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Beyond friends and foes: immigration policymaking in contemporary China

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Citation

Speelman, J. T. (2023, September 19). *Beyond friends and foes: immigration policymaking in contemporary China*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3641093>

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Timeline: Key events in Chinese immigration management (1978-2022)¹³⁸

Year	Event
1978	Deng Xiaoping rehabilitates foreign exchange in his December 13 closing speech at the Third Plenum launching China's reforms, saying that China should "discover experts, train experts, heavily make use of experts" and "learn from foreign advanced management methods."
1978	Starting from 1978, large groups of refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are resettled in southern China. This influx of about 250,000 migrants, mostly of Chinese descent, leads to the establishment of a UNHCR office in Beijing in 1980 and China's accession to international treaties on refugees. However, China has did not codify these treaties into Chinese law, and does not prioritize refugee protection, despite being an emerging (transit) destination.
1980	A new visa system is established (护照签证条例), requiring foreign nationals to apply for a visa to enter, transit, or exit China's borders. The exit visa was canceled in 1986. In this year, China also adopts a new nationality law (国籍法), in which dual nationality is banned.
1983	Exit-entry management bureaus are established under the Ministry of Public Security
1983	Adoption of the "Decision to attract foreign expertise to serve the four modernizations" (关于引进外国智力以利四化建设的决定), accompanied by a series of regulations on housing and other preferential policies for 'foreign experts'
1985	Adoption of the <i>Law of Administration of Entrance and Exit of Foreigners</i> , followed by accompanying regulations in 1986. A separate law governing the exit and entry of Chinese nationals was also adopted in 1985 (中华人民共和国公民出境入境管理法).
1985	Gradual opening up of Chinese territory to foreign nationals, from 244 areas in which foreigners could travel without requiring official permission in 1985 to 2650 areas in 2005 (making up 92% of national territory).
1996	Adoption of the "Regulations on the Management of Employment of Foreigners in China" (外国人在中国就业管理规定), ending a decade in which a lot of foreign employment did not have a legal basis.
1998	In nine major cities, professional police take over border inspection duties from military police. This reform is followed by the centralization of command over border control troops in 2001, and was implemented nationwide in 2018.

138 For sourcing and further detail, see: Gongan 2010, Liu 2011, Liu and Chen 2015, Liu and Ahl 2018, Song 2018, Zhang and Geiger 2020.

Year	Event
2001	A national exit-entry conference is held in November, ten days after China's accession to the World Trade Organization, announcing a foreigners' permanent residency program alongside reforms simplifying passport access for Chinese nationals
2003	Restrictions on foreigners' places of residency are lifted. Demand for 'international-style' housing among foreign professionals, whose numbers rapidly grow in this period, drives the emergence of a commodified housing market.
2004	China's foreigners permanent residency comes into force (外国人在中国永久居留审批管理办法). From 2004-2016, only 10,200 foreign nationals are awarded permanent residency, of which about 50% have been former Chinese nationals. Since 2016, the number of awardees has increased more rapidly, to a total of about 20,000.
2008	Regulations specifying the requirements to register foreigners' places of residency at police stations come into force (公安派出所外国人住宿登记管理办法 (试行)). These requirements, which function as an immigration control instrument, were subsequently codified in the 2012 Exit-Entry law.
2008	Launch of a series of programs aimed at attracting return and foreign 'high-level talent', in an effort to combat brain drain and aid innovation (e.g. 中央人才工作协调小组关于实施海外高层次人才引进计划的意见). Generally referred to as the 'Thousand Talent Program', participants in this and a variety of other talent programs receive high levels of compensation and are individually managed by Party and state bureaus.
2009	The death of a Nigerian migrant in Guangzhou during a police check leads to a rare confrontation between foreigners and Chinese police authorities. The incident reflects growing controversy around especially African migrants in the city, leading to the 2011 adoption of provincial-level legislation specifying penalties for housing or otherwise assisting irregular migrants (广东省外国人管理服务暂行规定). These regulations also influence national-level policymaking.
2011	National-level regulations are published on tax-paying foreigners' rights to Chinese social insurance (在中国境内就业的外国人参加社会保险暂行办法). However, implementation of these rules has been limited by, among other things, a lack of bilateral treaties on immigrant social insurance.
2012	Adoption of the <i>Exit and Entry Management Law</i> (中华人民共和国出入境管理法), which discusses cross-border movement of both foreign and Chinese nationals, integrating the 1985 laws. Coming after a decade of rapid growth of migrant communities, the law focused on strengthening control over irregular migration.
2016	China joins the International Organization for Migration as a full member, after having been an observing member for 15 years. One of its main activities has been the implementation of the EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project, focused on the exchange of expertise in migration control and other areas.

