KFUPM
Journal of Undergraduate Research International

Diamond Open Access 1

Article Accounting and Finance

Effects of Urban Comfort on a Heterogeneous Labor Force

Lifa Wang[1] and Xilin Zhang[2]*

Cite https://doi.org/10.64589/juri/209729

Submitted: May 07, 2025 **Revised:** July 24, 2025 **Accepted:** August 20, 2025

ABSTRACT

In China, the labor market is undergoing profound structural shifts in both supply and demand. As the economy transitions from high-speed to high-quality development, new competencies are required of the workforce. In this study, we used a microlevel perspective to examine the drivers of labor mobility. By integrating principal component analysis and the entropy weight method, we constructed a composite index for urban livability, theorized its role in shaping heterogeneous labor migration, and empirically tested these relationships using a conditional logit model. The analysis is based on 1% of the national population sample surveys conducted from 2000 to 2015, along with corresponding urban characteristics. The findings reveal that urban livability significantly influences destination choice, and there are notable variations between worker groups. Policy recommendations include enhancing urban livability to attract talent, tailoring recruitment strategies to local labor demands, and reforming the *hukou* (residency registration) system to reduce access barriers. This study offers theoretical and practical insights into how urban environments affect the mobility decisions of diverse labor populations.

Keywords: heterogeneous labor mobility, urban livability, conditional logit model

1. INTRODUCTION

As China transitions from high-speed growth to high-quality development, cities are no longer competing solely for capital and resources but also for human talent. Traditional economic incentives, such as wage differentials and job availability, remain important, but they are no longer the sole determinants of labor mobility. Urban livability, encompassing the natural environment, public services, cultural amenities, and overall comfort, has emerged as a critical factor shaping residential and employment decisions. However, migration patterns reveal a paradox: although large cities offer higher economic returns, many skilled workers are opting for smaller, more livable cities or returning to their hometowns to achieve a better balance between career development and life satisfaction. This raises key questions: To what extent does urban livability influence labor mobility, particularly among heterogeneous groups with diverse preferences and backgrounds, and how do these preferences evolve amid structural changes in the economy and society?

This study addresses these questions by constructing a comprehensive urban livability index and empirically testing its impact on labor mobility decisions using microlevel survey data and advanced econometric methods. By focusing on heterogeneous labor groups, the analysis reveals nuanced migration patterns not fully explained by economic variables alone.

1.1. Research Background.

Urbanization and industrialization have significantly expanded labor mobility across all sectors and regions. According to China's *Seventh National Census*, the floating population reached 375.82 million in 2020, approximately 26% of the total population, representing a 69.73% increase from 2010. Since 2000, the number of mobile workers has increased by over 210%, meaning that approximately one in five Chinese citizens is a migrant. In particular, cross-provincial migration continues to increase, especially concentrated in economically advanced urban clusters such as Beijing, the Yangtze River Delta, and the Pearl River Delta. However, migration to coastal megacities has slowed, giving way to trends such as labor "return migration" and the phenomenon of "escaping Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou."

Further, China's economic shift toward quality development has been accompanied by evolving social values. As incomes and living standards rise, workers increasingly prioritize quality of life, and labor demand is diversifying. This transition challenges the long-standing assumption that economic factors alone determine mobility. From the mass rural migration of the 1990s to present-day "labor shortages" and reverse flows of highly educated talent from megacities, patterns have changed. In this study, we investigated whether urban livability has become a decisive factor in workers' destination choices and whether its influence differs between labor groups.

1.2. Contributions of This Study.

(1) Theoretical Contribution: This study extends migration theory by integrating a multidimensional urban livability index into the analysis of labor mobility, with explicit attention to labor heterogeneity. It bridges the gap between economic and amenity-based migration models.

(2) **Practical Contributions**: The findings offer actionable guidance for local governments seeking to attract or retain talent. By quantifying the impact of specific livability components, cities can design targeted interventions to enhance their attractiveness.

(3) **Economic Contribution:** Understanding the drivers of labor mobility in the current era has direct implications for urban planning, regional development, and the efficient allocation of human capital. Enhancing urban livability holds substantial potential to attract high-quality labor, thereby supporting sustainable economic growth.

