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The Social Life of the Muslim Floating Population in Contemporary China

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ABSTRACT: In this article, investigate the issues related to the social life of Uyghur Muslim floating in mainland cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan. Divided into, the basic characteristics of the survey subjects; Living conditions; Survey at the social level; Uyghur Muslim floating population health problems and other social life issues are investigated. The study of social life focuses on key aspects of daily living, including language, diet, housing, interpersonal communication, and health. The influx of the Uyghur Muslim floating population into mainland cities reflects both their living conditions and their interactions with Han Chinese, shedding light on the implementation of local ethnic policies.
Keywords: *Social Life, Chinese Muslim, Floating Population, interpersonal communication*

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of social life focuses on key aspects of daily living, including language, diet, housing, interpersonal communication, and health. The influx of the Uyghur Muslim floating population into mainland cities reflects both their living conditions and their interactions with Han Chinese, shedding light on the implementation of local ethnic policies. Following the July 5th Incident, tensions between Uyghur migrants and local populations in mainland cities have occasionally arisen.

From 2000 to 2008 and 2011 to 2013, I conducted surveys of Uyghur floating populations in Beijing and Shanghai. The surveys included interviews with Uyghur workers in the catering industry, vendors, and unemployed individuals. Topics covered occupation, economic income, living conditions, religious practices, interactions with local residents, attitudes toward the government, education, healthcare, and transportation. Interviews were conducted bilingually in Chinese and Uyghur. In Beijing, research was focused on the densely populated districts of Haidian and Chaoyang, while in Shanghai, the focus was on Putuo District.

In Shanghai, a sampling method was used, selecting ten representative individuals from a list of over 100 Uyghur Muslims in the city.

- A and B: Small business owners selling lamb skewers
- C: A restaurant owner
- D: The leader of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Shanghai Office
- E: A national civil servant with Shanghai household registration
- F: A prominent entrepreneur with social and economic influence in Shanghai
- G: A restaurant waiter
- H: A small business owner selling raisins
- I: A large-scale business owner
- J: A small business owner selling snacks

The following sections analyze the interview data and provide insights into the social life of Uyghur Muslims in Shanghai.

Table 1: Basic information on age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, family members, educational level, residence time, local household registration, lack of household registration, purpose for coming to the city, change in life after moving to the city, housing environment (rental status)

	Age; gender; ethnicity; marital status; family members; educational level; residence time; Local household registration; Reason for lack of household registration; From the purpose; The results in the future; Housing situation
A	twenty-seven; male; Uyghur ethnic group; married; Three people in Xinjiang; junior high school; Six years; Having a temporary residence permit; Not willing to stay permanently; make

	money; Slight improvement in living conditions; Using someone else's residence
B	Twenty; Male; Uyghur ethnic group; unmarried; junior high school; Three years; Having a temporary residence permit; Not willing to stay permanently; The living conditions for earning money have slightly improved; Using someone else's residence
C	over 30 years old; Male; Uyghur ethnic group; married; Three people in Shanghai; junior high school; Over ten years; Having a temporary residence permit; Not willing to stay permanently; make money Life is improving; Renting a house
D	Over 50 years old; male; Uyghur ethnic group; married; Five people in Shanghai; undergraduate course; Over ten years; Having a household registration; Job requirements; Children gain development opportunities; Purchase of houses with self-owned funds
E	In their thirties; female; Mixed Blood Father Wei Mu Han; married; Three people in Shanghai undergraduate course; Over ten years; Having a household registration; Job requirements; Children gain development opportunities; Purchase of houses with self-owned funds
F	Over 40 years old; Male; Uyghur ethnic group; married; Three people in Shanghai; undergraduate course; Over ten years; Having a household registration; Making money; Children gain development opportunities; Purchase of houses with self-owned funds
G	20 years old; male; Uyghur ethnic group; Last marriage; Middle school; Six months; Not yet certified; Not willing to stay permanently; make money; Slight improvement in living conditions; Using someone else's residence
H	In their twenties; Male; Uyghur ethnic group; married; Five people in Xinjiang; primary school; For several consecutive years; No certification obtained; Not willing to stay permanently; make money; Slight improvement in living conditions; Using someone else's residence
I	In their twenties; male; Uyghur ethnic group; Last marriage; junior high school; several years No temporary residence permits; Not willing to stay permanently; make money; Life is improving; Renting a house
J	In their twenties; male; Uyghur ethnic group; married; Three months; In Shanghai; primary school; Years; No temporary residence permit; Not willing to stay permanently; Making money; Slight improvement in living conditions; Using someone else's residence

II. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research and interviews with individuals A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J provide insights into the demographics, living conditions, and socioeconomic realities of the Uyghur floating population in mainland cities like Shanghai.

The majority of the Uyghur floating population consists of young people, with around 80% being in their 20s. Approximately 20% are middle-aged, around 30 years old, while a smaller proportion are over 40. Among the interviewees, an office director in his 50s stands out as an exception and is not representative of the broader population. Teenagers are also a no table part of this demographic, reflecting the presence of young er individuals within the floating community.

Educational attainment among this population is generally low. Over 70% have only a junior high school education or less, with very few pursuing higher educations. Individuals such as D and E, who work in office settings and have attained a higher level of education, represent exceptions and do not reflect the majority.

The living conditions of Uyghur migrants vary significantly depending on their socioeconomic status and duration of stay. Long-term residents, typically those who have stayed for over a year, are more likely to possess temporary residence permits, while seasonal migrants often do not apply for such permits. Housing conditions are generally poor for most migrants, with many sharing cramped and inadequate spaces. However, individuals such as D, E, and F, who have higher incomes, have managed to purchase homes in Shanghai, a scenario that is rare and not representative of the majority. Notably, over 90% of Uyghurs, including individuals like D and C, do not intend to stay in mainland cities permanently.

The primary motivation for migration among the Uyghur population is economic. Almost all migrants, with the exception of D and E, move to cities like Shanghai to earn money. While their living conditions in Shanghai are modestly better than in their hometowns in Xinjiang, there has not been a significant improvement in their overall living standards. Despite this, most migrants manage to meet basic needs and send remittances to support their families back home.

In summary, the findings highlight the challenges faced by the Uyghur floating population in achieving economic and social advancement in mainland cities. While migration has provided some opportunities, significant barriers persist, limiting their ability to achieve substantial improvements in their living conditions

and long-term prospects.