Year	Event
2016	The State Council publishes an influential guiding document on strengthening the implementation of foreigners' permanent residency (关于加强外国人永久居留服务管理的意见). Aimed at better coordination between the Ministry of Public Security and 33 other government entities, the guidelines emphasize the need for full "citizen treatment" previous regulations had also stipulated but which in practice had failed to materialize due to fragmented governance.
2017	China introduces a unified work permit system for foreign nationals, merging previously separate systems for 'foreign experts' working in designated professions and other professional migrants. It also divides employment-stream migrants into three categories: A (highly skilled talent), B (professional talent), and C (ordinary foreign worker).
2018	The National Immigration Administration (国家移民管理局) is established as a semi-independent, sub-ministerial agency on April 2, merging the Ministry of Public Security's departments of exit-entry administration and border control. While its name only refers to 'Immigration', the agency is responsible for exit-entry management of both foreign and Chinese nationals, and has a mandate to coordinate all migration affairs.
2020	On March 28, China closes its borders for most foreign nationals, with an exemption for permanent residency holders. In the following years, borders are heavily guarded to prevent virus transmission via border crossings, and international flights to and from mainland China greatly reduced. Despite some relaxations since September 2020, these strict pandemic border controls were largely in place until January 2023, with all visa categories restored from March 15, 2023.
2021	China adopts a land borders law (中华人民共和国陆地国界法), following a period of border infrastructure build-up and in the context of several border disputes. While specifying the role of immigration authorities, the law focuses on the responsibilities of China's military in border safeguarding.

Annex 2. Immigration statistics: Selected data sources and their limitations

Few reliable statistics on the scale and characteristics of immigration to China are available. Here I give an overview of the most commonly cited national-level data, and provide some context on each data source and its limitations.

a. Immigration population data from the 2010 and 2020 national census

Table A.2.1

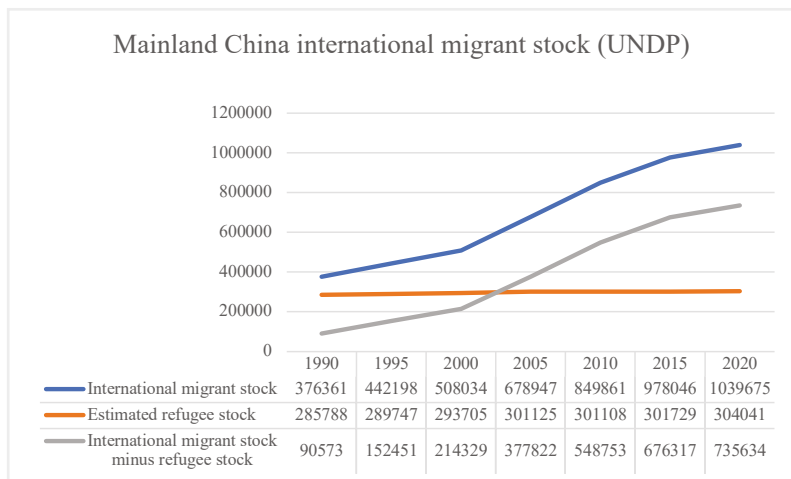
	2010 National Census	2020 National Census
Total third-country foreign population	593,832	845,697
Percentage of women	43.4	52.5
Percentage age 20-64	72.9	78.4
Length of stay (in %)		
• Less than a year	37.4	22.8
• 1-5 years	45.1	47.9
• Over 5 years	17.5	32.9
Education level (in %)		
• Primary and below	23.9	47.6
• Secondary and vocational	23	22.5
• University	53.1	27.9
Top 10 countries of origin	South Korea, United States, Japan, Myanmar, Vietnam, Canada, France, India, Germany, Australia	Myanmar, Vietnam, South Korea, United States, Japan, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Laos

