



## Analysis of the Construction of Rural Home-Based Elderly Care Service System

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**Abstract:** As my country's aging problem worsens, more and more attention is being paid to the construction of elderly care services in rural areas. This article aims to investigate the current status, problems, and challenges of rural home care services by analyzing the research literature. The research found that the number of older adults living alone in empty nests in rural areas increases each year, and problems such as inadequate elderly care services, low use of community elderly care facilities, and inadequate medical services are becoming more common. Its importance is increasing. The current rural home care system has many drawbacks. It is recommended to fulfill the federal government's responsibility for community elderly care services, establish urban elderly care services, improve community elderly care services and home care for the elderly, and participate in city- and community-level elderly care services, including the integration of medical and nursing care in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Rural Development; Home-Based Elderly Care; Elderly Care Supply; Countermeasure Suggestions

### 1. Introduction:

The aging population is a global phenomenon that presents significant challenges to societies worldwide, and China is no exception. As demographic shifts continue to reshape the country's social landscape, one of the most pressing issues for policymakers is ensuring adequate care and support for elderly individuals, particularly those living in rural areas. With the rapid pace of urbanization and economic development, rural communities in China are experiencing profound changes in family structures, social networks, and access to essential services, including healthcare and eldercare.

According to statistics from the National Office on Aging, China's elderly population has reached 2.67 billion and is growing by about 8 million each year. By 2035, it is projected that over 30% of the population will be aged 60 or above, marking a significant shift towards a "super-aged" society. Within this demographic landscape, rural areas face unique challenges, including outmigration of younger residents, shrinking family sizes, and limited access to healthcare and social services.

In rural China, where traditional family structures have long been the bedrock of eldercare, the increasing prevalence of elderly individuals in the empty nest and those living alone has strained existing support networks. As adult children migrate to urban centers in search of better economic opportunities, many elderly individuals find themselves without the familial support systems they once relied on. This trend underscores the need for alternative care arrangements and highlights the importance of strengthening community-based care networks and expanding access to essential services.

Additionally, health disparities between urban and rural areas increase the burden of aging in rural communities. Limited access to medical facilities, a shortage of healthcare professionals, and inadequate healthcare coverage further compound the difficulties of aging in rural China. As a result, many elderly individuals struggle to access timely medical care, leading to worsened health outcomes and diminished quality of life. Against this backdrop, the construction of a robust and responsive rural home-based elderly care service system emerges as a critical imperative. By addressing the unique needs and challenges of rural elderly

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individuals, such a system could enhance the quality of life, promote social inclusion, and ensure dignified aging for millions of rural residents. However, achieving this goal requires a coordinated, multifaceted approach encompassing policy reforms, infrastructure development, resource allocation, and community engagement.

In this context, this paper aims to explore the current state of rural home-based elderly care services in China, identify key challenges and shortcomings, and propose strategic recommendations for improvement. By examining the existing landscape and offering actionable insights, this paper seeks to inform policy discourse and catalyze efforts to build a more equitable and sustainable care ecosystem for rural elderly individuals in China.

## 2. Current Situation of Rural Home-Based Elderly Care Services

In China's rural areas, as population aging becomes increasingly prominent, the current state of home-based elderly care services faces several challenges. The growing number of empty-nest and solitary elderly individuals in rural areas has led to instability and inadequacy in the family-based care model. Due to long-standing imbalances in urban-rural development, the supply of elderly care services in rural areas is relatively limited, leaving elderly individuals without adequate services during their care period and unable to fully access community elderly care services (Qin, 2022).

### 2.1 Current Situation of Rural Empty-Nest and Solitary Elderly

According to statistics from the National Aging Office, as of 2023, the number of older adults aged 65 and above in China has reached 217 million, an increase of 63% compared to 2013. The proportion of the elderly population aged 65 and above has risen from 9.70% in 2013 to 15.38% in 2023 (Table 1). It is projected that by around 2035, the number of older adults aged 60 and above will surpass 400 million, accounting for over 30% of the total population, and that the world will enter a stage of severe aging. Meanwhile, the elderly dependency ratio for those aged 65 and above nationwide has reached 21.8%, increasing by 8.7 percentage points since 2013, indicating a significant rise in elderly care pressure (Figure 1). Among the 217 million older adults in China, more than half live alone, including over 46 million rural empty-nest elderly individuals. With the increasing number of rural empty-nest and solitary elderly individuals, as well as the exacerbation of elderly care issues due to factors such as children working away from home or urbanization, the challenges of elderly care are becoming increasingly prominent.