Anonym	Understanding and opinions on the basic situation of Floating Uyghur Muslims in Shanghai
A	Most of the people who come to Shanghai are impoverished farmers, most of whom drop out after finishing high school, and many drop out after entering primary school. If you live in a place for a long time after coming to the mainland, the local department requires you to apply for a temporary residence permit. Most people are unwilling to stay for a long time. If it is not for special circumstances, their purpose is to make money, and there is no way to improve their living standards. After coming to Shanghai, their living standards have slightly improved compared to Xinjiang, but not much. Many people share houses in remote areas, and the conditions are very poor.
B	Same as above (A and B have similar basic views on living together in mainland China for a long time)
C	There are approximately 20000 floating Uyghur people in Shanghai, with over 20 households registered in Shanghai and around 50 restaurants operated by Uyghur people. (C is a restaurant owner who has lived in Shanghai for over a decade, but his understanding and views on the situation of Floating Uyghur Muslims are not much different from A's small business (selling lamb skewers), with almost the same understanding and views.)
D	There are approximately 15000 Floating Uyghur populations in Shanghai, and very few have become local residents, to the point of not having them. More than 90% are in a Floating state with a temporary residence permit or nothing at all. Proportionally speaking, around 70% sustain their livelihood through legitimate means, around 20% sustain themselves through illegal means, and 10% in various other situations. As far as I know, there are about 50 Uyghur run restaurants in Shanghai, most of which rely on small businesses such as selling raisins and lamb skewers to make a living. Many Uyghurs in Shanghai do not live in Shanghai for a long time. They come in November and return around February, but there will not be much change in the Muslim floating population between 10000 and 20000 in Shanghai. How many people left, and how many people came at the same time.
E	I am not quite sure about the number of floating Muslim populations in Shanghai or their situation. As far as I know, the impression given by Xinjiang people is very bad, and the locals have very bad reactions when they hear about Xinjiang people. But this negative impression is not always present, it started in 1994. We moved to Shanghai in the 1990s, and at that time, Shanghai people were very fond of Xinjiang people. When we heard about Xinjiang people, we thought of them as simple and hospitable people who could sing and dance. When we saw them on the street, we treated them very kindly. Xinjiang people also received support and assistance from government departments in various aspects. But after 94 years, these situations began to reverse and became increasingly bad. A small portion of the Xinjiang people who flooded into Shanghai after 1994 did some legitimate business, but there was a portion of people without any economic ability who relied on illegal activities to make a living. As far as I know, before 2002, many young people in Xinjiang made a living through drug trafficking. In recent years, there have been fewer and fewer people doing this kind of business, but there have been particularly more people stealing on the streets. I am not alone in saying this phenomenon. Many people are talking about it. Currently, more than half of Xinjiang Uyghurs, especially young people, in Shanghai are stealing things on the streets. I cannot say the exact number, but there are many.
F	At present, there are approximately 10000 to 20000 people in Shanghai, but many of them are Floating. They will return from November to February, but the total population of 10000 to 20000 will not change significantly. There are about 50 restaurants operated by Uyghur people.
G	(He has not been in Shanghai for a long time and is not very familiar with the situation of Floating Uyghur Muslims, and the information he has learned is consistent with the above.)
H	(H is doing small business and working for the boss. He represents the same type as A, B, and C. His understanding and views are exactly the same as A.)
I	(I am a big boss who hires others and has similar knowledge and opinions as mentioned above)
J	(J is doing small business and working for his boss. He represents the same type as A, B, G, and H. His understanding and views are exactly the same as A.)

Below, a detailed analysis and research will be conducted in sections.

2 Basic Characteristics of Survey Subjects Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Nanjing

2.1 Age and Gender

According to survey data from Beijing, the majority of subjects are young and middle-aged individuals aged 18 to 35, with the youngest being 16 and the oldest 67. Men constitute the majori ty overall, though the gender distribution varies by profession. Males dominate among floating vendors, local specialty product operators, and ethnic handicraft sellers. Restaurant staff are primarily male, though women are also represented. Women dominate among performers in ethnic song and dance troupes.[1]

In Shanghai, most Uyghur floating workers are aged 20 to 30, with a smaller proportion over 40. Exceptions, such as an office director in his 50s, are atypical. The average age of Uyghur migrants is under 25, significantly lower than the national average of 29 for floating workers.[2] Teenagers also form a small proportion of this population.

While specific age and gender data for Nanjing are unavailable, the common pattern across mainland cities indicates that the majority of Uyghur floating workers are young adults in their 20s and 30s.

Uyghur Muslim floating workers in Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Nanjing are typically in their prime working years, seeking job opportunities. However, they often facedisad vantages in wealth, social networks, and education. Their primary asset enabling migration to major mainland cities is their age, which provides them with the physical and labor capacity to pursue work.

2.2 Marital Status and Family Dynamics

Analysis of survey data from Beijing and Shanghai reveals that approximately half of the respondents are married, while the other half are unmarried. In Wuhan, however, the marital status of Uyghur Muslims shows a different trend, with more than half being unmarried or single, and fewer identifying as married. In contrast, the majority of floating workers from Xinjiang have spouses, although only a small number of these spouses reside in cities like Shanghai.

Married individuals generally have two to three children. However, due to the economic pressures and high living costs in cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, many families adopt a strategy to cope with these challenges. Often, the eldest children are left behind in their hometowns under the care of elderly relatives. This approach is partly due to the fact that older children, who are typically of school age, face difficulties enrolling in schools within these urban areas. Younger children are more commonly brought to the cities, as families attempt to balance their resources and caregiving responsibilities.