Notes:

- Since the Chinese national census first included foreign nationals in the 2010 census, its results have become the key source for national immigration figures. The census aims to include foreign nationals residing in the country for 3 months or longer.
- The census figures are likely an undercount. Registered migrant populations by sending countries tend to be larger than those reported in the two censuses. For instance, South Korea's Foreign Ministry reported 369,349 South Korean nationals in mainland China in 2015, vs. 120,750 South Korean migrants counted in China's 2010 national census (and only 59,242 in the 2020 census – see the next point). Statistics from different state sources also show large discrepancies: Shanghai's public security bureau reports 338,700 foreign nationals in 2010, vs. 143,496 foreign nationals based in Shanghai counted in the 2010 census. It also excludes irregular migration.
- Due to its timing in November 2020, the 2020 census results should be considered a pandemic era snapshot and cannot accurately reflect pre-pandemic trends. At the time, most foreign nationals could not enter China, and a significant percentage of student and professional migrant populations had left the country in early 2020. The relative growth of border migrant populations in the 2020 results (with a significant shift towards less educated, female, and longer-term migrants) likely reflects this particular timing, in which migrants in urban areas left the country but migrants in more rural areas stayed. Strengthened control over border migration, compared to 2010, also plays a role in the higher numbers of border migrants captured in the 2020 census.

b. Immigration population data from the United Nations Population Division

Figure A.2.1



Notes:

- Updated every five years, the UN Population Division International Migrant Stock data are also frequently cited by researchers of Chinese immigration as an alternative source of data. Its published figures for mainland have been higher than national census figures. However, population censuses form its main basis, with the UNPD also applying methods of extrapolation and projection.
- In the case of mainland China, the UNPD figures include the population of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees who were resettled in Southern China in the early 1980s and remain registered as refugees. This fact is not usually noted, but can explain the discrepancy with the census figures on foreign nationals. More generally, this population, which has faced large challenges in gaining equal citizenship rights (see for instance Ho 2018) but has now (mostly) obtained Chinese nationality, is not usually included in the realm of Chinese immigration research.
- If you subtract the estimated refugee stock from the overall UNDP international migrant stock figure for mainland China, the resulting figures are more in line with the census figures on foreign nationals. However, going back to 1990, the UNPD data are valuable as a source on the rapid growth of China's foreign population prior to the 2010 census.

