WEP Warwick Evans Publishing

International Journal of Social Sciences and Public Administration

ISSN: 3005-9836 (Print), ISSN: 3005-9585 (Online)
Volume 10, Number 11, Year 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.62051/ijsspa.v10n11.03



# Review: Factors and Countermeasures for Jiangsu Graduates' In-Province Retention

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## ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of the national Talent-Strengthening Country strategy and Jiangsu's Talent-Strengthening Province strategy, university graduates serve as core resources underpinning regional innovative development. As a major province in education and economy, Jiangsu has abundant graduate talent reserves. However, it has long faced structural problems including uneven regional distribution of talents, outflow of high-quality talents, and mismatches between university supply and local demand, which constrain the high-quality development of regional talent resources. To explore the key influencing mechanisms of Jiangsu university graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention and improve local talent retention capacity, this paper takes the factors shaping graduates' willingness for in- Jiangsu retention as its research object, and systematically reviews existing literature that multi-dimensionally examines the driving forces and practical barriers affecting graduates' employment choices to stay in Jiangsu.

## KEYWORDS

Jiangsu; University Graduates; Willingness for In-Jiangsu Retention; Factors; Countermeasure.

## 1. SIGNIFICANCE

This review identifies key gaps in domestic scholarship on graduate mobility by synthesising available evidence regarding Jiangsu-based university graduates' in-province employment-retention willingness. Against the backdrop of expanding graduate cohorts and intensifying inter-regional talent competition, extant studies tend to place heavy emphasis on economic drivers, whilst devoting limited consideration to intertwined institutional, socio-cultural and labour-market constraints. This review furnishes context-sensitive insights for policy formulation under Jiangsu's talent-strong-province initiative. It also identifies avenues for future empirical research on provincial-scale graduate retention, with transferable reference value for talent-retention practice across comparable Chinese provinces.

## 2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The talent development strategy represents one of China's core strategic initiatives. The Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China stresses the full implementation of this strategy. Since the value of talent is realized primarily through employment, employment constitutes the most fundamental component of people's livelihood. Employment concerns every household and is ultimately a matter of national strategic importance. [1] As stipulated in The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan: "Foster an employment-friendly development model. Improve employment support and public service systems to stabilize and expand employment for key groups including university graduates, migrant workers, and veterans." In 2024, the number of graduates from general

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higher-education institutions nationwide stood at approximately 11.79 million, of whom more than 730 000 were from Jiangsu Province. In 2025, the national figure reached a new historical high of 12.22 million, exceeding the 10-million mark for four consecutive years, while Jiangsu Province produced 784 000 university graduates that year. Effectively addressing employment challenges constitutes the top priority for talent retention.

The Talent-Strong Province Initiative constitutes a core strategic initiative of Jiangsu Province. As outlined in Jiangsu's Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan, Jiangsu shall advance the coordinated development of its talent-strong province strategy. It will foster strategic scientific and technological talents and build talent clusters for characteristic industries. Talent is the primary resource and the most pivotal driver of modern-economic development. Achieving high-quality and full-employment, as well as attracting and retaining hundreds of thousands of graduates from Jiangsu-based universities, forms an essential guarantee for Jiangsu to implement the talent-strong province strategy and realize its development vision of greater strength, prosperity, cultural richness and environmental beauty.

It is imperative to enhance Jiangsu university graduates of the willingness for in-Jiangsu retention. As important talent resources, university graduates represent a key component in implementing Jiangsu's strategic arrangements for building a talent-strong province. As early as 2023, Anhui Province proposed appointing "employment service specialists" to track labor demand, labor shortages and recruitment conditions among industrial enterprises. The province targeted 1.5 million new employments for university graduates within Anhui by 2025, with the in-province employment retention rate of its local university graduates hitting approximately 75%. [2] According to the latest available data, the retention rate of graduates from general higher-education institutions in Anhui had stabilized at approximately 70% by May 2026. Many provinces have regularly convened exchange meetings on university graduates' in-province employment and joined this regional talent competition. Jiangsu has rolled out a full suite of policies to comprehensively lower living costs for graduates who secure employment and settle in the province. Nevertheless, the graduate retention rate tends to drop within the one-to-two-year window following graduation and generally levels off at 66% two years after graduation. [3] Therefore, under the backdrop of the national talent-strengthening strategy and Jiangsu's provincial talent development initiative, improving university graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention and retention rate has become an inevitable trend for regional high-quality development.

