



# "Forced Labor" Or "Pursuit of A Better Life"?

An Investigation of Xinjiang Minority Workers' Employment in  
Guangdong, China

By Nilufer Gheyret<sup>1</sup>, Ning Chen<sup>2</sup>

March 2021

---

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Gheyret is visiting research fellow at the Institute for Communication and Borderland Governance, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China. She can be reached at [niluobaier@qq.com](mailto:niluobaier@qq.com)

<sup>2</sup> Ms. Ning Chen is visiting research fellow at the Institute for Communication and Borderland Governance, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China. She can be reached at [Chen.A.Ning@hotmail.com](mailto:Chen.A.Ning@hotmail.com)

# Contents

## Executive Summary 3

## I. Research Background and Questions 1

## II. Research Findings 2

### *1. Why are We Here? 2*

- a. To See the Outside World 4
- b. Higher Income 5
- c. Introductions from Family and Friends 10

### *2. Daily Life of Workers 12*

- a. A Day at Work 13
- b. Rest Days and Holidays 18
- c. Long Holidays for Family Reunions 21

### *3. The Significance of Working in Other Provinces for Xinjiang workers 21*

- a. Source of Income 22
- b. Broadening One's Horizon 25
- c. Improving Language & Vocational Skills 28
- d. Children's Education 33

### *4. The Future Plans of the Workers from Xinjiang 34*

- a. Continuing to Work for More Years 35
- b. Settle-down 37
- c. Coming Back Home to Start a Business 37

## III. Conclusion 39

## Executive Summary

In April 2020, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute published a report entitled "Uyghurs for Sale: "Re-education," Forced Labor and Surveillance beyond Xinjiang, which, through second-hand data such as satellite imagery, Chinese documents, and media reports, denigrates the Chinese government's labor transfer policy as an extension of "forced labor" and so-called "re-education camps". The slander that "minorities in Xinjiang are subject to 'forced labor' in inland companies" directly prompted the author to conduct a field investigation into the allegations of "forced labor" in person. This research investigated five companies in Guangdong Province that employ Xinjiang workers, interviewed a total of 70 workers, including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Tajiks (the interviewee is free to choose the interview language they are comfortable with), and participated in their daily work and life. This research finds that:

In terms of the reasons for working outside Xinjiang, all Xinjiang workers in these five companies came to Guangdong out of personal considerations: including the agreeable natural environment, high salary, high-quality education for their kids, introduced by family and friends, or as an opportunity to broaden their horizons;

In terms of work, the labor rights of Xinjiang ethnic minority workers in these five companies have been fully guaranteed, such as working 8 hours a

day, make-up rest days and extra pay for extending working hours due to the need for production and operation, rest and vacation on statutory holidays, and social insurance;

In terms of life, Xinjiang workers have the right to freedom of religious belief, the right to use their language and writings, the freedom to choose their residence, etc... As to the religious dietary customs of Xinjiang workers, the five companies hired ethnic cooks to prepare halal food.

Working outside Xinjiang has many positive effects on Xinjiang workers, including boosting the income, broadening their horizons, changing their ideas, improving language ability and vocational and technical skills, and giving their children better education, enhancing the status of women, etc. In terms of future plans, affected by the experience of working outside Xinjiang, Xinjiang workers mainly have three different directions, such as continuing to make more money in these companies, returning to their hometowns to start their own businesses, and settling down in Guangdong Province.

In general, working outside Xinjiang is workers' own choice to pursue a better life. The rights of ethnic minorities have been fully guaranteed. The experience of working outside Xinjiang has a lot of positive effects for Xinjiang workers.

## I. Research Background and Questions

In April 2020, during the field research in Xinjiang, we came across a research report produced by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute entitled "Uyghurs For Sale: 'Re-education', Forced Labor and Surveillance Beyond Xinjiang" (hereinafter referred to as "the report"). Through the interpretation of second-hand data, such as publicly available documents, satellite images, academic research and media reports, and a case study of three companies that hire Xinjiang Uyghur workers, the report argues that "sufficient evidence" is suggesting that Xinjiang Uyghurs and other Muslim minority ethnic workers, under the guidance of the Chinese government from 2017 to 2019,

1. were part of the "forced labor" program in inland companies as a continuation of "re-education."

2. were "closely monitored, lived in guarded dormitories and restricted free movement" while working in inland companies.

3. "had no freedom of religious belief, rest and vacation, and were forced to learn *Putonghua* and received ideological education outside the working hours." The report argues that some factories in China are hiring forced Uyghur labor under the country's labor transfer program, which "pollutes" the global supply chain.<sup>3</sup>

Being native of Xinjiang and social science researchers, the report's allegations are serious and shocking. We believe that in today's world, any form of "forced labor" is unacceptable. "Forced labor" is not in line with the requirements of China's relevant laws and regulations<sup>4</sup>, nor can it enjoy moral support. The report stated that Xinjiang

---

<sup>3</sup> Vicky Xiuzhong Xu, Danielle Cave, Dr James Leibold, Kelsey Munro and Nathan Ruser. Uyghurs for sale: 'Re-education', forced labour and surveillance beyond Xinjiang, ASPI, Canberra, 1 March 2020, online.