Uyghur Muslims living in mainland cities consciously limit the number of children they have, despite being allowed up to three children under China’s family planning policies. This decision reflects the challenges of adapting to urban living conditions and managing the associated costs.

The attitudes of Uyghur Muslims toward intermarriage re veal strong cultural and religious influences. Most are unwilling to marry outside their ethnic group, largely due to their Islamic faith, which prohibits Muslims from marrying non-Muslims. Additional factors influencing this reluctance include deeply rooted cultural customs, language barriers, dietary practices, and the importance of maintaining family and community support. For the few Uyghurs who express willingness to marry outside their ethnic group, the primary condition is that the potential spouse must also be Muslim. In such cases, they consider intermarriage with individuals from other Islamic communities, such as Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Turks.

There is also widespread disapproval of intermarriage between their relatives or friends and members of the Han Chinese ethnic group. This limited willingness to intermarry, combined with the smaller social networks available to Uyghur Muslims in cities like Beijing and Shanghai, contributes to a higher single rate among them compared to floating workers from other ethnic groups.

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[1] Abdu Aini, “Investigation and Research on Uyghur Floating Popula tion in Beijing”, Ph.D. Dissertation, Central University for Nationalities, 2011. (阿不都艾尼,《在京维吾尔族流动人口调查研究》, 博士论文, 中央民族大学, 2011 年。)

[2] Hankiz Turak and Saiyare imam, “Quality of Life and Improvement Strategies for Uyghur Migrant Workers in Mainland Cities: A Survey Based on Wuhan Region”, Journal of Hunan Agricultural University, Vol. 4, 2011, pp. 45-49. (哈尼克孜·吐拉克、赛牙热·依马木, “内地城市 维吾尔族农民工生活质量及改善策略—基于武汉地区的调查”,《湖南农 业大学学报》, 2011 年第 4 期, 第 45-49 页。)

2.3 Living Consumption Patterns

The survey reveals that most Uyghur Muslim floating workers, apart from restaurant owners and vendors with fixed stalls, lead frugal lives. Their daily expenditures are primarily focused on essential goods, with minimal discretionary spending. They strive to reduce living costs to the lowest possible level. For instance, among street vendors selling sesame candy, rent constitutes their largest expense, typically ranging from 500 to 600 yuan per month.

These workers adopt two primary living arrangements. Some live with their families, while others opt for collective rental housing, typically shared by three to four individuals who split the rent equally. Additional expenses include water and electricity bills, coal for heating or cooking, as well as food and clothing. Mobile phones, an essential tool for maintaining communication with the outside world, are common among vendors. However, the cost of mobile phone usage is kept low, generally not exceeding 50 yuan per month.

On average, individual monthly living expenses amount to at least 1,000 yuan, while a family's expenses are at least 2,000 yuan. Despite these modest costs, their income and living standards remain among the lowest in urban areas. To save their limited income, many make significant sacrifices in their daily lives. These savings are often sent back to support impoverished families in rural hometowns. Even after working tirelessly in mainland cities for several years, or even decades, many Uyghurs floating workers are unable to escape poverty for themselves or their families. Their circumstances highlight the persistent economic challenges faced by this group, despite their efforts to build better lives in urban environments.

III. LIVING CONDITIONS

3.1 Language Communication Challenges

Uyghur Muslims primarily speak their indigenous language, Uyghur, which is also spoken by nine other ethnic groups in the Uyghur region. For example, the Uzbek ethnic group and even the Hui ethnic group surveyed also speak Uyghur due to their extended residence in Uyghur-dominated areas. However, upon moving to mainland cities like Beijing and Shanghai, language barriers present significant challenges, especially for those relocating for the first time. Many new arrivals can only understand basic Chinese phrases and struggle to speak the language fluently. Even those who manage to communicate in Chinese often face another hurdle—they cannot read or recognize Chinese characters.