1.3. Literature Review. Definitions of heterogeneous labor and urban livability vary between developmental stages. Drawing on the existing literature, this section clarifies both concepts and situates them within relevant theoretical contexts. Further, we review classical and contemporary theories of labor mobility and urban livability and analyze prior research across three key dimensions: (1) the heterogeneity of labor at the individual level, (2) role of economic factors in shaping mobility, and (3) influence of noneconomic variables, particularly urban livability, on migration decisions.

Existing studies on labor mobility identify both economic and noneconomic determinants. Economic factors include wages, housing prices, and unemployment rates. Noneconomic dimensions encompass public services, environmental quality, and urban livability. Research perspectives range from macro-level analyses focusing on household registration systems and national development strategies to microlevel approaches that examine individual preferences in response to city-specific attributes when choosing migration destinations.

1.3.1. Heterogeneity in Labor Mobility. Much of the existing literature treats labor as a homogeneous entity, overlooking how different worker types respond differently to the same influencing factors. Although such homogeneity may have applied during the early stages of industrialization, when labor oversupply allowed for standardized capital–labor combinations, subsequent economic development has produced labor shortages and increasingly differentiated demand, making heterogeneity more important. For example, Scully (1969) was among the first to recognize labor heterogeneity, observing that reverse migration in early 20th-century America stemmed from divergent regional income levels and was largely driven by differences among labor groups. Xiaofang (2013) analyzed the spatial mismatch between population and production in China, finding that cities such as Shanghai exhibited industrial overconcentration, whereas regions such as Inner Mongolia and Yunnan faced underutilization. She attributed these patterns to labor heterogeneity. In addition, some researchers have linked labor heterogeneity to regional income disparities. Wang and Fan (2004) argued that large-scale migration from central and western China to the eastern regions helped reduce income gaps by boosting productivity and wages in receiving areas. By contrast, Zhao and Li (2007) contended that skilled labor agglomeration intensified inequality, as higher-skilled workers benefited disproportionately relative to low-skilled counterparts. However, early research often treated labor as a homogeneous group, neglecting variation across skill level, age, and background (Scully, 1969). More recent studies, however, emphasize labor heterogeneity amid accelerated economic transformation (Sun, 2013). For example, Wang and Fan (2004) demonstrated that regional disparities in China are significantly shaped by the selective mobility of different labor groups. This is consistent with global findings showing that skill-based migration patterns have reshaped regional economies in the United States and Europe (Diamond, 2016; Storper et al., 2015).

1.3.2. Economic Drivers of Heterogeneous Labor Mobility. Because of individual differences in background and preferences, workers respond unevenly to economic incentives. Takatoshi and Thisse (2002) were among the first to incorporate labor heterogeneity into the New Economic Geography framework, arguing that disparities in household income, education, and personal values shape how workers perceive wage differentials and influence their locational choices. Moreover, housing costs have received significant attention as a proxy for living expenses. Housing prices play a dual role in migration decisions: labor inflows increase demand and push prices upward, whereas rising costs can deter further migration by raising the cost of living. However, whether housing acts as a "pull" or "push" factor depends on labor group heterogeneity. For example, Zhang, Zhang, and Yao (2019) found that increasing housing costs generally reduce migration intent. However, the deterrent effect is more pronounced among less-educated, younger, and female workers, whereas highly educated individuals tend to be less sensitive to these costs. This finding underscores the importance of recognizing labor heterogeneity in analyzing economic determinants of migration. Although economic factors such as wage differentials and housing prices remain central to migration decisions (Tabuchi & Thisse, 2002; Zhang et al., 2019), a growing body of literature highlights the importance of noneconomic influences, particularly urban amenities and livability (Tiebout, 1956; Glaeser et al., 2001; Florida, 2020). Recent research indicates that as economies mature, nonmonetary determinants, such as environmental quality, public services, and lifestyle preferences, become increasingly influential (Gennaioli et al., 2014). The "consumer city" paradigm suggests that urban growth increasingly hinges on a city's ability to offer a high quality of life (Glaeser et al., 2001). In China, several studies have shown that amenities such as educational resources, healthcare, and ecological quality significantly affect migration intentions (Zhang & Fang, 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Importantly, heterogeneity exists in amenity valuation: younger and more highly educated migrants tend to prioritize livability, whereas older or less-skilled groups are less sensitive to these factors (Liu & Shen, 2020).