<sup>4</sup> 国务院新闻办公室于2020年9月17日发布《新疆的劳动就业保障》白皮书，指出《中华人民共和国宪法》《中华人民共和国劳动法》《中华人民共和国劳动合同法》《中华人民共和国就业促进法》《中华人民共和国社会保险法》《中华人民共和国妇女权益保障法》《中华人民共和国残疾人保障法》等法律法规，《新疆维吾尔自治区实施〈中华人民共和国就业促进法〉办法》《新疆维吾尔自治区实施〈劳动保障监察条例〉办法》《新疆维吾尔自治区职工劳动权益保障条例》《新疆维吾尔自治区实施〈中华人民共和国

minority workers have become "forced labor," which prompted us to conduct field research on this topic.

Specifically, this research uses focus group interview, in-depth interview, participatory observation, and other methods to investigate five companies (including the two companies mentioned in the Australian report) that employ minority workers from Xinjiang in Guangdong Province. In this research, 70 minority workers from Xinjiang, including Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik, were interviewed (interviewees are free to choose the interview language). Besides, we also observed the daily work and life of minority workers from Xinjiang in five companies. Our research questions are as follows:

1. Why do ethnic minorities from Xinjiang work in inland companies?
2. How about the working and living conditions of ethnic minorities from Xinjiang working in inland companies?
3. What is the significance of working in inland companies for minority workers from Xinjiang?
4. What are the future plans for these minority workers?

Guided by the above questions, this research demonstrates the perspectives of minority workers from Xinjiang, restores the real situation of Xinjiang workers working in inland companies, and provides a local view for the research on Xinjiang migrant workers.

## **II. Research Findings**

### **1. Why are We Here?**

According to the Australian report, Xinjiang minority workers are coerced into working in inland companies rather than out of free choice. Therefore, the first thing we investigated is that why minority workers from Xinjiang work in Guangdong

---

国妇女权益保障法》办法》《新疆维吾尔自治区实施〈中华人民共和国残疾人保障法〉办法》等地方性法规规章，为公民平等享有劳动就业权利提供了坚实法治保障。

Province? This research found that all minority workers from Xinjiang in these five companies make their own choices to work in Guangdong Province. There are many reasons why they chose to work in inland companies, including being attracted by the agreeable natural environment and higher income, hoping to join family and friends, expecting to provide better education for their children, consolidating and learning new skills, broadening their horizon, etc.

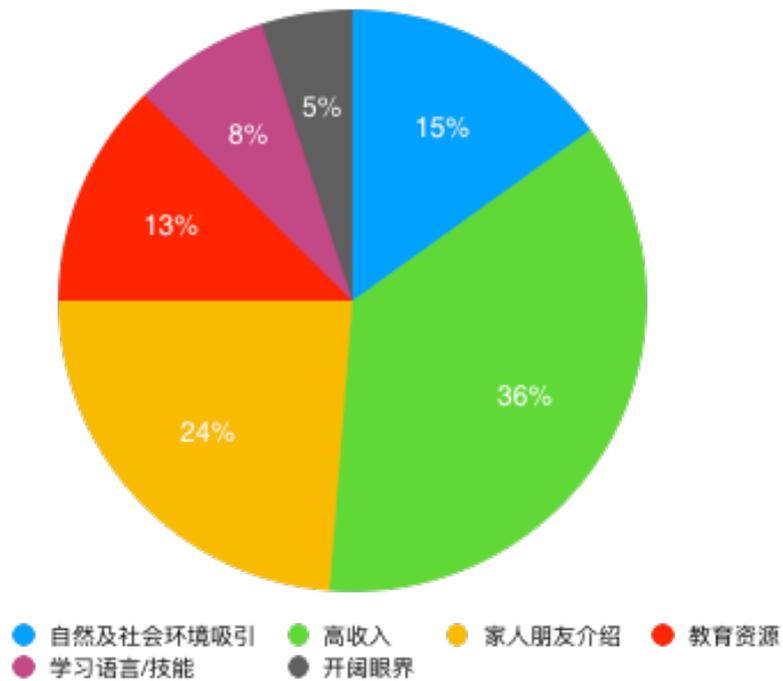


Figure 1: Proportion of Various Reasons for Minority Workers from Xinjiang to Work in Guangdong Companies

Three reasons were mentioned most in our interview: the natural and social environment attracts 15% of the interviewees, 36% of them are attracted by high income, 24% of them are introduced by family and friends, educational resources attract 13% of them, 8% of them are attracted by learning language and skills, and 5% of them are expected to take this opportunity to broaden their horizon, which is also analyzed in the aspect of social environment attraction.

#### a. To See the Outside World

Push and Pull Theory in demography holds that under the condition of market economy and free flow of population, the reason for migration is that people can improve their living conditions through relocation. Therefore, the factors that improve the living conditions of migrants in the inflow areas become the pulling force, while the unfavorable social and economic conditions in the outflow area become the pushing force. These two forces act on the migration together.<sup>5</sup> The research found that the better social and economic conditions and more agreeable natural environment in inland provinces are the "pull" to attract minority workers. In contrast, the relatively low income and harsh natural environment in their homelands are the "push" for their initiative to work in inland companies.