## 3. DEFINITION OF RELEVANT CONCEPTS

Given that existing literature defines and employs relevant concepts ambiguously, including willingness for in-Jiangsu retention, willingness for in-province retention, willingness for in-Jiangsu employment, willingness for in-province employment, and willingness for in-city employment, this study provides preliminary definitions for the concepts adopted in this review prior to further analysis.

Drawing on the definition of college graduates given in 100 Questions on Policies for Promoting Graduate Employment, issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China, the term "Jiangsu college graduates" in this study refers to current-year full-time graduates from regular institutions of higher education (including independent colleges) geographically located in Jiangsu Province. This group includes regular undergraduate and associate-degree students (including higher-vocational-education and second-bachelor's-degree program graduates), as well as master's and doctoral students.

Willingness for in-Jiangsu retention is defined as graduates educated at Jiangsu-based institutions either planning to or having already chosen Jiangsu as their employment destination via three nationally-recognized forms of employment: contract-based employment, non-contract employment, and flexible employment.

Willingness for in-province retention refers to the intention or actual behaviour of graduates enrolled in universities within a province to secure employment in that province. Three types of employment are covered: contractual employment, non-contractual employment, and flexible employment, with the province chosen as their place of employment.

willingness for in-city retention refers to the intention or actual behaviour of graduates enrolled in universities within a city to secure employment in that city. Three types of employment are covered: contractual employment, non-contractual employment, and flexible employment, with the city chosen as their place of employment.

# 4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Against the dual imperatives of the national talent-strong country strategy and Jiangsu's talent-strong province strategy, Jiangsu boasts a large pool of graduate talent befitting its status as a major educational and economic province. Nevertheless, challenges remain, including uneven regional talent distribution and the outflow of high-caliber high-level personnel. Such conditions highlight the project's considerable theoretical value and strong practical implications.

## 4.1 Theoretical Significance

First and foremost, it addresses the existing literature's insufficient attention to talent mobility in Jiangsu. To date, no National Social Science Fund or National Natural Science Foundation projects have produced direct research outputs on this specific issue. Domestic studies on graduate employment intentions have largely concentrated on northeastern and southwestern provinces or single-city samples, leaving a notable gap in research on economically advanced coastal provinces. In particular, studies that adopt a sub-regional lens-differentiating among Southern, Central, and Northern Jiangsu-to examine graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention especially scarce.

In addition, this study fills the gap in existing research regarding insufficient attention to macro and meso influencing factors such as talent policies. Current scholarly studies mostly focus on micro-level factors at the individual and household levels, while paying inadequate attention to the coupling effects of macro and meso variables including policies and industries. This study systematically integrates multi-dimensional variables covering policy environment, industrial supply and university cultivation. It focuses on analyzing the internal mechanism through which multiple factors including talent policies jointly shape Jiangsu university graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention, and addresses the limitations of extant research, namely insufficient regional stratified analysis and inadequate exploration of the policy dimension.

Furthermore, this study enriches the empirical findings regarding regional talent mobility and local university employment policies. It provides both theoretical references and a methodological paradigm for future research on talent retention in other economically developed provinces with comparable development levels.

## 4.2 Practical Significance

Firstly, this study builds an empirical evidence base for refining Jiangsu's talent-retention policies. By identifying the core drivers behind Jiangsu university graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention, it pinpoints structural gaps across three dimensions: existing talent-retention policies, industrial job supply, and urban supporting services (e.g., housing and settlement support). The findings generate actionable references for provincial and municipal governments to recalibrate household registration facilitation, entrepreneurship subsidies, and graduate employment incentives, so as to achieve more targeted retention of young talent.

Secondly, this study delivers concrete human-capital support for Jiangsu's talent-strong province strategy. By clarifying pathways to optimize the local employment ecosystem and expand in-province employment channels, this research helps ease short-term employment pressure on graduates, consolidate the youth talent pipeline, and redress spatial imbalances in talent distribution. These outcomes directly generate tangible talent stock support for Jiangsu's high-quality economic development.