1.3.3. Urban Livability and Other NonEconomic Influences on Heterogeneous Labor Mobility. Noneconomic factors, such as public services and urban livability, have long been recognized in labor mobility research. Tiebout (1956) introduced the "voting with their feet" theory, which suggests that individuals select residential locations based on preferred combinations of public goods and local tax structures. Around the same period, the geographer Ullman emphasized that migration is not solely economically driven, climatic comfort and quality of life also serve as powerful attractors. Similarly, Graves (1979) argued that regional utility differences arise not only from income but

also from nonmonetary attributes such as livability. He demonstrated that, in the absence of full income equalization, spatial variation in amenities may prompt migration. In the Chinese context, Zhang (2019) explained that when labor supply and demand experience external shocks and income adjustments fail to compensate for comfort disparities fully, livability must be directly incorporated into migration models. Glaeser et al. (2001) further advanced the "consumer city" concept, where urban growth increasingly depends on a city's capacity to deliver services and lifestyle amenities. Accordingly, livability has emerged as a central factor, beyond wages, in attracting labor. Diamond (2016) analyzed census microdata from the United States between 1980 and 2000, finding that migrants tend to prefer regions with lower housing costs and higher livability. However, preferences diverge by skill level: high-skilled workers prioritize quality of life, whereas low-skilled workers respond more strongly to wage–rent trade-offs.

1.4. Gaps in the Existing Literature. A review of the literature reveals several limitations. Most current studies investigate noneconomic factors influencing labor mobility using individual indicators such as public service quality or environmental conditions. However, relatively few incorporate urban livability as a composite metric that captures broader urban characteristics. In terms of data, many studies rely on aggregated macro-level statistics, which obscure individual-level heterogeneity. Although the China Labor Force Dynamic Survey (CLDS) is a commonly used microlevel dataset, its nationwide coverage began only in 2012, limiting most empirical analyses to 2014 or 2016. Consequently, studies often rely on data from 2005 or 2016, resulting in limited temporal coverage. Furthermore, while some scholars examine drivers of labor mobility at the macro level, few explore these mechanisms from a microanalytical perspective. This study addresses that gap by focusing on individual-level determinants of labor movement.

1.5. Theoretical Background. This study draws on two foundational frameworks: *Random utility theory* and the concept of *amenity migration*. According to random utility theory, individuals make locational choices by maximizing their perceived utility, which depends on both observable city characteristics and individual-specific preferences (McFadden, 1974). Within this framework, urban livability enters the utility function as a critical explanatory variable, interacting with personal traits such as age, education, and *hukou* (residency) status. Amenity migration theory (Graves, 1979; Glaeser et al., 2001) further explained why noneconomic factors, such as climate, culture, and public services, can outweigh purely monetary considerations, particularly for high-skilled or mobile populations. As the urban economy matures, cities increasingly compete based on "soft" factors, and these amenities become central to migration decisions. By synthesizing these theories, this study hypothesizes that (1) urban livability is an independent and significant determinant of labor inflow, and (2) the strength of this effect varies according to labor heterogeneity.

2. METHODOLOGY

We employed microlevel data from China's 1% population sample surveys for 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015. A conditional logit regression model was used to estimate the impact of urban livability on the probability of labor inflow. The model tested the core hypotheses and incorporated robustness checks to ensure the reliability of the results.

2.1. Model Specification and Data Description.

2.1.1. Model Specification. We adopted a conditional logit model to examine labor migration decisions across multiple potential destination cities. Each worker was assumed to face a set of urban alternatives and to select the one that maximized their expected utility. The random utility associated with choosing city j is given by Eq. (1).

$$U_{ij} = \alpha X_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \ (i = 1, 2, 3...j = 1, 2, 3...) \tag{1}$$

Here, i denotes an individual worker, and j represents a potential destination city. The utility that worker i derived from choosing city j is denoted by U_{ij}, where X is a vector of characteristics specific to city j. If $U_{ij} > U_{ik}$ for any alternative city k, then the worker chose city j. The probability that worker i selected destination j is given by Eq. (2).