*Interviewee No. 1 (Kyrgyz): "We have to sign up by ourselves. Not all of us have the opportunity to come. In my childhood, when I heard about the inland, I always think about the outside world. When knowing that I could go there, I was very happy, and I could finally see the place I was longing for when I was a child. I remember how happy I was when the announcement said, 'you can go to the inland.'"*

*Interviewee No. 2 (Tajik): "I am from Yarkant County, Kashgar. After graduating from Xinjiang Agricultural University, majoring in electric power, I came here for an internship first. On the one hand, I want to raise my income, and on the other hand, I want to see the world and broaden my horizon. The most important thing is to feel the development here."*

*Interviewee No. 3 (Kazakh): "I had a dream of going to the seaside, and then I heard that I could come to Guangdong to work, so I signed up. During the holiday, I went to Shenzhen to see the sea, and I want to go to Hainan in the future. "*

*Interviewee No. 4 (Uyghur): "In Hotan Prefecture, I don't know if you have been there, but it is very dusty. The dust in Hotan Prefecture is terrible, while Guangdong*

---

<sup>5</sup> 李强. 影响中国城市流动人口的推力与拉力因素分析. 中国社会科学, 2003(1):125-136.

*is so clean. I haven't stepped on dirt roads here. It's warm and humid all the year-round, so I don't need to use facial lotion."*

When most interviewees talked about how they told people about their work experience in inland provinces after returning to their hometown, they would mention that the social development and natural environment in the inland are what they would especially praise. Besides, all interviewees said that they would talk to their relatives and friends in their hometown about the competitive salary and relatively easy workload of their companies and suggested they work outside Xinjiang if they had the opportunity.

#### b. Higher Income

The after-tax income of 474 minority workers from Xinjiang in five companies surveyed by the research is between 4,500 yuan per month and 5,500 yuan per month. The average monthly income is 5,010 yuan. Among them, 35% of the workers are paid 4,500 yuan per month, 40% are paid 5,000 yuan per month, 19% are paid 5,500 yuan per month, and 6% of the workers in the other two companies are paid 6,500 yuan per month (with more overtime and night shifts or requiring higher technical skills), at the same time, five companies hired ethnic minority cooks from Xinjiang. The average salary of these cooks is 3,500 yuan per month. That is to say, the annual income of ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang is about 49,500 yuan to 71,500 yuan, or 55,110 yuan per person (based on 11 months of work in a year, because workers have one month to go home for vacation every year). Even the lowest-paid cook can earn 38,500 yuan per year.

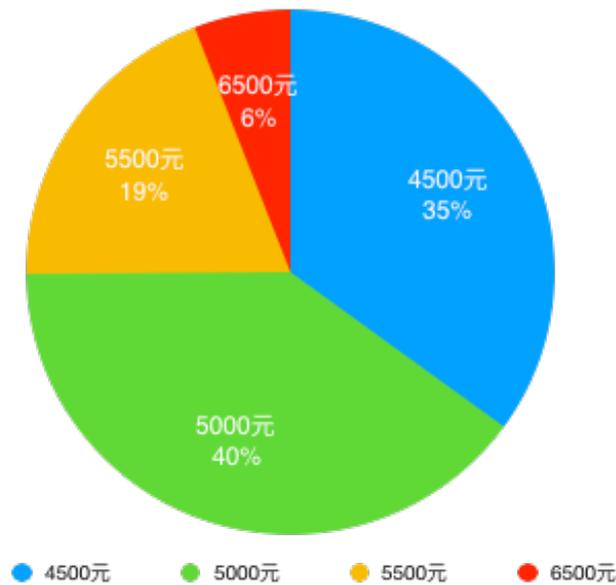


Figure 2: The Income of Minority Workers from Xinjiang in Guangdong Province

部门	姓名	工号	基本工资	平日加班	周六日加班	平日加班	基本工资	平日加班	周六日加班	平日加班	加班补贴	其他	一	二	三	四	五	六	七	绩效工资	扣款	代扣	伙食费	房租	水电	其他扣款	社会保险	住房公积金	缺勤类型及时间	合计	备注
阿卜	96591	600	20.8	68.3	14.0	1591	945	2097				1040	298	497	100				6577	6577	47	50	50				5	6425			

Figure 3: The Salary Slip of Minority Workers from Xinjiang in a Company in Guangdong Province in August 2020 Shows that the Actual Salary for that month was 6,425 yuan

According to the Statistical Communique on the National Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, in 2019, the residents' per capita disposable income was 23,103 yuan. That of urban residents was 34,664, and of rural residents was 13,122.<sup>6</sup> It is not difficult to see that the per capita annual income of these minority workers in Guangdong is far higher than the per capita disposable income of rural residents in their hometowns and urban residents. The

<sup>6</sup> 新疆维吾尔自治区统计局：《2019年新疆维吾尔自治区国民经济和社会发展统计公报》.2020年04月02日，[http://district.ce.cn/newarea/roll/202004/02/t20200402\\_34604870\\_2.shtml](http://district.ce.cn/newarea/roll/202004/02/t20200402_34604870_2.shtml).

attraction of high income has become one of the main reasons why minority workers from Xinjiang choose to work in inland companies.

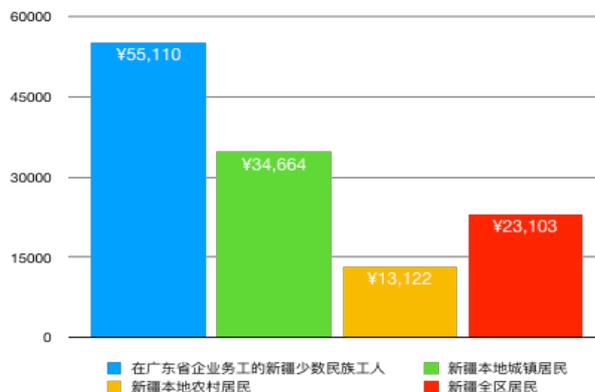


Figure 4: Income Comparison between Minority Workers from Xinjiang in Guangdong Province and Residents in Xinjiang

