

*The Evolution of Population Census Undertakings in China, 1953–2010**

Xiaogang Wu and Guangye He

Abstract

This article documents the evolution of census undertakings in China since 1953, with a focus on how the recently completed 2010 census differs from the 2000 census. We argue that how the censuses were conducted and what social and demographic information was collected per se to a large extent reflect the changing social and political situations in China over the past six decades. The article highlights the changes made since the 1982 census, especially the improvements of the 2000 census over the 1990 census and of the 2010 census over the 2000 census. Selected data are drawn from censuses to chart key aspects of social changes in China, including migration, urbanization, and employment. Finally, problems encountered during the 2010 census undertaking and challenges for future censuses are identified and discussed.

Xiaogang WU is professor of social science and the Director of the Center for Applied Social and Economic Research at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He is also a visiting chair professor at Shanghai University supported by the Eastern Scholar Program of Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. His research interests include social inequality and mobility, labor markets and economic sociology, and quantitative methodology. In 2012, he was awarded a Prestigious Fellowship in Humanities and Social Sciences by the University Grants Committee of Hong Kong SAR.

Guangye HE is a Ph.D. candidate in the Division of Social Science at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Her research interests include social stratification and inequality, with a focus on gender and family issues, and statistical methodology. She is a recipient of the Hong Kong Ph.D. Fellowship (2012–2015) from the Hong Kong Research Grant Council.

*An early and extended version of this article was submitted as a research monograph to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the