictions has a positive impact on residents' consumption level. Chen *et al.* (2010) studied the impact of the registered residence system on residents' consumption, and found that the marginal propensity to consume of urban residents was significantly higher than that of immigrants, and relaxing the registered residence restrictions could significantly improve the per capita consumption level of immigrants and the overall consumption level of residents. Yang and Ma (2011) found based on inter provincial data in China from 1996 to 2009 that the expansion of consumption and exports significantly reduced rural surplus labor, and the reduction of rural surplus labor was conducive to the reconfiguration of labor production factors. Zhou *et al.*

(2022), based on the data from the China Mobile Population Dynamic Monitoring Survey (CMDS), found that the conversion of non-agricultural registered residence registration can significantly reduce the consumption gap among migrant workers, and through the employment opportunity effect, welfare accessibility effect and social capital effect, it has an indirect effect on the alleviation effect of migrant workers' consumption gap. Releasing the restrictions on registered residence can effectively improve the consumption level and narrow the consumption gap. The increase in consumption further affects the flow of labor force with different registered residence.

Secondly, the liberalization of registered residence restrictions has improved the investment level of residents. Wang and Lu (2017) believe that social capital is an important intermediary for registered residence registration to affect resident families' participation in financial investment. Resident families with urban registered residence registration are more likely to accumulate social capital and are more willing to participate in financial investment. Through empirical research, it is found that urban registered residence registration has a significant role in promoting resident families' participation in financial investment.

### III. THE IMPACT OF REGISTERED RESIDENCE RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC SERVICES

#### *A. The Liberalization of Registered Residence Restrictions Has Promoted the Rise of Urban Housing Prices*

In recent years, the central and local governments have continued to guide a soft landing in housing prices, but most studies agree that population inflows will drive up housing prices. Yang and Lin (2022) conducted empirical research and found that in addition to the direct demand effect of foreign immigrants on the rise of urban housing prices, foreign immigrants also indirectly affect urban housing prices by affecting the mobility of local residents. Ma *et al.* (2022) used the "quasi natural experiment" of talent settlement policies in recent years and panel data from 26 provinces from 2006 to 2018 to empirically study through the difference in differences method. They found that talent settlement policies have a significant impact on urban housing price fluctuations, and the degree of impact depends on the level of urban transportation and education development. That is, the better the transportation conditions and education level of cities that attract talents to settle, the more obvious the rise in urban housing prices.

For the floating population, the housing cost behind the fluctuation of housing prices is not only the investment cost of buying a house, but also the consumption cost of renting a house. He and Fei (2018) found that the unequal public services brought by different registered residence increased the settlement cost of the inflow population, reduced their investment demand for housing and strengthened their consumption demand. Guo *et al.* (2022) investigated the micro mechanisms and welfare effects of housing costs on heterogeneous labor mobility. The study found that housing costs increase due to the concentration of heterogeneous labor in cities, and the increase in housing costs further promotes the mobility of heterogeneous labor between cities; In terms of the welfare effect of housing, Guo *et al.* (2022)

believe that although the rise in housing costs has compressed the benefits brought by wage premiums, it has alleviated the widening trend of the welfare gap between high and low skilled labor.

#### *B. Releasing the Restrictions on Registered Residence Requires Supporting Urban and Rural Medical Insurance Policies*

Qin and Liu (2011) concluded through research and review that the combination of medical insurance and labor employment will significantly interfere with the horizontal and vertical flow of labor force. Hong and Ning (2020) conducted a quasi natural experiment based on the coordinated medical insurance for urban and rural residents. Using data from the China Labor Force Dynamic Survey (CLDS), they found that the portability of medical insurance significantly incentivizes rural labor to move within the city, but inhibits inter provincial mobility; The coordinated medical insurance for urban and rural residents shows significant intergenerational heterogeneity in the “lock-in” effect on cross provincial employment of rural labor, and promotes mobility in the central and western regions while suppressing mobility from the central and western regions to the eastern regions.

#### *C. Releasing Registered Residence Restrictions Will Help Improve the Education Level of Migrant Children*

Oded (1986) proposed that intellectual outflow, i.e. the outflow of highly skilled talents, would reduce the ability of the outflow area to form human capital. Beine *et al.* (2001) proposed intellectual incentives on the basis of intellectual outflow, that is, the high income of the outflow population will motivate the outflow area to pay more attention to education, which will promote the improvement of human capital level. Sun (2012) emphasized that accelerating the reform of the registered residence system and liberalizing the registered residence restrictions in small and medium-sized cities are the requirements to eliminate the hidden dangers of the growth of migrant workers’ children. Tan *et al.* (2017) revealed the negative impact of registered residence restrictions on the accumulation of human capital in China’s megacities and even in the medium and long term based on the analysis of the dynamic monitoring data of migrant population in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, and found that migration helps to improve the return on education of migrant workers and reduce the registered residence difference in the return on education of migrant population. Si and Zhang (2021) studied the endogeneity of education and registered residence, and found that higher education can help rural residents of different income groups break through registered residence restrictions, improve rural residents’ educational yield, and reduce registered residence discrimination. It can be seen that registered residence system reform and education development interact and promote each other, and need to go hand in hand.

#### *D. Releasing Restrictions on Registered Residence Needs to Match Better Urban and Rural Infrastructure*

Guo *et al.* (2022) found that the improvement of convenience facilities benefits from high skilled labor, and the improvement of convenience facilities is conducive to the mobility of heterogeneous labor. At the same time, although

the improvement of convenience facilities improves the overall welfare level, it exacerbates the degree of welfare inequality between high and low skilled labor. Chen *et al.* (2022) used panel data from 275 prefecture level and above cities in China from 2003 to 2019 to study and found that infrastructure upgrades, especially the opening of high-speed rail and the construction of smart cities, have brought about larger scale labor mobility and helped narrow regional economic disparities.