*Interviewee No. 5 (Uyghur): "I came to the inland with my husband in 2018. When I heard the news of recruiting people to work in inland provinces, I was particularly interested. I worked as a waiter in a restaurant in our county, with a monthly salary of 2000 yuan, and my husband was an apprentice of gold ornaments. You should know that the apprentice didn't have much salary, and the salary was 1500 yuan at most, so we didn't have any savings. At that time, I heard that the inland salary was very high, and I was told that the minimum monthly salary was 4000 yuan. So, my husband and I signed up. When I first came to the inland, each person's salary could be more than 4,000 yuan. I have worked for three years. Now I earn more than 5,000 yuan a month, and sometimes 5,300 yuan."*

*Interviewee No. 6 (Kyrgyz): "In Aketao, we are just herding sheep in the mountains. But there are eight people in my family, so we don't have that many sheep to graze. As I didn't have much schooling, I could only do odd jobs and manual jobs. Manual work is not as comfortable and clean as working in a factory, and manual work can earn me 150 yuan a day, but it is not easy to find a job, so we have to go to the market every day to grab work. When they were hiring people, they told us that the minimum salary was 4,500 yuan, and after signing the contract, I came to work in*

*Guangdong. Now my salary is higher, and my work is easy. I can make at least 5,000 yuan a month. "*

*Interviewee No.7 (Tajik): "I've been here for almost a month. I've heard from my friends before that the work here is good and the income is high. This time I came here with my wife. Last month's salary was not bad, plus the night shift fee, it was 4500 yuan. "*



Figure 5: A worker from Hotan, Xinjiang, looks at his salary slip in the production workshop

Besides, minority workers from Xinjiang also inquire about the salary and job situation of various companies among their relatives and friends and make their own choices to work in companies with higher economic income or with the work content they prefer.



Figure 6: A Tajik worker from Xinjiang is telling about her experience of working in Guangdong after leaving her job at an electronics factory in Qingdao

*Interviewee No.8 (Kyrgyz): "I used to work in a shoe factory in Dongguan. Because of the epidemic, the factory hasn't started well in the past few months. After working for two days, we had to rest for three days, and our income was suddenly not as good as before. I have relatives in the factory here. My wife's brother is here. I asked him about the salary here and then came here last week. Four people came with me."*

*Interviewee No.9 (Uyghur): "We (husband and wife) started working in a place called AH. It was okay there, but we heard that the salary here was better, so we contacted a friend who works in this factory. After working in AH for half a year, we resigned and came here."*

*Interviewee No.10 (Tajik): "I came out to work in 2016. At first, I went to work in the electronics factory in Qingdao because my brother worked there. Although the salary was not bad, which was more than 4000 yuan a month, and the work content was simple, which was all procedural, I still didn't like it very much after I went there."*

*It was too boring for me to sit all the time and wrap the copper wire with my head down. Anyway, I didn't like it, so I contacted my friends here. The position here is more flexible. I can chat with my friends while I'm working."*

*Interviewee No.11 (Uyghur): "I came here last month. There are 13 newcomers recently, 10 of whom worked in the factory in Fuzhou before. They told me that the factory there pays a low salary, only 2,800 yuan per month, so they contacted me here. My other two friends and I worked in a factory that produces air conditioners before. The salary over there is almost the same as that of this factory, but the work here is easier, and we work in air-conditioned places. Besides, there are more young people here, so most of us can go out together during our free time."*

In observing company A's production line, the company's personnel department manager showed us around. When two minority workers from Xinjiang saw the manager arrived at the production line, they stopped their work and asked whether the factory had recruited people recently. They said that three workers working in Dongguan wanted to work here. The head of the personnel department said they could contact him tomorrow and left a contact number. When having a meal with minority workers in company B's staff cafeteria, the worker we were chatting with received a phone call. He told us that he needed to go to the station to pick up a friend who had just resigned from another company, so he had to leave.

### c. Introductions from Family and Friends

The research found that another reason minority workers from Xinjiang work in inland companies is that they are influenced by family and friends who have working experience outside Xinjiang. Their working experience in the inland arouses people's interests in their hometowns. On the other hand, as information comes from trusted people, ethnic minorities in Xinjiang are more willing to work outside Xinjiang. Our research shows that nearly two-thirds of the workers came to work in inland together with their spouses, family members, or friends.

*Interviewee No.12 (Kyrgyz): "I came here in June last year. I have friends who have worked here before. Most of us who have worked in the inland are bosses now. After graduating from high school, I had nothing to do, so I wanted to go inland. I have been working here for nearly two years. When I go back to Aktau on vacation, I'm not used to it and even want to come back early. "*

*Interviewee No.13 (Kyrgyz): "There are nine people in our family, five of whom are in this factory. At first, my father and older brother came here. After working for a year, they said that the working environment was good and they could save some money, so they took my mother, my wife, and me here. We've been here for almost three years. My older brother asked for leave last month because of something at home and will be back next week."*

*Interviewee No.14 (Tajik): "This is my second visit. In 2017, I came with my older brother. After working for a year, I went back to my hometown and stayed for a year, and then I wanted to come again. This time I came with three friends. After I told them about the work environment here, the work content, and salary in the factory, they came with me."*

*Interviewee No. 15 (Tajik): "My father worked here for three months in 2017. I always wanted to see where my father worked when I heard him talk about the inland. I want to come and see it. After graduation in 2018, I stayed at home for a year and had nothing to do, so I came here. Now I have been working here for nearly a year, and I am very used to the life here."*