Thirdly, this study serves as a practical lever for the integrated advancement of education, science and talent development. Its empirical insights enable universities to recalibrate academic program offerings, deepen industry-academia collaboration, and upgrade career-guidance systems, thereby aligning talent cultivation with regional industrial demand. Such alignment furthers Jiangsu's dual goals of optimizing intra-provincial talent allocation and sustaining high-quality socioeconomic growth.

## 5. LITERATURE REVIEW

As of 18 August 2026, few direct empirical studies have specifically examined the determinants of Jiangsu university graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention or put forward corresponding policy responses. Nevertheless, a substantial body of related scholarship provides a solid analytical foundation for this study, including research on provincial-level retention willingness, municipal-level local-employment intentions, and intra-provincial mobility choices. Relevant literature is reviewed in the following sections.

A keyword search for "staying to work in Jiangsu" was performed in the CNKI China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database as of 18 June 2026. Six journal articles were retrieved, while no closely-related doctoral or master's theses were found. Listed chronologically: Liu Meijuan and Xu Jie (2023), Factors Influencing Graduates' Employment Retention in Jiangsu and Policy Responses; Qiu Meiqin and Zhou Liya (2024), An Analysis of Current Jiangsu College Graduates' Employment Retention in the Province; Xu Yafeng (2024), Dilemmas and Prospects of Integrated Development for Taiwan Youth in Mainland China under the New Normal: A Su-Tai Youth Exchange Perspective; Bai Lan (2025), Strategies to Enhance Employment Retention Intentions among Higher Vocational Graduates in Jiangsu; Yan Wei et al. (2025), Determinants of Postgraduates' Employment in Their Host-Institution Province and Policy Implications; and Gu Xin et al. (June 2026), Why "Stay in Jiangsu": Internal Mechanisms and Policy Responses Shaping Graduates' Regional Employment Choices.

Among the aforementioned studies on the in-province employment retention of university graduates in Jiangsu, from the perspective of research focus, Xu Yafeng, Bai Lan, and Yan Wei examined the factors affecting graduates' retention in Jiangsu and put forward coping strategies, targeting young Taiwanese people, vocational college graduates, and postgraduates respectively. Their research subjects show distinctive innovativeness. In terms of research value, Liu Meijuan, Yan Wei, Qiu Meiqin and other scholars have carried out empirical studies with high reference value. Specifically, Liu et al. analysed the employment retention of graduates from the 2019, 2020 and 2021 cohorts based on data from the Jiangsu Graduate Employment Survey Report. They pointed out that graduates' willingness to stay and work in Jiangsu "is associated with regional industrial structure, higher education resources, student origin composition and disciplinary distribution in Jiangsu"[4]. Furthermore, they proposed countermeasures from three dimensions: government, universities and enterprises. Yan Wei et al. surveyed graduating postgraduates from Nanjing Forestry University between 2021 and 2024. Their findings indicate that universities can convert Jiangsu's institutional policy dividends and industrial comparative advantages into sustainable talent retention momentum. Through systematic improvements in discipline construction, educational resource allocation, categorized group support, and value cultivation, higher education institutions can continuously provide intellectual support for regional innovation-driven economic development. [5] Qiu et al.

analysed data from the dynamic monitoring of graduates' in-province and out-of-province mobility conducted by the Jiangsu Strategy and Development Research Centre, covering university graduates of 2021, 2022 and 2023. Their research proposes to "upgrade industrial and supply chains to create more job opportunities…strengthen breakthroughs in scientific and technological innovation to attract and cultivate high-end talents". [6]

Research on university graduates' in-province employment retention:A topic search of "university graduates" OR "college students" AND "in-province employment" was conducted using the advanced search function of the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) full-text journal database. After removing irrelevant records, 69 academic journal articles (non-core journal papers) and 15 master's theses were retained. The publication trend of journal articles on this topic shows that relevant research first emerged in 2018, reached its peak in 2023, and has gradually declined thereafter. The earliest relevant work is a current-affairs news article Promoting the Great Wilderness Spirit, Serving Heilongjiang's Development, and Fully Facilitating Graduates' In-Province Employment, published in China University Students Employment in 2018. The most-cited journal paper is Liu (2019), Research on Countermeasures to Boost In-province Employment and Entrepreneurship of University Graduates in Heilongjiang Province, published in Contemporary Education Practice and Teaching Research, with 13 citations. The paper with the highest download count is Zhang (2022), Study on In-province Employment Willingness and Influencing Factors of Students from Agricultural Universities in Jilin Province, published in Heilongjiang Science, which has 1414 downloads. In her master's thesis, Ou Yue constructs a model of university graduates' in-province employment retention willingness specifically from the perspective of talent policies, and empirically explores the mechanism through which provincial talent policies shape graduates' in-province employment retention willingness[7]. This work carries certain research value.

