

Analysis of Employment Industry Destinations for Graduates with a Bachelor's Degree in Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning: A Case Study of X University in Southwest China

Yang Wang^{1,a}, Honglin Tao^{1,b,*}, Yuliang Yang^{1,c}

¹Faculty of Geography, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, Yunnan, China

^a210058@ynnu.edu.cn, ^b2423130064@ynnu.edu.cn, ^c82464494@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: This paper focuses on graduates from the Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning program at X University in Southwest China between 2015 and 2023, conducting a systematic analysis of their employment destinations and related data. The study reveals that the employment destinations of these graduates exhibit a diversified trend, encompassing various categories such as employment within the public sector, postgraduate studies, employment outside the public sector, and unemployment/freelancing. Among these, employment outside the public sector has consistently remained the primary destination, with its proportion increasing in recent years. In contrast, the proportion of graduates entering the public sector has declined annually, while the number of those pursuing postgraduate studies has shown an upward trend. This indicates a shift in graduates' employment perspectives and the job market environment. The findings of this study provide a scientific basis and reference for the cultivation of students, career guidance, and individual employment choices in the field of Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning at Chinese universities.

Keywords: Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning; Graduate Employment; Employment Trends; Employment Destinations

1. Introduction

Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning is a discipline primarily rooted in geography and urban-rural planning, with its core knowledge system encompassing multidisciplinary content such as geography, planning, management, and environmental science, making it a dynamic and adaptable field of study^[1]. It focuses on the interactions between the natural world and human activities on the Earth's surface, guided by an understanding of and influence on the processes of regional sustainable development at different spatial scales^[2]. The discipline covers a wide range of topics, including spatial layout of urban and rural areas, land use planning, regional economic development, and ecological environmental protection. The scientific questions it addresses span both natural and social sciences, reflecting its distinctive interdisciplinary nature^[3]. Graduates of this program are expected to possess a solid foundation in geography, enabling them to analyze and solve practical problems using geographic information technology. Additionally, they must master the principles and methods of urban-rural planning and acquire practical skills such as drafting planning blueprints and writing planning proposals.

With China entering a new era, the implementation of the national ecological civilization strategy, the restructuring of the territorial spatial planning system, and the advancement of the urban-rural integration development strategy have introduced new requirements for the development of the Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning discipline^[4]. This field plays a critical role in promoting rational urban-rural layouts, optimizing resource allocation, and fostering sustainable development. It also provides strong talent support for the implementation of China's new urbanization and rural revitalization strategies. At the same time, with the deepening of globalization and the rapid advancement of information technology, the discipline of Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning needs to place greater emphasis on international perspectives and cross-cultural communication. Globalization has expanded the scope of urban-rural planning beyond individual regions or countries, necessitating consideration of transnational and cross-cultural factors^[5]. As a result, society has raised higher expectations for the comprehensive competencies of professionals in this field. They must not only possess innovative thinking and

interdisciplinary integration capabilities but also keep pace with the times by mastering the application of emerging technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence in their professional domain. This will enable them to better adapt to the demands of a diversified job market in the future.

Although existing studies have explored educational reforms, curriculum design, and talent cultivation models in the field of Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning [6-7], systematic research on the employment destinations and their dynamic changes among graduates of this discipline remains relatively insufficient. This study focuses on graduates from the Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning program at X University in Southwest China between 2015 and 2023. By systematically collecting and analyzing data on their employment destinations, the research aims to examine the characteristics of these graduates' employment choices, the trends and dynamic changes in their employment destinations in recent years, and whether significant shifts have occurred in their employment perspectives.

The significance of this study lies in enriching the case studies on employment in the field of Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning. Through empirical analysis, it reveals the dynamic patterns of employment destinations among graduates of this discipline, providing new perspectives and data support for related theoretical research. At the same time, the practical significance of this study is to offer empirical evidence for universities to optimize talent cultivation programs, adjust curriculum design, and strengthen career planning and employment guidance. This will help universities better adapt to the demands of socio-economic development and enhance the employability of graduates. Additionally, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for students in this field in their career planning and employment choices, guiding them to make informed career decisions based on market demands and personal interests.