*Interviewee No. 16 (Kazakh): "I worked here for half a year last time and came back this year, this time with my wife. Last time, six of my friends, all good acquaintances, came together, and four of them had made enough money and wanted to go back, so they asked the rest of us to go back together, saying it would be lonely if there were fewer people here. This time I come with my wife and plan to work for two more years if there is nothing to do at home."*



Figure 7: Interview with a Xinjiang Kyrgyz worker who brought a family of 5 to work in Guangdong in the production workshop

In general, the ethnic minorities from Xinjiang are mainly attracted by the social and economic benefits, natural environment, high-paying job opportunities, and the influence of their families and friends to choose to work outside Xinjiang. From their working experience, we can see that minority workers from Xinjiang are entirely free to decide the place and period of their work according to their own will.

## 2. Daily Life of Workers

Scholars are widely using participant observation and interviews. This research uses these research methods to observe the daily life of minority workers from Xinjiang working in inland companies at a micro-level. In this section, the research will present the everyday life of minority workers from Xinjiang in five companies where we conducted the fieldwork utilizing "thick description" and presentation of interview contents.

## a. A Day at Work

Minority workers usually work 8 hours a day (some technical posts shorter), divided into two shifts: day shift and night shift. When companies have more orders, they will have extra overtime within the scope of the law. There is also performance pay for technical posts and extra salary, and subsidies for overtime and night shift. Although the products produced by the five companies in the field research are different, the front-line workers' daily work schedules are similar, so there is no separate distinction in the description.

*Interviewee No.17 (Kyrgyz): "We work every day from 8 am to 12 am, take a break after lunch, and then get back to work from 3 pm to 7 pm for dinner. Recently, due to a lot of orders, we have 2 hours of overtime work, which will be paid separately (People who work night shifts have a different dinner time from ours. They still have a meal and rest time at 11 in the evening. Generally, if I am on a day shift this month, I will be on the night shift next month. If you don't like the night shift, you don't have to do it, but the night shift pays higher. "*

*Interviewee No. 18 (Kazakh): "The working hours are about the same, but sometimes, people in technical positions just work for three or four hours, and we have a few of them over there."*

*Interviewee No.19 (Tajik): "Working hours in the factory workshop are all fixed. We go to work at 8 am, eat at noon, have a lunch break for one and a half hours, and then get back to work from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm. After dinner, 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm is overtime. There are night shifts, but there are only two or three people on the night shift. With new machines, we don't need too many people on night shifts."*

*Interviewee No. 20 (Uyghur): "Our working hours are usually from 8 am to 5 pm from Monday to Friday, and the fixed basic salary is 2,700 yuan. The manager told us that there would be overtime pay. At first, we didn't understand anything like overtime. A fellow child was studying in Guangzhou, so we asked him to interpret for us. Only then did we know that the overtime pay was higher than normal working days, and over 8 hours of normal working hours and weekend work are also*

*considered overtime. I can get 5,500 yuan in minimum wage now. We come here to make money, and the work is easy. Overtime is not compulsory, and there are limits on overtime, no more than three hours a day."*

After the focus group interview, we continued to research the production workshops, workers' cafeterias, dormitories, and workers' rented homes of various companies, with a purpose to communicate and exchange with more minority workers from Xinjiang and to observe their daily work and life.

We found that minority workers from Xinjiang enjoy the freedom of religious belief, the right to use their language, and the right to choose their residence freely, such as free dormitory and low-cost off-campus houses and couples' rooms. Meanwhile, companies hire minority cooks from Xinjiang to prepare halal food for the workers.



Figure 8: minority workers on an assembly line

The five companies we investigated all provide free dormitories for minority workers, generally 2-4 people per room. Most of their relatives and friends prefer to

live together. The dormitories are equipped with independent washrooms and bathrooms and common household appliances such as air conditioning and washing machines. For couples, the companies will provide free or cheap (100 yuan per month) couples' rooms, and some workers also choose to live off-campus (300-400 yuan per month).

*Interviewee No. 21 (Tajik): "Four of us come together and live in the same dormitory. We are all bachelors usually play video games together after work."*

*Interviewee No. 22 (Kyrgyz): "The factory will arrange a couple's room for us. We don't have to pay for the couple's room here, just pay for the water and electricity. Some people rent their own houses nearby, 300-400 yuan per month, which is not too expensive."*

*Interviewee No.23 (Uyghur):" Our dormitory is in good condition, with air conditioning and bathrooms. You can cook if you want. There are also couples' rooms. Among the 93 people, there are 19 couples, 19 couple's rooms, and these rooms are arranged separately. The couple shares the cost, and the utility bill is included."*

Minority workers from Xinjiang like to decorate their residences with ethnic-style decorations. During our research, many minority workers took the initiative to show us the ethnic costumes they brought from Xinjiang, saying that they would wear them when celebrating festivals or corporate activities, and shared their photos during celebrations such as Eid al-Adha.



Figure 9: The carpets in a dormitory

In terms of diet, we ate in Xinjiang workers' cafeteria with minority workers in three companies. Company A offers shredded meat and rice with boiled eggs for lunch on the day of our investigation, company B offers rice with chowder for dinner, and company C offers meat soup and egg noodles for dinner. The tastes were in line with the different dietary preferences of different nationalities.