There are exceptions where Uyghur individuals can navigate language barriers effectively. For example, Interviewee E in Shanghai, whose mother is Han Chinese and father is Uyghur, has fluent Chinese proficiency due to his upbringing. E's mother, originally from Shanghai, moved to Xinjiang during the Cultural Revolution to marry E's father, and the family later returned to Shanghai. E, born in Xinjiang, came to Shanghai as a teenager and is now fluent in Chinese and working as a translator. Another case, Interviewee D, has lived and worked in Shanghai for over a decade, purchased a house, and brought his family to live with him, showcasing a smoother integration into the urban environment.

However, cases like E and D remain the exception. Many Uyghurs Muslims, even after a decade or more in cities like Beijing or Shanghai, still struggle with Chinese. For example, Interviewee A, with a junior high school education, has lived in Shanghai for over ten years with his wife and three children but speaks only rudimentary Chinese. His limited proficiency has even impacted the language abilities of his children, who also struggle to speak Chinese. Interviewee B, who has a primary school education and is unmarried, has similarly poor Chinese proficiency, which restricts their ability to communicate beyond basic everyday phrases.

When asked whether they can fully, partially, or not at all express their inner thoughts in Chinese, only a few respondents stated they could fully express themselves. Most could only manage simple daily expressions, while others were unable to articulate their inner thoughts fluently in Chinese, even after years of living and working in these cities.

The difficulties extend to understanding the local dialects of cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan. Uyghur Muslims face similar challenges to other non-native residents, such as migrants who cannot speak the Shanghai dialect. This suggests that the language adaptation issues faced by Uyghur Muslims are not entirely unique but reflect broader challenges encountered by all newcomers to these cities.

Nevertheless, Uyghur Muslims who engage in business activities often adapt more quickly to the language environment through constant interaction. While they may not become fluent in local dialects, they gradually develop an understanding of them, enabling smoother communication in public and professional spaces. This adaptability highlights the role of sustained exposure and necessity in overcoming language barriers.

3.2 Diet

Uyghur Muslims who move to cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Nanjing maintain many of the

unique dietary customs associated with their nomadic ethnic heritage. Their diet is primarily centered around noodles as the staple food, complemented by a strong preference for meat and dairy products, with minimal vegetable consumption. Traditional dishes such as nan (flatbread), poxkel (a type of dumpling), sagza (vegetable stew), lagman (noodle dish), polo (rice pilaf), zuyukax (fried dough), and kawap (kebabs) are integral to their daily diet. As Muslims, they adhere to Islamic dietary laws, which prohibit the consumption of pork.

When Uyghur Muslims relocate to mainland cities, the stark differences in dietary habits pose significant challenges to their adaptation. Many find it difficult to access authentic Uyghur style halal cuisine, which reflects not only their cultural preferences but also their religious dietary requirements. Interviews conducted with Uyghur Muslims reveal that almost all respond ents express difficulty in finding satisfying and trustworthy halal food in cities like Beijing and Shanghai. This difficulty persists even when they lower their expectations, foregoing the Uyghur flavors they are accustomed to, as they often struggle to find any halal food that meets their standards.

For example, some Uyghur Muslims report that while there may be restaurants labeled as “halal” in these cities, the food offered does not align with their culinary traditions or meet their standards for halal preparation. This gap in availability and quality underscores the cultural and practical challenges they face in integrating into urban environments where their dietary needs are not easily met.

Q: Did you have any discomfort after arriving in Beijing?
A: In terms of diet.
Q: Specifically, which aspect?
A: Halal restaurants are not authentic.

This is the same answer to the same question I asked during the interview process. I also encountered difficulties in diet while studying at a university in Nanjing. For example,

> We told the school that we all come from Xinjiang, and we like to eat pasta, such as Legmen and Polo, but the way of eating is different from that here. We asked for a Uyghur cook, but they didn’t invite him. The chef in this canteen can’t cook our Xinjiang Muslim rice. I told them that I would cook it for you once, and then you would look at it and learn from it. They were not so stupid, and they said that they would not do it. He said: After doing it, people will not eat it, and waste it. I said: If it is done, why don’t they eat it? I did it once last time, and ate it all. We were arranged to visit the slaughterhouse this time, because once we were a little doubtful whether it was halal meat. We usually don’t eat an ything that we don’t kill with God’s words. We ate for a while and thought whether the food we ate was up to the standard, or what the Koran said.