$$\text{Prob}(y_i = j \mid x) = \frac{\exp(\alpha X_{ij})}{\sum_{j=1}^{J} \exp(\alpha X_{ij})} \tag{2}$$

When individual i evaluates city j, they face a binary choice: migration to that city (i.e., labor inflow) or not. This decision is captured using a binary indicator. If migration occurred, the observation is coded as 1; otherwise, it is coded as 0, as shown in Eq. (3).

$$\text{Prob}(\text{choice}_{ij} = 1) = \frac{\exp(\alpha X_{ij})}{\sum_{j=1}^{J} \exp(\alpha X_{ij})} \tag{3}$$

Because we analyzed the impact of urban livability on heterogeneous labor mobility, recognizing that individuals respond differently to city characteristics based on their own attributes, the empirical model incorporated interaction terms between urban livability and worker-specific traits. If Z_i denotes the characteristics of worker i, Y_{ij}represents the level of urban livability in city j, and X_{ij} include other city-level attributes. The utility function is given by Eq. (4).

$$\text{Prob}(\text{choice}_{ij} = 1) = \frac{\exp(\alpha X_{ij} + \beta Y_{ij} + sZ_i * Y_{ij})}{\sum \exp(\alpha X_{ij} + \beta Y_{ij} + sZ_i * Y_{ij})} \tag{4}$$

2.1.2. Variable Description and Data Sources.

(1) Dependent Variable: Individual Labor Data

The primary individual-level labor data used in this study were drawn from the 1% *National Population Sample Survey Microdatabase* for 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015 (Table 1). Migrant workers were identified as individuals whose current place of residence was in a different prefecture-level city from their registered *hukou* location. Those residing in a non-*hukou* prefecture were classified as inflow migrants.

The sample was restricted to individuals aged 16–65 and excluded those whose current activity status was listed as "in school." In the dataset, gender was coded as 1 for males and 2 for females, whereas *hukou* type was coded as 1 for agricultural and 2 for nonagricultural.

Table 1. *Indicators for the urban livability index*

Primary Indicator	Secondary Indicator	Tertiary Indicator
High quality of resources	Medical treatment	Number of hospital beds per 10,000 people Number of doctors per 10,000 people
	Education	Pupil–teacher ratio in primary and secondary schools Student–teacher ratio in general secondary schools Number of college students per 10,000 people
Living convenience	Traffic	Number of buses per 10,000 people Number of taxis per 10,000 people
	Living consumption	Number of hotel and catering industry employees Residential service and repair employment Number of post offices (county level)
Environmental comfort	Natural environment	Annual sunlight hours Average January temperature
	Artificial healthy environment	Green coverage rate of built-up areas (%) Centralized treatment rate of sewage (%) Harmless disposal rate of household garbage (%)
Cultural richness	Library holdings	Library holdings per 100 people
	Theaters	Number of cinemas

(2) Independent Variables: City-Level Characteristics

City-level variables referred to data collected at the prefecture level or above. These characteristics were sourced primarily from the China *City Statistical Yearbook*, *Regional Economic Statistical Yearbook*, *Statistical Yearbook*, and *Environmental Statistical Yearbook* for the corresponding years.

In addition to urban livability, the core explanatory variable, key economic factors, were incorporated, including average wages and housing prices. Wage data were drawn from the *China City Statistical Yearbook* and reflect the annual average salaries of urban employees. It was assumed that workers tend to migrate to cities offering higher wages. Housing prices serve both as a proxy for the cost of living and as an outcome partially shaped by labor inflows. High housing costs may deter migrants; however, labor inflows, improved employment opportunities, and increased livability may also elevate housing prices. Because each individual i faces a choice set of j cities, the conditional logit model estimates a total of $i \times j$ observations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Basic Regression Results. Table 2 reports the regression results for labor mobility across four survey years, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015, based on standardized city-level indicators, including urban livability, average wages, and housing prices. Regression model (1) includes only the three core explanatory variables: average wage, housing price, and urban livability. Regression model (2) introduces additional city-level covariates, including industrial structure, GDP per capita, population density, foreign investment, annual population, provincial capital status, and fixed asset investment. Regression model (2) also incorporates a set of control variables: industrial structure, population density, foreign direct investment (FDI), GDP per capita, fixed asset investment, and provincial capital status. As the analysis employed a conditional logit model and all city characteristics were transformed into positively oriented indicators, the estimated coefficients represent the percentage increase in the probability of city inflow associated with a 1% increase in the respective variable.