*Interviewee No. 24 (Kazakh) "The food in our factory canteen is free, and the cook in the kitchen is also invited from our hometown. Because we have Kazakhs and Tajiks (workers) in our factory, our cooking area is separated.*

*Interviewee No. 25 (Kyrgyz): "Our dormitories and canteens are in good condition. Many people want to work in this factory."*

Besides, we came across Muslim engineers from Bangladesh studying technology in company B when we were dining. During the conversation, they said that because the meals provided by Xinjiang workers' cafeteria are not only halal but also in line with their tastes, they applied to the company for dining here.

Unlike the other four companies that provide bilingual menus in Chinese and minority languages, this company's menu has three Chinese, Kyrgyz, and English versions.

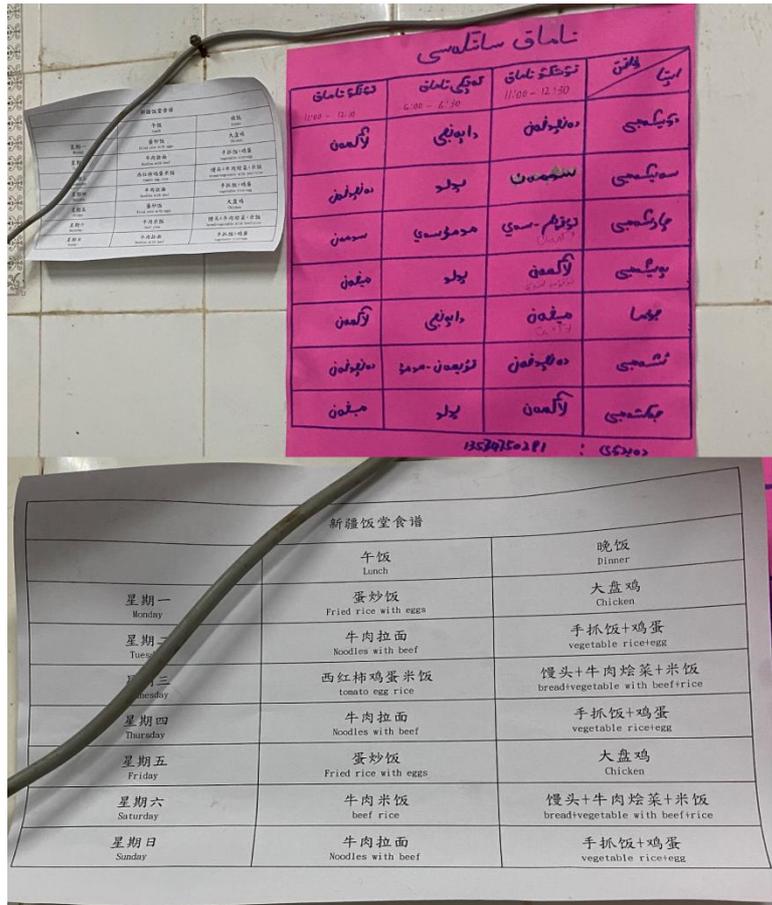


Figure 10: Menus in three languages

In addition to the cafeteria, minority workers from Xinjiang also dine together in nearby halal restaurants and barbecue restaurants after work.

Interviewee No. 26 (Kyrgyz): "There is an Atushi noodle shop next to our factory. The ramen noodles are very authentic. We sometimes go there when we are tired of dining in the cafeteria. If you can stay a few more days, I'll invite you to dinner there."

Interviewee No. 27 (Kazakh): "There are a lot of Lanzhou ramen here. We can have some food and spend time with friends together. There are also barbecue restaurants here."

Interviewee No. 28 (Uyghur): "A guy runs a barbecue shop from Hotan Prefecture. The business is very good. We often go there for a barbecue. Their sheep are all raised by themselves, and the meat is delicious."

## b. Rest Days and Holidays

According to the companies' different production conditions, the five companies in this research have 1-2 days off every week. Employees can also take personal leave and sick leave according to their own needs. Minority workers from Xinjiang enjoy the right to leave on national holidays according to law. If the company needs to work on national holidays, the company will pay the worker three times the salary according to the Labor Law provisions.

During the interview, some minority workers from Xinjiang told us about their rest days and holidays.

*Interviewee No. 29 (Kyrgyz): "We have one day off every week, and all the workers in the factory are off on Sundays. We do things on our own during the break, relax, walk around, and nothing else. I just play games on my phone, and sometimes I hang out with my friends."*

*Interviewee No. 30 (Kazakh): "During the break, I would walk around the neighborhood. It takes 40 minutes by bus from here to a place like a bazaar. There are a lot of shopping malls and so on. I just look around and always buy things online."*

*Interviewee No. 31 (Uyghur): "When I have a break, I like to go to the hot spring resort next to us. Our factory employees enjoy a 50% discount, and the admission fee is only more than 60 yuan. In the past, the factory also organized us to see the sea together, but we did not go this year because of the pandemic. There will be celebrations in the whole factory in the New Year, and we will participate in the party. We will prepare group dance and other programs to perform together, and participate in basketball games, tug-of-war games, etc. We can get the first place every time in the tug of war."*



Figure 11: minority workers from Xinjiang participate in the company's cultural activities



Figure 12: minority workers from Xinjiang participate in the company's cultural activities

During ethnic minorities' traditional festivals, companies will also organize

activities for the celebration.