c. Exit-entry data from the National Immigration Administration

Figure A.2.2

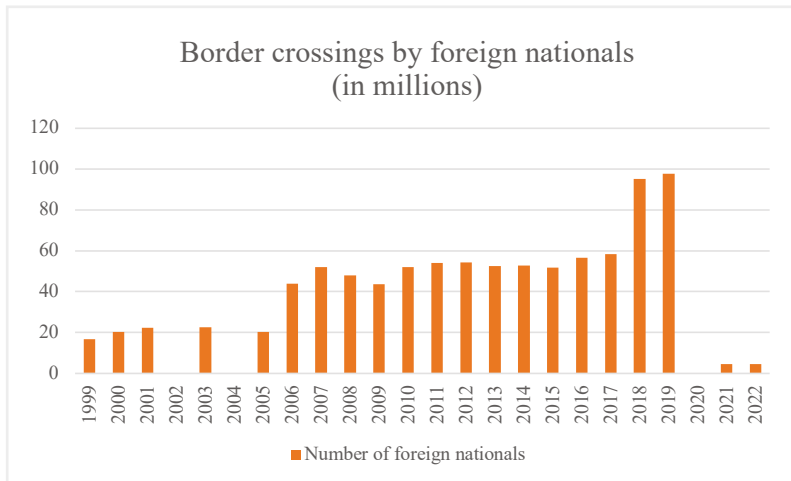
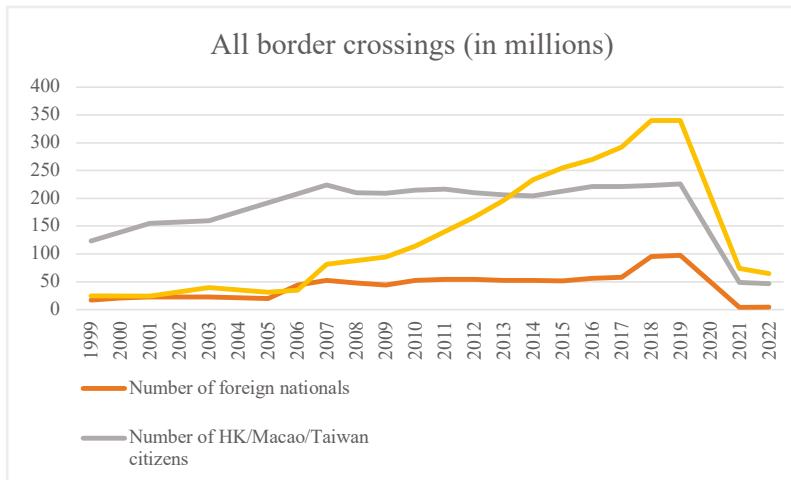


Figure A.2.3



Notes:

- Exit-entry figures have been the only figures on international mobility that are regularly released by China’s immigration authorities. An annual statement has been put out in state media for most years since the early 2000s, while the NIA website has archived annual overviews for (2007-2013) and quarterly figures since 2014. Figures for 2020 were not published.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ See <https://www.nia.gov.cn/n741440/n741567/index.html>.

- The border crossings data show how international mobility took off in the early 2000s, when for several years, the cross-border flows of foreign nationals and Chinese citizens were comparable in size, before Chinese relaxations of passport controls led to a larger percentage of Chinese nationals traveling abroad. It also shows the high levels of HK/Macao/Taiwan border crossings throughout this period.
- Apart from showing the total number of border crossings, the data for foreign nationals likely provide some insight into migration trends as well, given the prevalence of long-term foreign residents working on short-term visas in this period.
- The large jump in registered border crossings by foreign nationals from 58,4 million in 2017 to 95,3 million in 2018 should primarily be attributed to an increase in central data collection of border crossings in land border areas, as reported by the NIA.

Annex 3: Interview and survey details

Table A.3.1. Details on survey “National attitudes towards incoming transnational migrants” (N=1888 completed questionnaires)

	% of respondents
Gender	
• Female	54.2
• Male	45.8
Location of household registration	
• Rural hukou	33.6
• County-level city	21.7
• Prefectural-level city	20.6
• Provincial capital/municipality	24.4
Education (highest level)	
• Primary or middle school	11.4
• High school	19.0
• College/vocational degree	59.6
• Graduate degree	10.0
Occupation	
• Full-time employment	39.8
• Other types of employment	8.9
• Agricultural work	4.1
• Retired	3.7
• In education	37.3
• Unemployed	5.2
Social class (self-identified)	
• Lower class	18.8
• Lower middle class	41.2
• Middle class	35.7
• Upper middle class	4.0
• Upper class	0.4
International experience	
• Has not traveled outside China	75.5
• Has traveled abroad	21.2
• Has worked abroad	3.6
• Has studied abroad	4.2

Table A.3.2. Geographical distribution of completed questionnaires (N=1888)


	Location	% of respondents
	Henan	14.3
	Jiangsu	10.2
	Zhejiang	9.6
	Shanghai	8.3
	Qinghai	8.3
	Anhui	7.3
	Liaoning	7.3
	Hebei	6.0
	Gansu	4.2
	Hubei	4.2
	Guangdong	3.5
	Other	16.8