2. Employment Status of Graduates in Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning from X University

By systematically collecting and organizing data on the employment destinations of graduates from the Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning program at X University in Southwest China between 2015 and 2023, the results show that a total of 386 students graduated from the program during this period (as shown in Figure 1). Overall, except for an increase in the number of graduates in 2016 and 2021, the number of graduates from this program exhibited a year-by-year declining trend during the study period. This trend may be closely related to changes in the program's attractiveness and the dynamic adjustments in societal demand for professionals in this field.

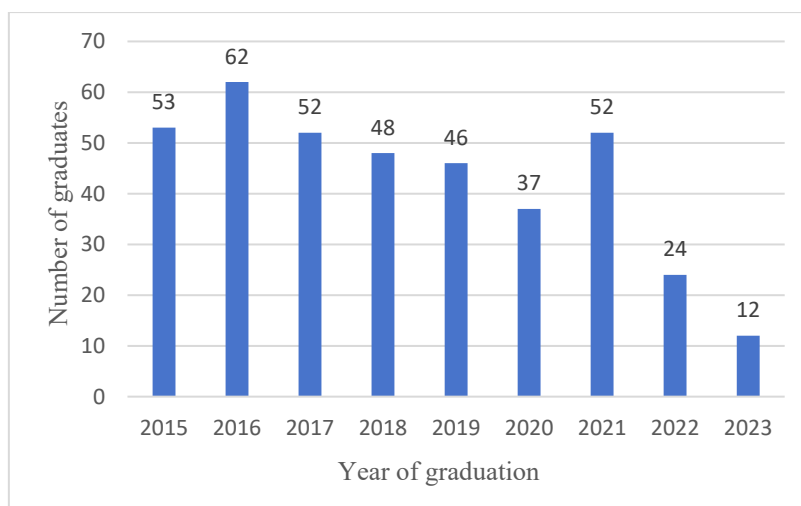


Figure 1: Number of graduates from the Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning program at X university (2015-2023)

Based on the nature of the industries, the employment directions of graduates in Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning are categorized into the following four types: pursuing postgraduate studies, employment within the public sector, employment outside the public sector, and unemployment/freelancing. Employment within the public sector includes government agencies, public institutions, grassroots organizations, and basic education, while employment outside the public sector encompasses enterprises related to the field, enterprises with low relevance to the field, preschool

education, and individual businesses. Graduates employed outside the public sector account for the largest proportion, with a total of 219 individuals, representing 56.74%. This is followed by graduates employed within the public sector, totaling 104 individuals, or 26.94%. Those choosing to pursue postgraduate studies number 41 individuals, accounting for 10.62%, while the proportion of graduates who are unemployed or engaged in freelancing is the smallest, with 22 individuals, or 5.7%.

By further categorizing the employment units of graduates, the employment industries of graduates in this program can be divided into the following nine major categories (as shown in Figure 2). The statistical results indicate that a total of 191 graduates entered enterprises, with the highest proportion working in enterprises with low relevance to the field, totaling 124 individuals, or 32.12%. Graduates employed in enterprises related to the field numbered 67 individuals, accounting for 17.36%. Following this, the number of graduates entering government agencies and public institutions ranked third, with a total of 61 individuals, or 15.8%. Meanwhile, the number of graduates engaged in individual business operations and preschool education was the smallest, with only 3 and 2 individuals, respectively, accounting for 0.78% and 0.52%.

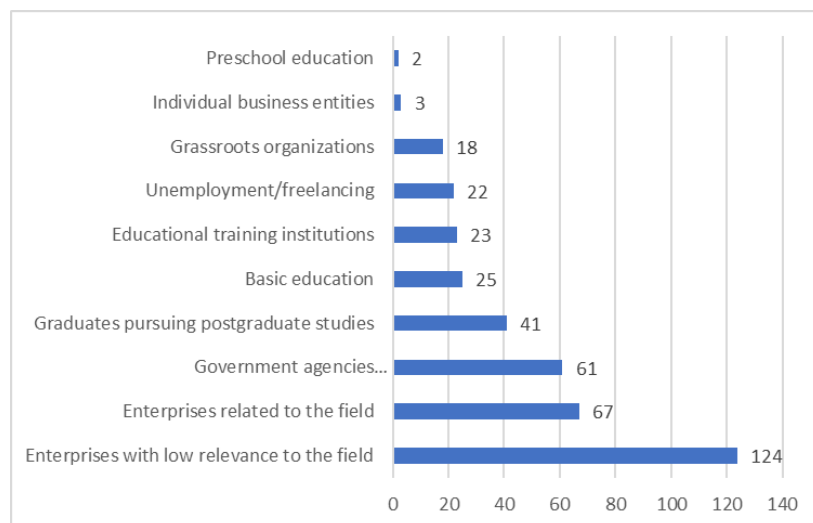


Figure 2: Overall employment status of graduates from the Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning program at X university