Uyghur Muslims who move to cities like Beijing and Shanghai tend to place great trust in the food provided by mosques. This trust is reflected in the practices of some Uyghur traders I inter viewed, who sell mutton kebabs and roasted whole lamb. They revealed that most of the mutton they use comes directly from mosques, highlighting the widespread recognition of mosque prepared food as both authentic and reliable.

For newly arrived Uyghur Muslims in Beijing and Shanghai, dietary issues pose one of the greatest challenges to adaptation. Despite having money, they often struggle to find suitable places to eat that meet their religious and cultural standards. This difficulty extends beyond Uyghur Muslims to other Muslim ethnic groups, who similarly face obstacles in accessing acceptable halal food. Even Muslims who have lived in these cities for many years report persistent dissatisfaction with the availability and quality of halal food, noting that it often falls short of their expectations. For those arriving from more rural or scattered are as, these challenges are even more pronounced, as they encounter an even steeper gap between their dietary practices and the local food culture.

There is a pressing need for government and public institutions to address these dietary challenges. Providing mechanisms for better information dissemination and support could help Muslim communities align their needs with the development of ethnic and cultural diversity in cities like Beijing and Shanghai. Unfortunately, there appears to be a lack of responsiveness from public security and government departments regarding their dietary habits. For example, policies or initiatives to support the availability of authentic halal food or ensure cultural inclusivity in public dining spaces are noticeably absent.

This oversight underscores a missed opportunity to foster greater cultural integration and support for Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic groups navigating life in urban environments.

Q: Can you please describe the special situations encountered during the translation process.

E's Answer: After the public security department arrested the suspect in Xinjiang, if they can't speak Chinese, they asked me to be their interpreter. The biggest problem I found is that the public security department doesn't respect their religious life so much. Although they are prisoners, many Uyghurs youth are held temporarily, and their eating habits are not respected. The public security department knows very well that Uyghurs believe in Islam, and they don't eat pork, etc., but the public security personnel will not separate the food, but deliberately put pork in their meals for them to eat. Young people from the southern region of Xinjiang with strong religious beliefs go on hunger strike, and don't eat for weeks. I personally met a young man from Kaka A criminal youth in his 20s from Shih (a city in the south of Xinjiang) had been on hunger strike for several weeks, when his body had completely collapsed and his life was in danger. We went to do spiritual work for him, and he insisted that the food of Muslim prisoners be completely separated from that of other people. But the public security department did not agree, and was unable to meet this requirement.

The shortage of mosques and the lack of access to authentic halal food in Beijing and Shanghai create significant challenges for Uyghur Muslims and other Muslim communities in these cities. Many Uyghurs Muslims express a strong desire for dedicated halal supermarkets where they can purchase authentic and reliable halal ingredients to cook their meals or buy ready-to-eat halal products. While Beijing has some options, such as the Niujie halal food supermarket, cities like Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan lack similar facilities. For example, in Shanghai, the only notable halal food outlet is a halal food company in Baoshan District. There are no halal supermarkets, department stores, or dedicated markets, which not only inconveniences Uyghur Muslims but also impacts other Muslim residents in these cities.

During interviews, respondents frequently mentioned the inconvenience caused by the lack of halal food options. When asked if halal supermarkets existed in Shanghai, most replied that they had not seen any and found it difficult to buy groceries and meat that met their dietary needs. When further asked where they usually purchase halal food, the majority answered that they relied on general shopping malls or supermarkets. However, they had to rely solely on reading the packaging and ingredient lists to check for Islamic dietary taboos, such as pork or lard, before making their purchases. The absence of clearly labeled "halal" products in major supermarkets and markets in cities like Shanghai forces many to compromise and settle for products that may not fully meet their cultural and religious standards.