Table A.3.3. Details on semi-structured public interviews (46 interviews in total)

	# of interviews
Locations	
• Shanghai	28
• Pinghu	10
• Jinan	8
Gender	
• Female	24
• Male	22
Age	
• Under 30	14
• 31-45	18
• Over 45	14
Education	
• High school or less	13
• Vocational degree	4
• Bachelor degree	16
• Graduate degree	12
Monthly household income	
• Under 10,000RMB	18
• 10-25,000RMB	21
• Over 25,000RMB	7
Migration status	
• Local	20
• Internal migrant	26
Cross-cultural contact	
• Rare	12
• Occasional	20
• Frequent	14

Table A.3.4. Details on surveys used

Survey name	Year conducted in mainland China	Sample size
World Values Survey (Waves 2-7)	1990, 1995, 2001, 2007, 2013, 2017	N=1000, N=1500, N=1000, N=1991, N=2300, N=3036
China General Social Survey (Han 2017a)	2008	N=3008
Asian Barometer Survey, Wave 4	2014-2016	N=4068
Online survey “National attitudes towards incoming transnational migrants and their formation”	2020	N=1888

Annex 4: Selected survey data

a. Online survey “National attitudes towards incoming transnational migrants and their formation” (July 2020)

Figure A.4.1. Immigration control

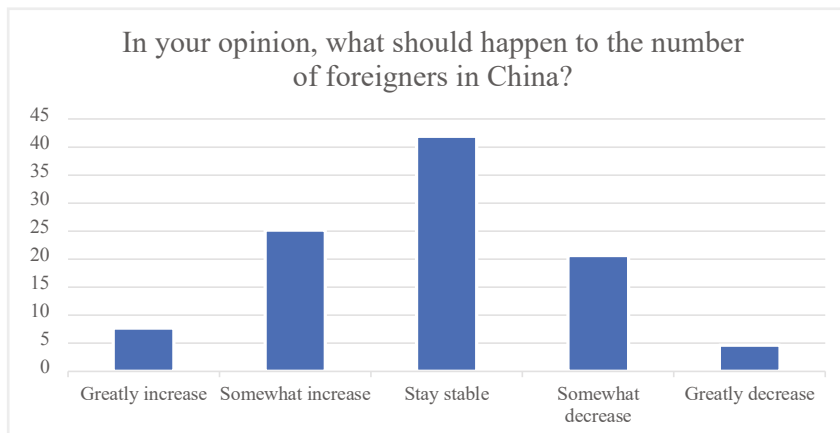


Figure A.4.2. Immigrant selection

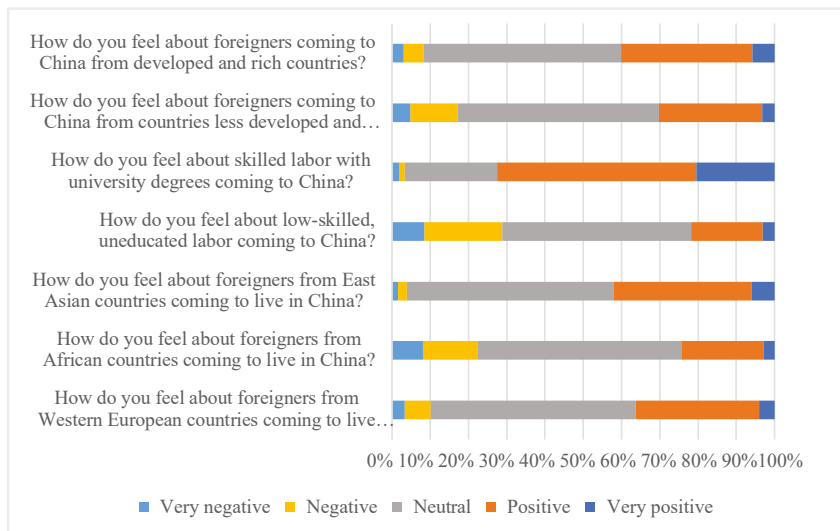


Figure A.4.3. Immigration effects

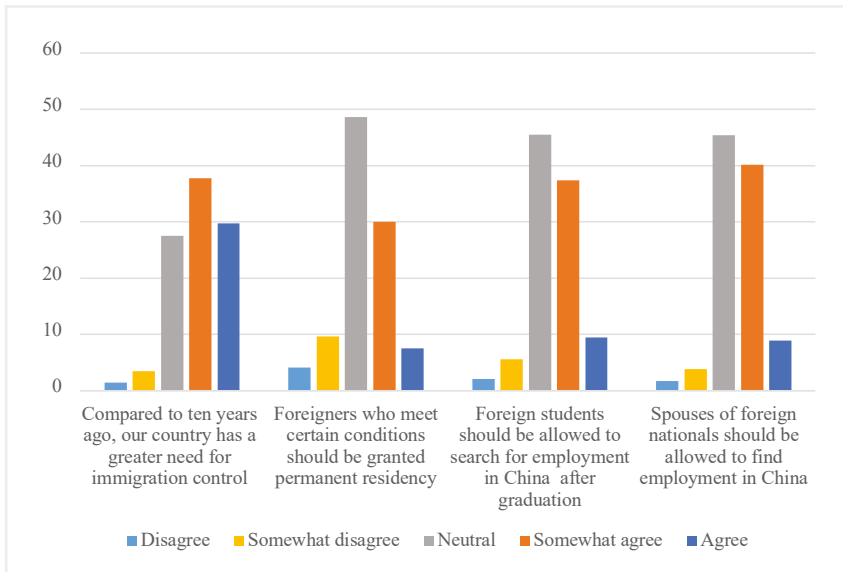


Figure A.4.4. Immigration policy

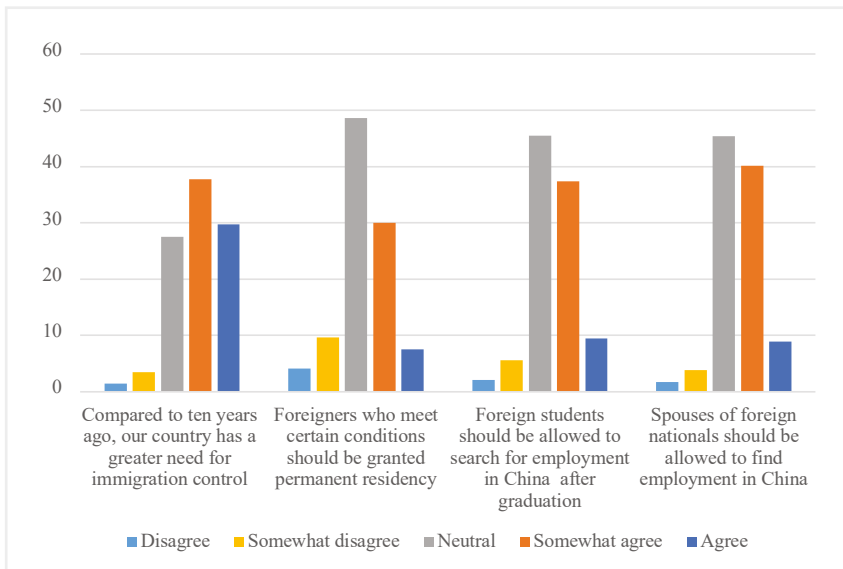
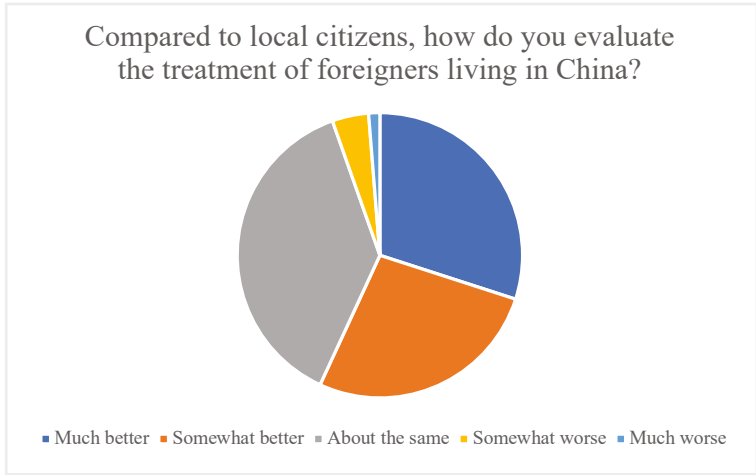
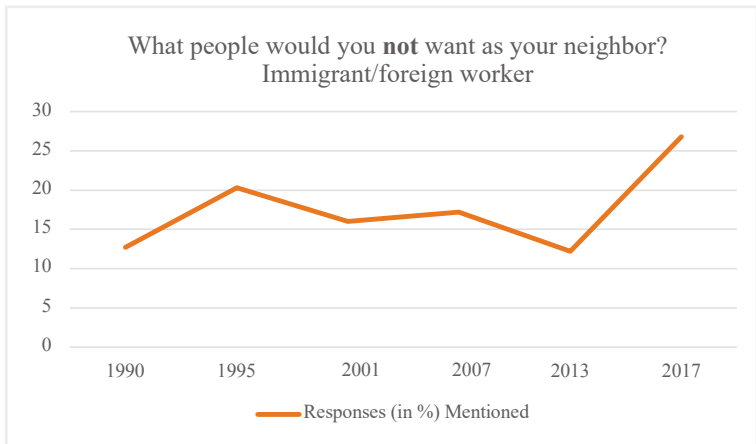