The results show that average wage consistently exerted a positive effect on labor inflow across all years, indicating that workers were sensitive to monetary returns. In 2000 and 2005, housing prices positively affected migration decisions, whereas in 2010 and 2015, after controlling for additional variables, the relationship turned negative. This implies an inverted U-shaped effect of housing prices on labor mobility, initially attractive, but eventually inhibitory as costs outweigh benefits.

3.1.1. Individual Heterogeneity of the Impact of Urban Comfort on Labor Mobility. In Table 2, the regression model treated labor as a homogeneous group and reported the overall effect of urban livability on labor mobility. Table 3 extends this analysis by incorporating individual heterogeneities. Specifically, it examines how the impact of urban livability varies by age, gender, educational attainment, and urban–rural *hukou* status. Building on the baseline conditional logit model, interaction terms between individual characteristics and urban livability were introduced. The coefficients of these interaction terms allow for an assessment of how different types of workers responded to variations in urban livability, revealing distinct patterns of migration preferences.

Summary of Regression Findings: (1) *Wages consistently positively influenced labor mobility.* For all four sample years, average urban wages exhibited a stable and significant positive effect on the probability of labor inflow. Higher wages enhanced the attractiveness of a city to migrant workers. (2) *Urban livability is an increasingly important driver.* In 2000 and 2010, higher urban livability was negatively associated with labor inflow, suggesting that during periods of economic uncertainty or slower growth, workers prioritized cities with better income prospects. However, in 2005 and 2015, livability became a strong positive predictor. Notably, in 2005, the influence of livability was less than that

Table 2. *Basic regression results: Impact of urban livability on labor mobility (2000–2015)*

	2000		2005		2010		2015	
Explanatory variable	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Average wage of employees	0.270***	0. 141***	0.375***	0.528***	0.497***	0. 139***	0.315***	0. 152***
	(0.00672)	(0.00842)	(0.00472)	(0.00622)	(0.00373)	(0.00486)	(0.00267)	(0.00499)
Housing price	0.388***	0.218***	0.599***	0.501***	−0.311***	−0.672***	0. 146***	−0. 105***
	(0.00740)	(0.00982)	(0.00458)	(0.00624)	(0.00462)	(0.00801)	(0.00183)	(0.00340)
Urban comfort	−0.455***	−0.687***	0.209***	0.475***	−0.471***	−0.429***	0.509***	0.626***
	(0.0135)	(0.0155)	(0.00675)	(0.0105)	(0.00390)	(0.00458)	(0.00441)	(0.00740)
Industrial structure		−0.0325***		0.0413***		0.0391***		0.0792***
		(0.00584)		(0.00386)		(0.00582)		(0.00336)

	2000	2005	2010	2015
Explanatory variable	(1) (2)	(1) (2)	(1) (2)	(1) (2)
GDP per capital	0. 172***	−0.0780***	0.402***	0.374***
	(0.00404)	(0.00639)	(0.00440)	(0.00394)
Population density	0. 136***	−0.0578***	0.207***	0.234***
	(0.00450)	(0.00332)	(0.00428)	(0.00303)
Foreign investment is ten thousand dollars	0.0568***	0.758***	0.952***	0.0788***
	(0.004500)	(0.00558)	(0.00824)	(0.00278)
Average annual population	0. 113***	0.537***	0. 111***	−0.0852***
	(0.00414)	(0.00551)	(0.00664)	(0.00383)
Whether it is a provincial capital city	0.620***	0.857***	−0.833***	−0.0351***
	(0.0163)	(0.0102)	(0.0222)	(0.0116)
Investment in the fixed assets	−0.021***	−1. 127***	−0.903***	−0.0807***
	(0.0036)	(0.00858)	(0.0106)	(0.00393)
Number of cities	232 232	234 234 93	93	282 282
Number of workers observed	52345 52345	111012 111012 152241	152241	108341 108341
Total observations = Number of cities *Number of workers observed	12144040 12144040	25976808 25976808 14158413	14158413	30552162 30552162