**Table 1:** Statistical Changes in China's Elderly Population from 2013 to 2023

Indicator	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
<b>Population aged 65 and above (in 10,000)</b>	21676	20978	20056	19064	17767	16724	15961	15037	14524	13902	13262
<b>Proportion of population aged 65 and above to total population (%)</b>	15.38%	14.86%	14.20%	13.50%	12.60%	11.90%	11.40%	10.80%	10.50%	10.10%	9.70%
<b>Proportion of male population aged 65 and above to total male population (%)</b>		13.83%	13.20%		11.62%	11.06%	10.59%	10.11%	9.78%	9.41%	9.05%



Proportion of female population aged 65 and above to total female population (%)	15.98 %	15.29 %	13.57 %	12.85 %	12.23 %	11.62 %	11.19 %	10.75 %	10.35 %
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Data Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Note: The proportions of the male and female populations aged 65 and above relative to the total male and female populations, respectively, are estimated from sample survey data, while other data are from population census data.

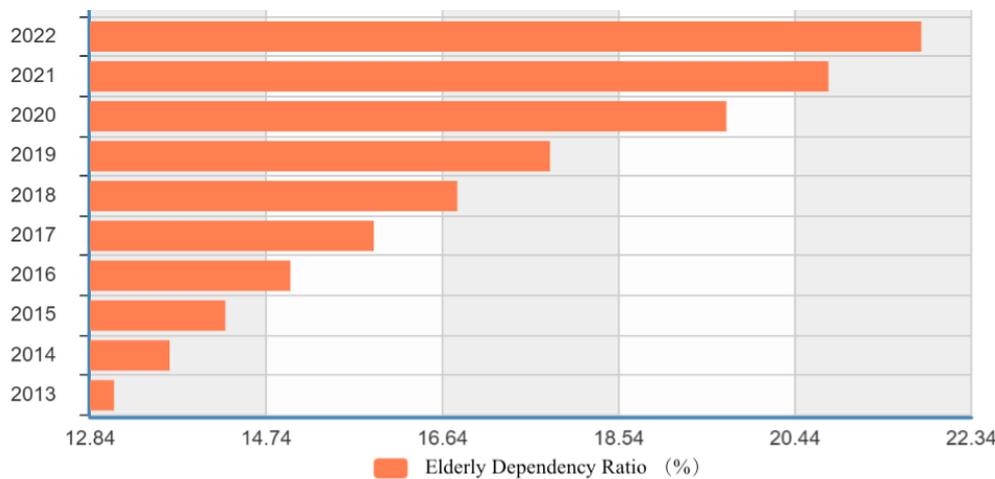


Figure 1: Changes in the Elderly Dependency Ratio of China's Population Aged 65 and Above from 2013 to 2022

Firstly, the weakening of family caregiving ability is evident, as young people migrate for work, leading to a decrease in the number of children in rural households and a reduction in family size, thereby increasing the burden of elderly care within families. Elderly individuals in the empty nest lack daily care and emotional support (Li, 2023). Secondly, there are limited sources of income, as elderly individuals in rural areas generally have low incomes, lack sufficient economic accumulation, and receive low pension benefits, resulting in significant economic challenges in elderly care. Thirdly, rural areas suffer from inadequate medical resources, with high costs for medical consultations and prescriptions for empty-nest elderly individuals. At the same time, those with mobility issues struggle to access timely medical care. The living environment is not conducive to aging, as issues related to the suitability of living spaces, community environments, and social and cultural environments for the elderly are widespread in rural areas, making it difficult for the elderly to travel and engage in activities and posing safety hazards. With societal development, perceptions of elderly care among farmers are changing, influenced by new models of care that challenge traditional beliefs (Han & Liang, 2023; Pan et al., 2022). Finally, the rural aged care system faces financial challenges due to limited budgets and insufficient support for the construction and operation of aged care facilities. These problems have left elderly care services in rural areas incomplete and underdeveloped. Relevant units and the entire society need to work together to solve the problem.

### 2.2 Current State of Rural Home-Based Elderly Care Services Supply

First, as the rural population ages, the demand for elderly care services continues to increase. However, elderly care services are inadequate and face serious challenges. Currently, elderly care services in rural areas are inadequate, and access to specialized resources is restricted, resulting in inadequate services and low rates (Sun,

[2022](#); [Xian, 2021](#)). Second, the small number of nursing homes and hospitals in rural areas makes it challenging to provide quality care and services to the elderly. There is also a shortage of elderly care specialists in rural areas. The lack of elderly care facilities and personnel in rural areas often makes elderly care services inefficient, leading to problems for older adults. This situation prevents medical products and services from meeting the real needs of the elderly ([Su & Wang, 2021](#)). In general, rural elderly care services are weak and cannot meet the needs of homeless older adults.