This lack of accessible halal food options highlights a broader issue of cultural inclusivity and support for Muslim communities in mainland cities. The establishment of dedicated halal supermarkets or more clearly labeled halal products in general supermarkets would significantly alleviate these difficulties and foster a more inclusive environment for Uyghur Muslims and other Muslim residents navigating life in urban China.

IV. THE DILEMMA OF HOUSING

4.1 The Challenge of Renting a House

For Uyghur Muslims migrating to mainland cities like Beijing and Shanghai, the primary goal is to earn more money and break free from poverty. Driven by this purpose, they are willing to endure hardship and adapt to harsh living conditions, often setting very low standards for their housing, as long as it pro vides a roof over their heads.

In many cases, Uyghur Muslims in Beijing and Shanghai utilize their storefronts as dual-purpose spaces, serving both as business premises and living quarters. It is common for shop owners and their families, along with workers, to share cramped attic spaces above their shops. The number of people living in such spaces varies, ranging from two or three to as many as seven or eight individuals.

Street vendors, particularly those involved in the grilled lamb business, often reside in shared accommodations with relatives, friends, or fellow townspeople in remote suburban areas. Renting a single room in urban areas typically costs around 1,000 yuan per month, and such accommodations are usually far from city centers. Houses priced under 1,000 yuan are almost exclusively located in suburbs or shantytowns, where living conditions are often rudimentary and lack basic amenities.

As Imam X from the X Mosque in Nanjing shared during a conversation, this arrangement reflects not just financial constraints but also a broader systemic issue. The lack of affordable, decent housing for Uyghur Muslims and other low-income mi grant groups in major cities exacerbates their challenges, forcing them into overcrowded and inconvenient living situations. These housing conditions highlight the socio-economic struggles faced by Uyghur Muslims in mainland cities, where their limited financial resources and marginalization often leave them with few viable housing options. Addressing these challenges requires not only economic empowerment but also a reevaluation of urban housing policies to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all communities:

> The people from Xinjiang who come to Nanjing come from various cities, live scattered, and in remote suburbs, with strong mobility. They can do business for two days if it's good, or change places if it's not good, and ultimately maintain their survival.

The housing situation for Uyghur Muslims in Beijing reveals a complex interplay of financial constraints, social dynamics, and systemic challenges. According to a survey conducted in Beijing, the Uyghur Muslim floating population is scattered across various parts of the city, though there are pockets of relatively concentrated communities. Most reside in the urban-rural fringes of the city, driven by the dual factors of affordability and practicality.

The primary reason for choosing these peripheral areas is the relatively low cost of rent. For instance, a 10–square-meter bungalow typically costs around 1,000 yuan per month. These areas also offer convenient transportation and proximity to commercial zones, making them an attractive choice for those engaged in trade or street vending. Additionally, Uyghurs face significant difficulties in renting houses elsewhere in the city due to social and systemic barriers, making these suburban areas somewhat more accessible.

Communities often form based on shared hometown origins or kinship ties. For example, a group of over 40 vendors selling sesame candy from Peiziwat County resides in the Tuofangying community on Jiangtai Road in Chaoyang District, creating a concentrated population of 60–70 people. Similar clusters exist in other parts of the city, such as Tiancun and Xisanqi in Shi jingshan and Haidian Districts, and in Fangshan District, where many vendors from Hotan have settled.

For street vendors and other low-income workers, shared living arrangements are common due to financial pressures and the difficulty of securing housing. Typically, several close friends or relatives share a single room, which is often dilapidated, with limited space and inadequate facilities. Heating is absent, leaving rooms extremely cold in the winter, while some live in basements that are damp and unbearably hot during Beijing's humid summers.

