



HOME

[Publications](#) > [Policy Research Division Working Papers](#) > Working Paper No. 214

RESEARCH AREAS

RESEARCH LOCATIONS

PROGRAMS

PUBLICATIONS /
RESOURCES



No. 214, 2006

Zimmer, Zachary, Toshiko Kaneda, and **Laura Spess**. "Urban versus rural mortality among older adults in China," *Policy Research Division Working Paper* no. 214. New York: Population Council. ([PDF](#))

Abstract

Urban versus rural place of residence has proven to be a critical health determinant over time and across countries. Several studies have demonstrated an urban advantage in mortality in China. This variation by place of residence could be a function of differences in characteristics of individuals, differences in urban and rural communities, or a combination of individual and community factors. Population aging, coupled with a growing distinction between urban and rural life, is creating some urgency in the effort to determine the magnitude of the urban advantage among older adults and to ascertain the mechanisms responsible for the association. Using data from the China Health and Nutrition Survey, with additional information from the 2000 Chinese Census, the current study examines urban/rural variation in mortality of adults aged 50 and older. The analysis describes differences in mortality and examines the extent to which variations are accounted for by socioeconomic and health-access and health-availability characteristics that are measured at individual and community levels. Age-specific mortality rates across regions and Cox proportional hazard model ratios are provided using mortality data from 1989 to 2000. Results show unadjusted rural mortality to be 30 percent higher than urban mortality. Adjusting for cadre status and number of amenities within the community reduces the difference to about 18 percent, so that these two covariates account for about 40 percent of the baseline urban advantage.



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▶ **Annual Report**

▼ **JOURNALS**

- **Population and Development Review**
- **PDR Supplements**
- **Studies in Family Planning**

▼ **WORKING PAPERS**

- **Poverty, Gender, and Youth Working Papers**
- **South and East Asia Working Papers**

▼ **NEWSLETTERS/SERIALS**

- **Population Briefs**
- **Momentum**
- **Quality/Calidad/Qualité**
- **SEEDS**

▶ **Publicaciones en español**

▶ **Publications en français**

▶ **إصدارات عربية**

▶ **Software**

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EVENTS

SEARCH

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