3. Fluctuations in Employment Industries

3.1 Changes in Employment Industries

Based on the analysis of employment industries of graduates from the university over the past nine years (as shown in Table 1), the proportion of employment in government agencies and public institutions fluctuated significantly between 2015 and 2023, peaking in 2020 (40.54%) while remaining relatively low in other years (only 1.92% in 2021). This fluctuation trend may be closely related to national policy orientation, the scale of civil service recruitment, and changes in graduates' preferences for stable careers. The proportion of employment in basic education rose significantly to 25.00% in 2023, while it remained relatively low in previous years (0% in 2015). This change may be associated with the expansion of the education sector, increased demand for interdisciplinary talent, and growing interest among graduates in the education industry. The proportion of employment in enterprises related to the field reached its highest level in 2018 (31.25%) but dropped to 0% in 2023. This significant change may be linked to industry restructuring, shifts in market demand, and changes in graduates' employment perspectives. The attractiveness of field-related enterprises to graduates varied greatly across different years, reflecting the instability of employment opportunities and increasing difficulty in securing jobs in this sector. The proportion of employment in grassroots organizations peaked in 2015 (11.32%) but was 0% in both 2020 and 2023. This trend indicates a declining attractiveness of grassroots positions to graduates over time, possibly due to changes in working conditions, career development paths, and policy support, as well as the high requirements and difficulty of recruitment exams for grassroots positions in recent years. The proportion of employment in educational training institutions reached its highest level in 2019 (8.70%) but fell to 0% in 2023. This change may be closely related to policy adjustments in the educational training industry (the "Double Reduction" policy) and shifts in market demand. The proportion of

employment in enterprises with low relevance to the field reached relatively high levels in 2016 and 2017 (41.94% and 40.38%, respectively) but dropped significantly to 5.41% in 2020 and further to 16.67% in 2023. This trend suggests that employment in this category is less stable and heavily influenced by economic conditions and industry restructuring. The proportion of employment in individual business entities was generally low and remained 0% in most years. This result indicates limited attractiveness of this employment direction to graduates, possibly due to lower professional skill requirements in this field and graduates' preference for stable careers. The proportion of employment in preschool education rose significantly to 8.33% in 2023, while it remained low in previous years (0% from 2015 to 2019). This change may be associated with the expansion of the preschool education industry and the diversification of graduates' employment choices. The proportion of unemployment/freelancing peaked in 2020 (16.22%) while remaining relatively low in other years (8.33% in 2023). This trend may be related to economic uncertainty, saturation of the job market, and graduates' autonomous choices in career development. The proportion of graduates pursuing postgraduate studies reached its highest level in 2023 (33.33%), while it was relatively low in 2015 and 2016 (5.66% and 3.23%, respectively). This trend indicates that, with increasing societal demand for highly educated talent, graduates' interest in further education has been rising year by year.

Table 1 Employment industry status of graduates majoring in Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning at X university from 2015 to 2023

Summary of the Situation									
Year Employment industry	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Government agencies and public institutions	28.30%	29.03%	7.69%	6.25%	4.35%	40.54%	1.92%	8.33%	8.33%
Basic education	0.00%	6.45%	3.85%	4.17%	13.04%	8.11%	5.77%	8.33%	25.00%
Enterprises related to the field	15.09%	11.29%	21.15%	31.25%	15.22%	8.11%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%
Grassroots organizations	11.32%	3.23%	7.69%	6.25%	2.17%	0.00%	1.92%	4.17%	0.00%
Educational training institutions	9.43%	0.00%	3.85%	2.08%	8.70%	8.11%	9.62%	12.50%	0.00%
Enterprises with low relevance to the field	30.19%	41.94%	40.38%	27.08%	30.43%	5.41%	46.15%	25.00%	16.67%
Individual business entities	0.00%	0.00%	1.92%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.92%	4.17%	0.00%
Preschool education	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.70%	0.00%	0.00%	8.33%
Unemployment/freelancing	0.00%	4.84%	7.69%	6.25%	10.87%	16.22%	0.00%	0.00%	8.33%
Graduates pursuing postgraduate studies	5.66%	3.23%	5.77%	16.67%	15.22%	10.81%	7.69%	25.00%	33.33%