Figure A.4.5. Immigrant treatment



b. World Values Survey (Wave 2-7)¹⁴⁰

Figure A.4.6. Immigrant neighbor question (Wave 2-7)



140 For more detailed data see the World Values Survey website: worldvaluessurvey.org

Figure A.4.7. Employment migration policy question (Wave 3-5)

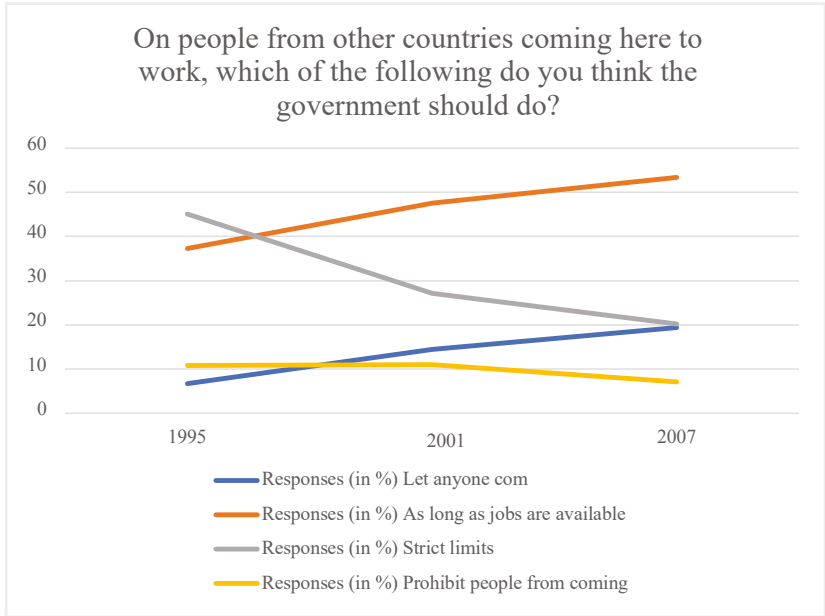
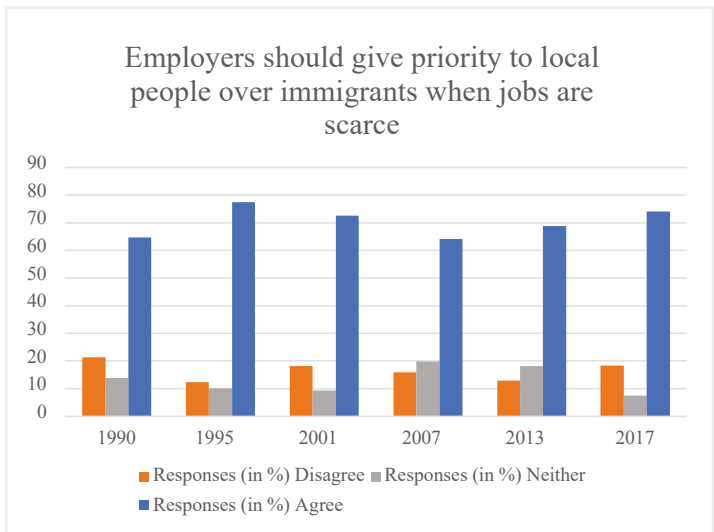
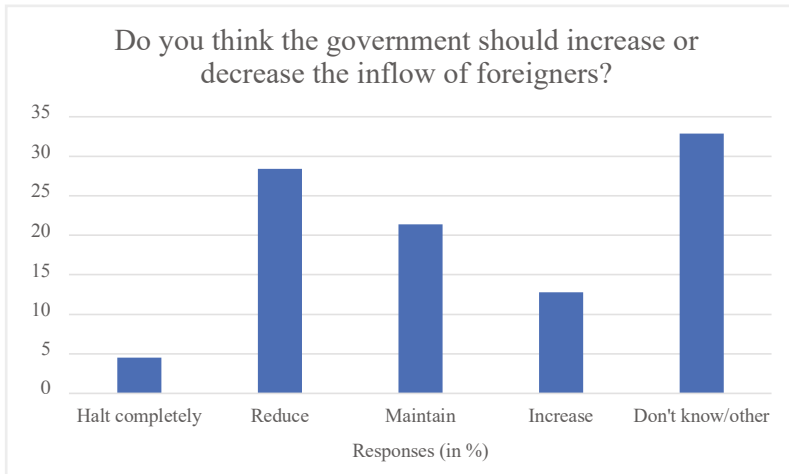