Standard errors in parentheses $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$

of wages; by 2015, it had surpassed wage levels in determining migration. (3) *The effect of urban livability on labor mobility is heterogeneous.* The influence varied significantly across demographic groups. Age moderated the positive effect of livability; that is, younger workers were more responsive to urban amenities. Educational attainment enhanced the effect of livability , whereas *hukou* status and sex also introduced measurable differences in sensitivity to urban conditions.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS

4.1. Research Conclusions. Urban livability has become an increasingly important factor influencing labor mobility, and its impact has intensified over time. However, during periods of slower economic development or economic volatility, improvements in livability alone did not significantly increase the probability of labor inflow. Further, the effect of urban livability on labor mobility did not show individual heterogeneity during those periods. By contrast, younger and more highly educated workers were more inclined to migrate to cities with higher levels of livability. The influence of urban livability on labor mobility corresponded most strongly to the quality of urban resources and the convenience of daily life, suggesting that these components are key drivers in shaping migration preferences. Workers of different ages, educational levels, and *hukou* types responded differently to urban livability. Gender appeared to have little effect on this sensitivity. Younger and more educated workers were more likely to select cities with higher livability, and individuals holding nonagricultural *hukou* were more inclined to migrate to such cities than those with agricultural *hukou*.

https://doi.org/10.64589/juri/209729

Table 3. *Individual heterogeneity of urban comfort affecting labor mobility*

(1) choice VARIABLES		(2) choice VARIABLES		(3) choice VARIABLES		(4) choice VARIABLES	
Salary	0. 152*** (0.00499)	Salary	0. 152*** (0.00499)	Salary	0. 152*** (0.00498)	Salary	0. 152*** (0.00499)
Housing price	−0. 105*** (0.00340)	Housing price	−0. 105*** (0.00340)	Housing price	−0. 106*** (0.00340)	Housing price	−0. 105*** (0.00340)
Urban comfort	0.718*** (0.0109)	Urban comfort	0.638*** (0.0103)	Urban comfort	0.432*** (0.00953)	Urban comfort	0.492*** (0.0104)
Age * City comfort		Gender ∗ Urban Comfort		Educational level ∗ Urban comfort		Household nature ∗ City comfort	
	−0.00253*** (0.000222)		−0.00809 (0.00495)		0.0532*** (0.00164)		0.0911*** (0.00494)
Industrial structure	0.0792*** (0.00336)	Industrial structure	0.0792*** (0.00336)	Industrial structure	0.0790*** (0.00336)	Industrial structure	0.0791*** (0.00336)
GDP per capital		GDP per capital		GDP per capital		GDP per capital	
	0.374*** (0.00394)		0.374*** (0.00394)		0.374*** (0.00394)		0.374*** (0.00394)
Density of population	0.234*** (0.00303)	Density of population	0.234*** (0.00303)	Density of population	0.235*** (0.00303)	Density of population	0.235*** (0.00303)
Actually utilized foreign capital		Actually utilized foreign capital		Actually utilized foreign capital		Actually utilized foreign capital	
	0.0789*** (0.00278)		0.0788*** (0.00278)		0.0792*** (0.00278)		0.0790*** (0.00278)
Year-end population	−0.0855*** (0.00383)	Year-end population	−0.0852*** (0.00383)	Year-end population	−0.0880*** (0.00383)	Year-end population	−0.0861*** (0.00383)
Whether it is a provincial capital city		Whether it is a provincial capital city		Whether it is a provincial capital city		Whether it is a provincial capital city	
	−0.0347*** (0.0116)		−0.0351*** (0.0116)		−0.0318*** (0.0116)		−0.0341*** (0.0116)
Investment in the fixed assets		Investment in the fixed assets		Investment in the fixed assets		Investment in the fixed assets	
	−0.0807*** (0.00393)		−0.0807*** (0.00393)		−0.0804*** (0.00393)		−0.0806*** (0.00393)
Total observations	29,225,916		29,225,916		29,225,916		29,225,916

Standard errors in parentheses $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$