3.2 Changes in Employment Directions

This paper analyzes the employment directions of graduates from this program using a three-year research scale (2015–2017, 2018–2020, 2021–2023), as shown in Figure 3.

(1) Employment Within the Public Sector

The study found that during the 2015–2017 period, the proportion of graduates employed within the public sector was the highest, at 32.93%, making it the second most important choice after employment outside the public sector. However, from 2018 to 2020, this proportion dropped to 26.72%, indicating a decline in the attractiveness of public sector positions to graduates. By 2021–2023, the proportion of public sector employment further decreased to 15.91%. This may reflect changes in the socio-economic structure, shifts in graduates' employment perspectives, and the increasing difficulty of securing public sector positions. As a result, more graduates are beginning to choose more diversified employment channels rather than limiting themselves to traditional public sector roles.

(2) Pursuing Postgraduate Studies

Pursuing postgraduate studies is an important pathway for graduates to enhance their academic qualifications and career competitiveness. During the 2015–2017 period, the proportion of graduates pursuing postgraduate studies was only 4.79%, remaining at a relatively low level. However, from 2018 to 2020, this proportion significantly increased to 14.50%, reflecting the growing demand for further education among graduates as societal needs for highly educated talent increased. By 2021–2023, the proportion of graduates pursuing postgraduate studies remained stable at 15.91%. This trend indicates

that pursuing postgraduate studies has become one of the significant choices for graduates in this field and has stabilized in recent years.

(3) Employment Outside the Public Sector

Employment outside the public sector has consistently been the primary employment direction for graduates in this field. During the 2015–2017 period, the proportion of employment outside the public sector was 58.08%, dominating the employment landscape. From 2018 to 2020, this proportion decreased to 48.09%, but it remained the main employment choice for graduates. By 2021–2023, the proportion of employment outside the public sector rebounded to 67.05%, indicating its growing importance in the job market. This change suggests that, against the backdrop of diversified socio-economic development in recent years, employment opportunities outside the public sector have continued to increase. Additionally, the relative ease of securing jobs outside the public sector compared to within it has led to stronger employment preferences among graduates.

(4) Unemployment/Freelancing

Unemployment/freelancing reflects the flexibility and autonomy of graduates in the job market. During the 2015–2017 period, the proportion of graduates who were unemployed or engaged in freelancing was 4.19%, remaining at a relatively low level. From 2018 to 2020, this proportion significantly increased to 10.69%. However, by 2021–2023, the proportion of unemployment/freelancing dropped sharply to 1.14%. This change may be related to the economic conditions at the time, the saturation of the job market, and the employment choices of graduates themselves. In situations of economic instability or intense competition in the job market, some graduates may choose to remain unemployed or pursue freelancing to wait for better employment opportunities or engage in self-employment activities based on their interests and capabilities.

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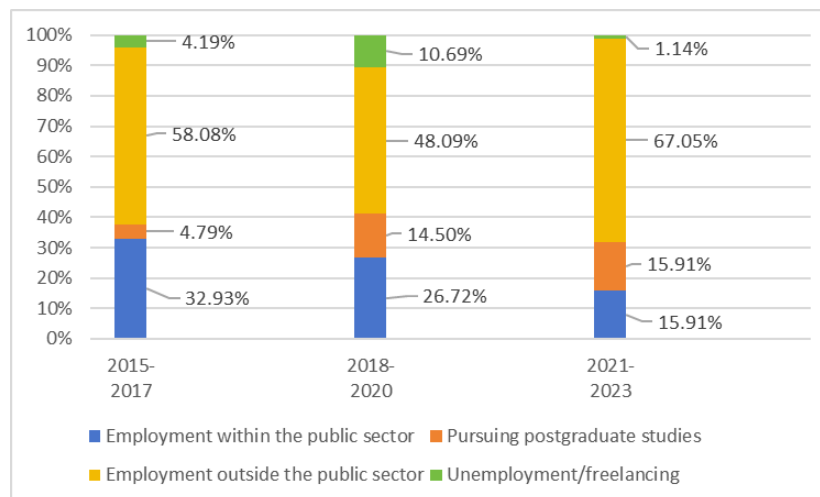