### **3. Problems in Rural Home-Based Elderly Care Services**

#### **3.1 Insufficient Supply of Elderly Care Services**

Care services for the elderly are still inadequate in rural areas. Although the program is comprehensive, service quality is low, and many older people do not receive good care. Inadequacy of elderly care services in rural areas is an important problem. The lack of nursing homes and home care facilities in many rural areas makes it impossible for the elderly to receive appropriate care and attention ([Li, 2022](#)). Secondly, even some nursing homes are inadequately equipped. Due to a shortage of medical personnel and funding, these institutions cannot provide quality services to the elderly, and the elderly often receive inadequate care. In addition, the needs of the elderly in rural areas are different, and existing elderly care services cannot meet the needs of different age groups.

#### **3.2 Low Utilization Rate of Community Elderly Care Service Facilities**

Inaccessibility of community aged care facilities is a significant problem in rural home aged care services. On the other hand, community care centers for the elderly are not developed enough to meet the real needs of the elderly. On the other hand, less use is also due to the elderly's knowledge and self-confidence in these areas. Fitness, entertainment, and other things make seniors use these places more often. Provide additional services and representation, such as: To address the low use of aged care facilities in rural aged care communities, we need to pay attention to factors such as infrastructure, relationships and support, volunteering, and management. Home care is necessary ([Niu, 2024](#)). To establish and improve the management of aged care services in the community, including the implementation of policies and management to ensure the quality of services and the safety of elderly users.

#### **3.3 Insufficient Medical and Healthcare Service Resources**

Inadequate medical care and poor health are the main problems of rural housing development. Firstly, there is a shortage of medical resources in rural areas. Many rural regions lack adequate medical facilities and healthcare personnel, making it difficult for elderly individuals to access medical care conveniently. Secondly, the medical insurance system in rural areas is relatively weak. Many rural elderly lack health insurance or have low reimbursement rates for medical expenses, resulting in a heavy financial burden. Additionally, due to the vastness of rural areas and the inconvenience of transportation, elderly individuals often need to travel long distances to urban areas for medical treatment, which is highly inconvenient. This issue is particularly challenging for specific groups, such as the disabled elderly and those with chronic diseases, as the lack of adequate medical and healthcare services severely impacts their quality of life ([Guo & Li, 2024](#)).

### **4. Countermeasures for Improving the Rural Home-Based Elderly Care Service System**

#### **4.1 Policy Promotion and Basic Public Service Guarantees**

Policy support and public accountability are key strategies for improving rural housing programs. Based on the existing framework, the government should strengthen the development and implementation of relevant policies and ensure elderly care in rural communities. Currently, the lack of financial support results in inadequate services. The government should allocate special funds to encourage social capital to invest in elderly care companies, increase subsidies for nursing homes in rural areas, and build highways to expand services. Additionally, the government should establish a financial monitoring system and use analytical methods to ensure transparency and effective financial management. The state can determine nursing home service standards, require nursing homes to provide services in accordance with those standards, and conduct monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the government should strengthen nursing staff training and development, improve their resources and services, and ensure that the elderly receive quality care. Home elderly care services make it easy and efficient to provide elderly care. The government can provide support and guidance, promote knowledge development, and create an integrated elderly care service ([Sun, 2022](#)). Through this platform, seniors can share and exchange information, making it easier for them to understand



and choose appropriate elder care services. In addition, the government should strengthen the construction and management of elderly care facilities in rural communities and improve their cost-effectiveness and service quality. stand up. The government can increase investment, reform medical and health services, expand the city's medical and health services, and improve the quality of work. In addition, the government can strengthen cooperation between hospitals and nursing homes, improve services providing medical and nursing care, and provide opportunities for sharing medical services in the care of the elderly.

#### 4.2 Standardized System Construction and Service Network Improvement

Creating service systems and developing service providers is also key to improving rural housing services (Dong, 2021; Liang, 2022). The first is to develop and improve the system for the care of the elderly in rural homes, including service content, quality, and standards, to ensure that the elderly receive high-quality care and that this care adds value. The second is to improve home care services for the elderly in rural communities, improve service facilities and equipment, and improve service and convenience. In addition, to ensure that the elderly receive good care and service, the training and management of service workers should be strengthened to foster professional, service-oriented attitudes. Finally, the government should increase investment in rural home care services, provide greater policy and financial support, and encourage more efficient and effective development of home care infrastructure in rural areas.