Existing literature on university graduates' in-province employment retention covers a wide range of provincial contexts, including Shandong, Henan, Anhui, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Guizhou, Xinjiang, and Hainan. Overall, both journal articles and master's theses in this field predominantly focus on graduate retention in Northeast China, which constitutes more than 70 percent of total relevant studies. This imbalance indicates a clear geographical research gap: current scholarship is concentrated on northeastern provinces, while empirical evidence targeting southeastern coastal regions remains insufficient. Existing literature on university graduates' in-province employment covers diverse provincial research contexts across China, including Shandong, Henan, Anhui, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Guizhou, Xinjiang, and Hainan. Overall, journal articles and master's theses in this field are heavily concentrated on graduate employment retention in Northeast China, accounting for over 70% of all relevant studies. This uneven distribution reveals a prominent geographical research gap: extant scholarship overwhelmingly focuses on northeastern provincial regions, while empirical research targeting southeastern coastal provinces remains inadequate and underdeveloped. Against the national strategic backdrop of strengthening the country through talent development, it is imperative to enrich and deepen research on graduate employment retention in southeastern coastal areas. Several highly representative and informative studies provide solid theoretical and empirical references for this research. Zheng Yunpeng and Huang Ruihua (2023) published A Brief Analysis of Strategies to Promote College Students' Employment and Entrepreneurship in Their Home Provinces in Sichuan Labor and Social Security. Zhao Mingju et al. (2024) contributed Research and Practice on Promoting Provincial Employment Retention from the Perspective of Career Education in Local Engineering Colleges: A Case Study of Jilin Province to Journal of Jilin Institute of Chemical Technology. Yang Yibin (2024) published An Empirical Study on College Students' Local-Retention Willingness and Its Influencing Factors in Journal of Mudanjiang Normal University.

Sub-provincial studies investigate graduates' urban retention willingness for specific Jiangsu cities: Nanjing, Changzhou, Huai'an, Yancheng and Xuzhou. Xue Lipeng[8] et al. (2017) studied Nanjing-oriented employment-retention willingness based on samples from Nanjing Audit University.

Chen Yan [9] (2024) empirically examined retention willingness in Changzhou via a questionnaire of 1 350 students across three local universities. Zhu Shasha[10] (2024) analyzed graduate retention in Huai'an from the perspective of governmental functional performance. Chen Muhua [11] (2025) examined urban-retention willingness in Yancheng, drawing samples from key provincial normal universities within the city. Zhu Yuxia et al. (2026) conducted a questionnaire survey among college graduates in Yancheng. They identified personal-, family-, and social-level factors shaping graduates' local-employment intentions and put forward a four-tiered countermeasure system: Government level: Orient policies toward graduates' practical needs to construct a precise, multi-tiered support system; University level: Align talent cultivation with Yancheng's industrial development priorities to dynamically optimize academic disciplines and course offerings; Enterprise level: Improve remuneration, welfare benefits and career-development environments to boost job attractiveness; City level: Upgrade public services and foster a positive urban image to build a livable and employment-friendly environment [12].

Existing studies on university graduates' urban employment retention willingness outside Jiangsu Province cover multiple provincial-level administrative regions and prefecture-level cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Yantai, Shenyang, Changchun, Xiamen, Quanzhou, Fuxin, Jiaozuo, Daqing, Luoyang, and Liaoyang. The extant literature mainly targets cities in the Beijing–Shanghai–Guangzhou (BSG) cluster, Northeast China, and Southwest China, with most empirical analyses focusing on regions featuring polarized economic development. Specifically, studies on graduate employment retention within the BSG cluster account for approximately 40% of relevant literature (including master's theses), while studies on urban retention willingness in Northeast China make up around 19%. In their 2012 paper Investigation and Analysis of Factors Influencing the Intention of Undergraduates in Beijing Universities to Stay in Beijing for Employment, Zhou Shi et al. surveyed undergraduates from 26 Beijing-based universities and identified five core influencing factors. Their results show that higher expected income correlates positively with local-retention intention. In addition, students aiming for jobs in government agencies, public institutions, state-owned enterprises or foreign-funded enterprises are more likely to stay in Beijing, and graduates from regions adjacent to Beijing display the strongest retention willingness. [13] Based on a survey of non-local students who had resided in Shanghai for no more than five years, Niu Xing et al. (2022) found a significant positive correlation between newly-employed graduates' perceived housing affordability in Shanghai and their long-term urban-residence intention. [14]