The reluctance of many homeowners to rent to Uyghur Muslims compounds the housing challenges. This reluctance stems from social biases and concerns about potential interfer ence or disputes. Even homeowners willing to rent to Uyghur tenants often express hesitations due to perceived risks. During interviews, many Uyghur Muslims shared experiences of rejection and marginalization when attempting to secure housing, further underscoring the difficulties they face in achieving stable living conditions.

These realities highlight the precariousness of Uyghur Muslims' housing situations in Beijing and point to broader issues of social integration, economic disparity, and systemic inequality that require urgent attention:

> We pay 100–200 yuan more than others to rent the same house, making it difficult to rent a house in such a situation.

> I have four children, three of whom are in school, and my wife and children are all in my hometown. I should have taken them over, but now I don't have the conditions. It's difficult to support our family by farming in our hometown. Our area is short of water, and they don't want us to live here (they don't want to rent out a house).

> A landlord told me that it's not that I don't want to rent the house to you, but that the relevant parties have notified us not to rent a house for Xinjiang residents. I asked a relevant person why? He replied that because there was an accident in Xinjiang (referring to the July 5th incident)

For example, in a survey conducted in Shanghai, it was found that:

> Q: Does the local department require you to obtain any documents or similar documents in your area?
> A: Yes, our boss has over 20 fellow villagers under his command. The local public security bureau requires us to apply for temporary residence permits, and now we all have temporary residence permits.
> Q: How is your housing situation?
> B Answer: My brother rented a house (bungalow) for us, and more than ten of us lived together in a small house.

The housing conditions of Uyghur Muslim Street vendors and other floating populations in cities like Beijing

and Shanghai are characterized by significant challenges. Although the living spaces they rent are often rudimentary and poorly equipped, these physical conditions are not their primary concern. Instead, the major issue they face is the difficulty of finding housing at all, largely due to widespread reluctance from local landlords to rent to them.

Uyghur Muslims who have just arrived in Beijing or Shang hai often rely on the generosity of fellow villagers or friends, staying in their homes temporarily. However, this arrangement is unsustainable in the long term. For those unable to secure permanent housing, mosques sometimes serve as temporary refuges. Mosques with available empty rooms may offer short-term accommodations. While living with friends or relatives provides some stability, those without such connections or those relying on mosque shelter face significant uncertainty. Prolonged difficulty in finding housing becomes a major obstacle to settling and building a stable life in these cities.

Discrimination plays a key role in this housing crisis. Many landlords refuse to rent to Uyghurs, even when their properties are vacant. In some cases, landlords initially agree to rent their homes but later ask the tenants to leave, often within a few days. When questioned, landlords frequently cite vague reasons, such as being instructed by “relevant parties” not to rent to Uyghurs. However, when approached, these “relevant parties” deny issuing such directives, leaving Uyghur tenants caught in a frustrating cycle of blame-shifting and eviction.

Economic status and employment significantly influence housing outcomes within the Uyghur floating population. Those with higher incomes, such as restaurant owners, often have broader social networks in cities like Beijing and Shanghai, which makes it easier for them to rent homes or even purchase properties. Uyghur individuals with stable jobs often have housing arranged by their employers, providing them with more se cure and satisfactory living conditions. In contrast, street vendors typically share housing with companions, often in overcrowded and substandard accommodations. The situation is worst for unemployed individuals, who frequently remain in their hometowns or struggle to find any housing in urban centers.

Uyghur Muslims accommodated by business owners enjoy significantly better living conditions than street vendors or un employed individuals. This disparity underscores the broader social and economic divides within the Uyghur population in mainland cities, with access to decent housing heavily dependent on financial stability and occupational status.

These housing difficulties reflect systemic barriers that hinder the integration and well-being of Uyghur Muslims in urban environments. Addressing these challenges requires targeted measures to combat discrimination, provide affordable housing options, and create more inclusive policies to ensure that all res idents can access stable and dignified living conditions.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings highlight the challenges faced by the Uyghur floating population in achieving economic and social advancement in mainland cities. While migration has provided some opportunities, significant barriers persist, limiting their ability to achieve substantial improvements in their living conditions and long-term prospects.

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