#### 4.3 Integration of Urban and Rural Medical and Elderly Care Resources and Market-Based Service System Improvement

The integration of urban and rural medical and elderly care resources, along with improvements to the market-based service system, are critical components of building a rural home-based elderly care service system. Firstly, the integration and sharing of urban and rural medical resources need to be strengthened. Given the relative concentration of urban medical resources, a medical collaboration mechanism can be established to enhance cooperation between urban medical institutions and rural community health service institutions, promoting the sharing and optimal allocation of medical resources. Simultaneously, efforts should be made to improve the medical service capabilities in rural areas, enhancing the professional level and service ability of grassroots medical personnel, thereby providing a solid medical guarantee for rural home-based elderly care services.

Secondly, a market-based home-based elderly care service system should be promoted. Policy measures can be formulated to encourage social capital to enter the elderly care service field, promoting the development of market-based elderly care institutions, and improving service quality and standards (Li, 2020). Additionally, a robust regulatory framework should be established to strengthen the supervision and management of elderly care institutions, ensuring the safety and consistency of home-based elderly care services. Moreover, a diversified elderly care service model can be explored, including family care, community care, and institutional care, to meet the needs of different elderly individuals. Especially in rural areas, the family's role in elderly care can be emphasized. Through government-purchased services, professional elderly care can be provided, while support and training for family caregivers should be prioritized to ensure that rural elderly individuals receive comprehensive careservices.

In summary, it is important to improve rural home care services, policy support, and public accountability. The government should continuously improve the quality and level of elderly care services in rural areas by increasing investments, establishing systems, enhancing services, and integrating health and elderly care services and promoting community participation in elderly care programs, promoting business-oriented development of elderly care programs, providing more choices and good choices for the elderly, and providing quality elderly care services to rural elderly.

#### 5. Conclusion

The challenges facing the rural home-based elderly care service system in China are multifaceted, stemming from rapid population aging, inadequate infrastructure, and resource shortages. This necessitates comprehensive strategies to address these issues and ensure that elderly individuals in rural areas receive the care and support they deserve. One of the primary challenges is the increasing number of elderly individuals in the empty nest and those living alone in rural areas. This demographic shift strains traditional family care structures and underscores the need for alternative care arrangements. Additionally, the lack of adequate

healthcare services and facilities exacerbates the difficulties faced by rural elderly individuals, particularly those with chronic illnesses or disabilities. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach. Firstly, policy promotion and public service guarantees play a pivotal role. Governments must prioritize funding and policy support to improve the accessibility and quality of rural home-based elderly care services. This includes incentivizing private investment, establishing standardized service protocols, and enhancing the training of care personnel.

Furthermore, efforts to bolster community-based care networks are essential. By investing in infrastructure and technology, governments can facilitate the delivery of services closer to home, reducing the need for elderly individuals to travel long distances for care. Additionally, initiatives to improve awareness and trust in community care facilities can help boost utilization rates and ensure that elderly individuals receive the support they need. Integrating medical and elderly care resources is another critical aspect of enhancing rural home-based elderly care services. By fostering collaboration between urban and rural healthcare providers, governments can improve access to medical services for rural elderly individuals. This includes initiatives to strengthen primary care capabilities in rural areas and promote the adoption of telemedicine technologies to bridge geographical barriers.

Carefully improve the level of care in the community. It is recommended to focus on communities, villages, and cities, develop home care services for the elderly, strengthen the formation of professional groups, and provide high-quality, appropriate services to the elderly across many areas. To comprehensively improve the level of social services. It is recommended to focus on communities, villages, and cities, develop home care services for the elderly, strengthen the formation of professional groups, and provide high-quality, appropriate services to the elderly across many areas. In conclusion, while the challenges facing the rural home-based elderly care service system in China are significant, they are not insurmountable. Through strategic investments, policy reforms, and cross-sector collaboration, governments can create a more robust and responsive care ecosystem that meets the diverse needs of rural elderly individuals. By prioritizing the well-being and dignity of older adults, China can ensure that its aging population receives the care and support necessary to age with grace and dignity in its rural communities.

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### **Data availability**

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### **Declarations**

#### **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines, and all necessary approvals were obtained.

#### **Consent for publication**

Not applicable.

#### **Competing interests**

The authors declare no competing interests.

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