## 6. RESEARCH SUMMARY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In summary, extant domestic scholarship on this topic falls into three major research strands. The first consists of foundational theoretical explorations of Jiangsu university graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention, focusing on its conceptual definition, intrinsic connotations and theoretical foundations. The second features growing empirical research, including status-quo investigations, determinant analyses, and countermeasure optimization for graduates' retention intentions at provincial, municipal and Jiangsu-specific levels. The third refers to emerging interdisciplinary research perspectives integrating insights from education, economics and other related disciplines.

Extant domestic scholarship on this topic exhibits four salient features. First, indirect investigations far outnumber direct empirical studies. Second, empirical research dominates over theoretical-oriented inquiries. Third, extant literature is heavily concentrated in economically-developed megacities (e.g., Beijing, Shanghai) and northern remote regions (e.g., the three northeastern provinces: Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang). By contrast, studies targeting southeastern coastal provinces remain notably scarce. Fourth, single-discipline research remains prevalent, whereas interdisciplinary work is comparatively limited. Specifically, abundant outputs stem from sociology and education, while contributions from psychology and other relevant disciplines are relatively sparse.

To elaborate, the existing body of literature on this subject is constrained by three principal limitations.

To begin with, empirical investigations explicitly targeting Jiangsu university graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention are virtually absent. Extant scholarship mostly focuses on related themes, such as provincial- or municipal-level graduate retention in other regions, rather than examining this specific research subject. Moreover, robust theoretical frameworks are markedly under-represented; the vast majority of publications are empirically oriented. In terms of publication quality, non-core journal articles and postgraduate theses are abundant, while outputs published in core journals remain sparse, limited to only a handful of papers.

Furthermore, existing empirical studies suffer from insufficient methodological rigor, homogeneous research subjects, and a lack of interdisciplinary perspectives. On the one hand, survey-based research still lacks standardization and scientific rigor, which leads to sub-optimal empirical quality. On the other hand, research samples suffer from poor representativeness and limited diversity. Most existing samples are sourced from students at general undergraduate institutions, while students from higher-vocational colleges are only sparsely covered. To date, no relevant studies have targeted students from private universities or independent colleges. Moreover, interdisciplinary research on this topic remains insufficient in both breadth and depth, calling for further enrichment and development.

Finally, regional research distribution lacks adequate balance, especially for southeastern coastal provinces, where relevant empirical work needs to be further advanced. Extant literature shows an unbalanced research-focus pattern: existing outputs concentrate heavily on northeastern and southwestern provinces together with provincial-level municipalities, whereas studies targeting southeastern coastal provinces and their cities remain scarce. Against the national strategic backdrop of talent-driven development, this pronounced regional imbalance in research coverage calls for effective remediation.

## 7. CONCLUSION

To begin with, strengthen direct theoretical explorations of influencing factors and countermeasures concerning Jiangsu university graduates' willingness for in-Jiangsu retention, and improve overall research rigor.Furthermore, empirical studies need higher scientific standards. Survey-based methodologies ought to be more rigorous and standardized.Finally, diversify research samples and expand interdisciplinary research perspectives. Future analyses should cover postgraduate students at master's and doctoral levels, undergraduates from private universities, and higher-vocational-college students. Meanwhile, multidisciplinary insights from psychology, education and other relevant disciplines should be further integrated.Last but not least, promote balanced regional research, with special emphasis on empirical work targeting southeastern coastal provinces and cities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding: This paper is a phased research outcome of the Jiangsu Provincial Universities Philosophy and Social Science Research Project. Project name: Investigation and Research on the Sense of Gain of Ideological and Political Courses in Independent Colleges Based on the OBE Concept; Approval No.: 2022SJSZ1190.

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