*Interviewee No. 32 (Khalkha): "The Qurban Festival and the Rozi Festival are all celebrated with special funds provided by the factory. During these festivals, I always wear ethnic clothes that I bring with me. We also perform some programs, and we dance, we sing and so on, just as we were at home."*

*Interviewee No. 33 (Uyghur): "We have holidays on Spring Festival, National Day, and Dragon Boat Festival. We are the first Uyghurs who come to work here. At first, the company is not familiar with our traditional festivals. We told them about these festivals, and they search them on the Internet. Then they learned that these festivals are celebrated in Xinjiang, so they help us prepare sheep for ceremonies and all kinds of food, from meat to fruit during these festivals."*

*Interviewee No. 34 (Uyghur): "We received cash to celebrate festivals from the factory. This year, we had a day off and received 5000 yuan. We bought three sheep from a butcher, and we cooked mutton, noodles, pilaf, and kebab. We also bought lots of fruits. Everyone enjoyed a happy festival. You know pandemic in my hometown, this year people there didn't have a good celebration. We are quite lucky to be able to enjoy the festival here."*



Figure 13: Minority workers from Xinjiang celebrating Qurban Festival in inland companies

### c. Long Holidays for Family Reunions

Considering that it is a long journey for the minority workers to go back to their hometown, all five companies we researched offer the workers 30-days holiday to visit their relatives every year. The companies will cover all transportation expenses for workers who return to work on time. Four would pay for train tickets among the five companies, and one would pay for plane tickets. Some of the minority workers from Xinjiang told us that as the ticket prices are similar in the off-season, they prefer to pay extra money to buy plane tickets.

*Interviewee No. 35 (Kyrgyz): "On my family-reunion-holiday last year, I first went on a trip to Shenzhen and Hainan. Because the 30-day-holiday is very long, I didn't have much to do back home. If you can come back within a month, the company would pay for travel expenses and train tickets. "*

*Interviewee No. 36 (Tajiks): "We have 15 people. The factory buys us 15 plane tickets, so we come here to work by plane."*

*Interviewee No. 37 (Uyghur): "We can go on the family-reunion-holiday as long as we told the manager ahead of time, the factory will arrange the schedule according to our needs. Because many ethnic minority workers want to go on holidays, we take turns to go on holidays. If we all go back at the same time, the factory's operation will be affected. We workers from Xinjiang have 30-days-off every year, ten days more than other Han workers. Because it's a long journey, we usually visit our relatives by plane, since it takes more time to travel by train, more time is wasted on the road, and sometimes plane tickets are cheaper than train tickets."*

### 3. The Significance of Working in Other Provinces for Xinjiang workers

The purpose of this research is not to simply address the problems mentioned in

the Australian report, such as whether there is "forced labor" or not, whether "the ethnic minority workers' labor rights and the freedom of movement are infringed" or not, but also to understand the life experiences of the minority workers from Xinjiang and how would they interpret this experience. Although it is impossible to know everything about each individual, we can understand their life experiences through in-depth interviews. In the process of storytelling to recount one's experiences, meanings will be assigned to their own experiences by the interviewees through their narrations. We believe that meaning-revealing is the best way to explore the minority workers' experiences working outside of Xinjiang. Therefore, through their accounts, we hope to investigate the significance of working in companies outside of Xinjiang for minority workers.

#### a. Source of Income

Ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang who work in other provinces in China have significantly increased their family income and created a good life with their own hands. In 2015, interviewee No. 17 and her husband came to work in a company in Guangdong province from Akeqi County, Xinjiang. They have been working there for five years. In the interview, she talked about their working experience.

*Interviewee No. 38 (Khalkha): "I come from Akeqi, Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang. We came here when the company came to Xinjiang to recruit workers for the first time in 2015. At that time, my husband and I worked as cleaners in the Urban Construction Bureau of Akeqi, where the monthly salary was only 1000 yuan per person. We two can only earn 2000 yuan, which was not enough for our family's basic expenses, let alone for a good life. So, my husband and I decided to come here together. Because I have to take care of my children, I take more days off. I can earn 4,000 yuan monthly, and my husband can earn more than 5,000 yuan a month so that we can earn more than 9,000 yuan. We are quite satisfied with the salary. Since we work here, our life has been much better. We bought an 87 square meter well-furnished house in Akeqi county, which cost us more than 200,000 yuan.*

*We bought carpets priced more than 10,000 yuan, automatic washing machines, and other new electrical appliances, so we prefer to keep the house our residence rather than renting it. Last year, we started re-building a bungalow in our village, costing us more than 100,000 yuan, so we now have some debts. The bungalow's courtyard has been completed recently. My daughter is still in college, and we send her money for her living expenses every month. I think we have a good income here, so I invite many of my relatives and friends to come here. I told them that inland provinces are very good, just come here to earn more. No job in Xinjiang can offer you four or five thousand yuan a month. If you come here, you can work in factories with good sanitary conditions and your work are not difficult. Some of them still work here. Some have earned enough money, so they go back to their hometown."*

After the interview, interviewee No. 17 invited us to visit her place in Guangdong. She added us one WeChat, hoping that we can keep in touch. When we returned to the hotel that evening, she greeted us in WeChat and asked if we have any internal information from the company. She was anxious about losing her job because the company's business was affected by the pandemic.