### IV. POLICY PATH CHOICE OF REGISTERED RESIDENCE RESTRICTION AND LIBERALIZATION

As an important basic system of Chinese society, the registered residence system is one of the roots of the dualization of China’s urban and rural economic structure. Wang *et al.* (2009) found that the registered residence system reduces the trust level of migrants to the local government, society and social groups in the inflow area, which implies the necessity and significance of registered residence system reform. They proposed that it is necessary to eliminate the social segmentation within the city formed by the registered residence system and weaken the residential differentiation that links registered residence through registered residence system reform, especially to improve the protection of relevant rights and interests after settlement. Liu and Shao (2013) found that the reason why the urban-rural gap continues to expand under the background of urbanization is that the flow of urban and rural labor does not get the same benefits. Therefore, it is necessary to realize the “deep urbanization” of migrant workers through the reform of registered residence policy, and strive for the organic unity of the transformation of dual structure and the effect of economic agglomeration.

Further, more scholars emphasized that the reform of registered residence policy should be based on local conditions and should be carried out step by step. Zhang (2012) believes that the reform of the registered residence system must be based on the premise of accelerating the reduction of urban-rural and regional differences, and gradually form differentiated population management policies with the goal of achieving equal public services. For example, some cities whose population carrying capacity has reached its limit need to set certain entry thresholds to alleviate the pressure of urban development and facilitate the transformation and upgrading of industrial structure; In cities where the population size is not yet saturated and economic development is needed, the restrictions on registered residence should be appropriately liberalized according to the fiscal revenue and expenditure and public service level, so that “attracting investment through labor” can quickly form population agglomeration and industrial agglomeration, and maximize the advantages of labor resource agglomeration; There is still a small area with poor ecology that is not suitable for a large population to live in. Reasonable encouragement and guidance should be given to encourage population migration, reduce resource and environmental pressure, and achieve sustainable development between humans and nature. Ouyang and Zou (2017) pointed out the shortcomings of the “controlling large and relaxing small” household registration policy based on urban scale, that is, the lack of differentiation between regions and migrant

worker groups. They proposed that in the future, the promotion of urban household registration for migrant workers should be carried out by comprehensively considering the different characteristics of the areas where migrant workers move in and the differences in the conditions of the migrant worker group itself, and promoting it by regions and groups according to “urban pressure+differences in migrant worker conditions.” Ouyang *et al.* (2018) rejected the policy of differentiated household registration based on urban size and proposed a practical approach to promote differentiated household registration for migrant workers, which is to develop “low threshold and standardized” admission conditions for different groups according to the “two stability+group age indicators,” and divide them into four different characteristic areas to implement four different household registration strategies. One type is to exchange space for capacity, improve management, and tighten appropriately; The second type is to enhance capacity through policies, prioritize existing resources, and gradually open up; Three types of strong guarantees based on innovation, with stock as the main source and appropriate looseness; Four types of incentives to increase willingness, fully open up, and eliminate barriers. Ouyang and Li (2021) believe that the reform of the registered residence system is a long-term process. They need to formulate short-term and long-term goals in stages, and gradually advance in accordance with the principle of “full coverage, bottom line coverage, and equalization”. They also propose that registered residence restrictions in key cities with large population should be continuously liberalized, and the threshold for settlement in most cities should be appropriately relaxed. Major coastal urban agglomerations can be selected for the pilot of comprehensive registered residence reform, to increase the security level of housing for agricultural migrants and the education of their accompanying children. The policy of “linking people with land and money” is tilted to cities with large population, and constantly improve the rural “three rights” maintenance and exit mechanism for migrant workers to settle in cities, in order to improve the quality of urbanization, and achieve a happy life for urban and rural populations. Good wishes of industry.

The existing research has laid a solid foundation for exploring the impact of registered residence restrictions on urban social and economic development, but there are also many shortcomings.

The deficiencies in the impact of registered residence policy on economic growth are reflected in the following two aspects: First, most existing studies focus on the impact of labor mobility on economic growth, and registered residence system reform should be based on the current situation of urban floating population. Liberalizing registered residence restrictions can further optimize the allocation of labor production factors, so registered residence policies often indirectly affect economic growth by affecting the inflow and outflow of population. Second, most of the existing research has not distinguished between the speed and quality of economic growth. With the proposal that high-quality development is the top priority, high-quality economic growth has become increasingly important.

In the research on the relationship between registered

residence policy reform and public services, most of the research focuses more on the proposal and effect analysis of public service policies, and how the public service system can support the reform of registered residence system to better improve. Few studies directly discuss the impact of the liberalization of registered residence restrictions on public services. There is also a lack of analysis on the endogenous problems between public services and registered residence, and few in-depth excavation of public services such as transportation, public security, etc. For a long time, China’s social public services not only include housing, medical care, education and infrastructure. Today, when “green waters and green mountains are golden mountains”, the ecological environment has been focused on, which determines that it has important theoretical value and practical significance to systematically explore the direct impact of deregulation of registered residence restrictions on public services in a multi-dimensional and multi-level way.

Based on the above carding and review, the author believes that the core research is limited to the impact of registered residence policy reform on all aspects of the city with a specific city as the object, and it is relatively rare to propose targeted and direct research. Therefore, this article will focus on Nanjing as the research object, attempting to provide a new theoretical analysis framework and practical path selection.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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