Figure A.4.8. Job scarcity question (Wave 2-7)



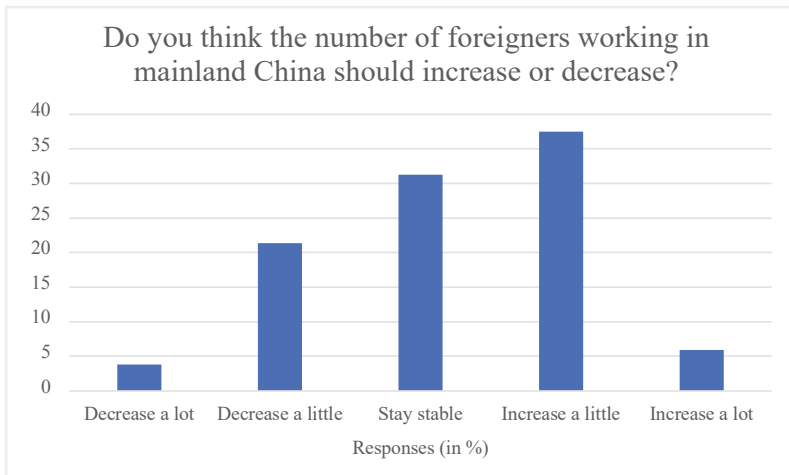
c. Asian Barometer Survey (Mainland China: December 2014- June 2016)¹⁴¹

Figure A.4.9. Immigration control



d. China General Social Survey 2008 (Han 2017a)

Figure A.4.10. Immigration control



141 To obtain the full dataset see the Asian Barometer website: globalbarometers.org.

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