4.2. Policy Suggestions. (1) *Enhance urban livability to increase the attractiveness of cities to migrant labor*. As China enters a stage of high-quality economic development, urban livability has become a core determinant of labor migration decisions. This study confirms that livability significantly influences worker mobility. In an era of rising living standards and growing aspirations for improved quality of life, enhancing urban livability is essential to meet labor demands and attract a mobile workforce. (2) *Adopt demand-oriented talent strategies tailored to local conditions.* The regression results indicate significant individual heterogeneity in migration preferences. Younger and more educated workers tend to favor cities with higher livability, and individuals with nonagricultural *hukou* are more likely to migrate to such areas. Talent attraction policies should therefore be demand-driven and locally adapted to align with the preferences of diverse labor groups.

4.3. Directions for Future Research. Although this study provides new insights, several directions remain for future investigation. First, as data availability improves, longer time-series and panel datasets could allow for more precise identification of dynamic effects and causal mechanisms. Second, comparative studies across different countries or within diverse regions of China would help generalize the findings and test their external validity. Third, qualitative research could deepen the understanding of individual migration motivations and identify the specific urban amenities most valued by different labor groups. Finally, the potential mediating roles of digital infrastructure and emerging forms of flexible work in shaping labor mobility merit further exploration.

AFFILIATIONS AND AUTHOR DETAILS

Undergraduate Author

Lifa Wang – *Department of Economics and Management, Shandong Huayu University of Technology, China;* 0009-0003-0534-1699
Email: 17862931961@163.com

Corresponding Author

Xilin Zhang – *Research Mentor, Professor, Department of Economics and Management, Shandong Huayu University of Technology, China;* 0009-0008-5861-8854
Email: 18905442878@163.com

REFERENCES

(1) Clark, D. (2004). Urban world/global city. Routledge.

(2) Scully, G. W. (1969). Interstate wage differentials: A cross section analysis. The American Economic Review, 59(5), 757–773.

(3) Zhao, W., & Li, F. (2007). The Mobility of Heterogeneous Labor and Regional Income Disparities: An Extended Analysis Based on the New Economic Geography Model. Chinese Journal of Population Science, (01), 27–35, 95.

(4) Sun, X. (2013). Heterogeneous Labor and Labor Mobility in China: An Analysis Based on New Economic Geography. Chinese Journal of Population Science, (03), 36–45.

(5) Wang, X. L., & Fan, G. (2004). Trends and Determinants of Regional Disparities in China. Economic Research Journal, (01), 33–44. Tabuchi T, Thisse JF. Taste heterogeneity, labor mobility and economic geography [J]. Journal of Development Economics, 2002, 69(1): 155–177.

(6) Zhang, H. F., Zhang, J. Z., & Yao, X. G. (2019). Spatial Evolution of Housing Costs and Their Impact on Labor Mobility Decisions in China. Economic Geography, 39(07), 31–38.

(7) Tiebout CM. A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures [J]. Journal of Political Economy, 1956, 64(5):416–424.

(8) Graves, P. E., & Linneman, P. D. (1979). Household migration: Theoretical and empirical results. Journal of urban economics, 6(3), 383–404.

(9) Zhang, Y. L., & Fang, Q. Y. (2019). The Impact of Urban Livability on Labor Mobility. China Population, Resources and Environment, (3), 118–125.

(10) Glaeser, E. L., Kolko, J., & Saiz, A. (2001). Consumer city. Journal of economic geography, 1(1), 27–50.

(11) Diamond, R. (2016). The determinants and welfare implications of US workers' diverging location choices by skill: 1980–2000. American economic review, 106(3), 479–5.

(12) Diamond, R. (2016). The determinants and welfare implications of US workers' diverging location choices by skill: 1980–2000. American economic review, 106(2), 479–524.

(13) Florida, R. (2020). The New Urban Crisis. Basic Books.

(14) Glaeser, E. L., Kolko, J., & Saiz, A. (2001). Consumer city. Journal of economic geography, 1(1), 27–50.

(15) Gennaioli, N., La Porta, R., Lopez De Silanes, F., & Shleifer, A. (2014). Growth in regions. Journal of Economic growth, 19(2), 259–30.