Figure 3: Employment directions of graduates from the Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning program at X university

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Research Conclusions

Through the analysis of the employment situation of graduates from the Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning program at X University in Southwest China, the following conclusions can be

drawn:

(1)Diversification of employment destinations:The employment destinations of graduates from this program encompass various categories, including employment within the public sector (such as government agencies, public institutions, grassroots organizations, and basic education), pursuing postgraduate studies, employment outside the public sector (such as field-related enterprises, low-relevance industry enterprises, and preschool education), and unemployment/freelancing. The proportions of these employment destinations have shown significant trends over different time periods, reflecting the strong adaptability and flexibility of graduates in the job market. They are able to choose suitable employment directions based on their interests, capabilities, and market demands.

(2)Dominance of employment outside the public sector:Although employment within the public sector and pursuing postgraduate studies are favored by some graduates, employment outside the public sector has consistently remained the primary employment destination for graduates in this program, with its proportion increasing in recent years. This indicates that the talent cultivation of this program aligns well with the diversified demands of socio-economic development, allowing graduates to find broad development opportunities in enterprises, social organizations, and other entities outside the public sector.

(3)Shift in employment perspectives:The gradual decline over the years in the proportion of employment within the public sector and the changes in the number of graduates who are unemployed or engaged in freelancing suggest a significant shift in graduates' employment perspectives. They are no longer confined to traditional, stable employment models but instead place greater emphasis on their career development plans, personal interests, and employment quality. They are willing to explore different employment methods and professional fields to maximize their personal value.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned research conclusions, this study proposes the following recommendations to help relevant institutions better respond to changes in graduate employment dynamics, improve the quality of graduate employment and social adaptability, and provide strong support for professional development and societal needs:

(1) Highlight the Unique Orientation of the Program's Training.

As an applied geography-oriented program, it emphasizes enhancing practical capabilities through a geographic platform. Therefore, improving planning skills based on spatial information science distinguishes it from traditional urban planning in engineering and better aligns with the redefinition of planning skills in the context of spatial planning transformation. The focus should be on the organization and governance of land at the macro level, while de-emphasizing detailed design skills.

(2) Integrate Social Educational Resources and Build a "School-Government-Enterprise" Collaboration Platform.

By inviting industry mentors to campus, the "school-government-enterprise" partnership can participate in the entire talent cultivation process, including curriculum design, professional internships, graduation projects, and scientific research exploration. This approach aims to enhance students' understanding of issues, deepen their knowledge, and broaden their industry awareness. Breakthroughs should be sought in areas such as the construction of practical teaching platforms, sharing of course materials, decomposition of government and enterprise tasks, and the regular implementation of teachers' scientific research projects.

(3) Strengthen Practical Ability Training.

In traditional teaching, instructors often prioritize classroom theoretical instruction, while practical teaching is constrained by time, resources, and other subjective and objective conditions. As a result, practical teaching tends to be superficial, with low student engagement and limited effectiveness. Therefore, in the context of the national spatial planning strategy, China's Human Geography and Urban-Rural Planning programs need to strengthen practical ability training based on real-world demands, better achieving the integration of "knowledge and action" to serve local economic development^[8].

(4) Enhance Career Planning and Employment Guidance.

In response to the shift in graduates' employment perspectives, universities should strengthen career planning education, guiding students to choose suitable employment directions based on market demands and personal interests. At the same time, targeted employment guidance services should be provided to

help students develop comprehensively and improve their job-seeking skills.

(5) Monitor Economic and Policy Environment Changes.

Universities should closely monitor the impact of economic conditions and policy adjustments on graduate employment and adjust employment guidance strategies accordingly. For example, during periods of economic instability, support and follow-up for unemployed or freelancing students should be strengthened. When policies change, relevant information should be promptly communicated to students to guide them in making reasonable adjustments to their employment choices.

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