*Interviewee No. 39 (Kyrgyz): "I'm thrilled to meet you today. I've spoken my mind to you a lot. It's lucky to have this opportunity to get to know each other. This factory's business used to be good, but this year, it was not so good because of the pandemic. We don't know whether they will let us continue to work here or let us go. In the past, there were a lot of workers from Xinjiang in our factory. There were more than 150 workers from Xinjiang at most. Now there are only 40. There are no recruits this year. We are all worried that we can't continue to work here any longer. I wonder if they have told you anything about that?"*

In the meeting with the company manager and human resource department, we learned that this year, the company went through a dramatic decrease in orders because of the pandemic, so there was not much recruitment demand this year. Hopefully, the situation has improved in recent months, and probably there would be more demand next year. For ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang who have been working here already, they will continue to employ them. We convey this message to

the worker, hoping that she would be relieved for the time being.

Another interviewee's story also shows that the opportunity to work outside of Xinjiang is significant for the livelihood of the ethnic minority workers.

*Interviewee No. 40 (Uyghur): "I've been here for two years, and I have a lot of stories to tell you. I am from Kashgar, married to a man from Aketao, but I didn't report to the local authorities for a residency change. I had no income, so I wanted to work here after my divorce, but the opportunities were given to people who had registered permanent residence in Aketao first. When I signed up for working outside of Xinjiang, they told me there was no opportunity for me yet. I desperately needed this job, so I turned to the village leaders for help. I said that you know what situation I was facing, and I had to work. If I didn't go out to work, I couldn't support myself and my children. At first, they said that there was no opportunity left. Since I insisted on turning to them for other several times and they know my situation well, they helped me get in touch with the company and finally found an opportunity for me. Since then, I have been working here. This opportunity is very precious, and it's not like anyone who wants a job here can be employed. Because inland companies pay workers better and the working conditions are good, we all want to work here. Since the Aketao government contacted the companies that these job opportunities are offered to us, the opportunities would be given to people whose permanent residency is in Aketao. It's not easy for people like me who get married there but do not change the registered residency to there." (Interviewer: "Will you still come to work here next year?") "Of course, if I don't work here, where can I make money? As a divorced woman, I can hardly support myself, not to mention raising my children. And now our salaries have increased. Starting from June, if we work full time, we will be paid around 5,000 yuan monthly. I can't make so much money if I go back to my hometown."*

Just as the ethnic minority workers mentioned above, for the ethnic minority workers who go out to work outside of Xinjiang, inland companies' high-income job is the primary income source for their families, which secure them financially maintain their livelihood and to pursue a better life.

## b. Broadening One's Horizon

Having experienced the advanced science and technology and modern way of life, ethnic minorities from Xinjiang have broadened their horizon and changed their inefficient modes of production and way of life. What is more important is that they are now getting rid of some outdated mindsets, such as "education is no good," "valuing men over women," and "relying on government aid and relief for a living." After working outside of Xinjiang, they realized the importance of education and paid attention to children's education. Today women's status in the family and society has been improved, believing that "only hard work can bring a better life" is widespread.

Working in inland companies has enabled Xinjiang ethnic minority herdsmen and farmers to go out of the pastoral areas and their farmland, go to the developed eastern provinces in China and experience the world's development and diversity. Working in modern factories offers them opportunities to experience advanced science and technology.

*Interviewee No. 41 (Kazakh): "I didn't realize that the world is so big and how things have developed until I came here. When I first came here, I told myself that I knew nothing in the past 30 years, and the only thing I did is herding sheep. In the past, herding sheep is all about luck. If I had good luck, I would have more lambs in spring. If I had bad luck, it was not impossible to die when you were driving the sheep to another pasture."*

*Interviewee No. 42 (Uyghur): "Our factory is huge. When I first came here, I felt like I was living in a movie. I saw many foreigners from different places, such as Russia, India, Japan, and some other countries that I couldn't name. These people would come to the factory to pay a visit. I was very interested because I only saw foreigners on television before, and now, I can see a different world."*

*Interviewee No. 43 (Kyrgyz): "I used to herd sheep. I have never gone out of our village. This job opportunity the government offered gave me chances to see the outside world. Herding sheep's income is okay, but if you are used to working in factories like this, you will be reluctant to herd sheep again. When you are herding*

*sheep in the mountains, you just find a stone and wrapped yourself in your clothes to sleep at night. How can you have living conditions as good as this?"*

Secondly, through communicating, working, and living together with workers from all over the country, not only do all workers deepen their mutual understanding and forged a bond of friendship, but also ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang gradually accept, actively learn and absorb the lifestyle and ideas of modern life.

*Interviewee No. 44 (Kyrgyz): "Women learn more about how to make up and dress up. They learn from local people who are always in fashion. Even men pay more attention to their appearances, and they are keeping up with fashion. I used to wear the same cloth all the time. Anyway, that's what I did. I put on the same cloth for two or three weeks. Now I change my clothes every day, and I don't want to wear them the next day. I will never wear the same cloth for more than two days. The other thing is, now I don't think that it's okay even if I don't work hard. You should work hard. Otherwise, you will be left behind."*

*Interviewee No. 45 (Kazakh): "For me, I think the best part is the people (Han). They are very modest. I can earn money here while I can learn things from them. We have a lot to learn from them, both in technology and in life. We should admit that. People asked me about the other provinces outside of Xinjiang when I was back home. I said most is that people here are friendly and skilled at work. Moreover, they are modest and generous. For example, the first time we were on the production line, they taught us how to work. When we made mistakes, they didn't blame us, and they would not say things like "what's wrong with you?" They would explain to you patiently."*

*Interviewee No. 46 (Tajik): "The reason I work here was simply that I wanted to make money. After I came here, I found that it's not enough to make money. I think I have to learn techniques while making money. Robots are broadly used in our factory now. Robots take over some strenuous and dangerous work. If I don't learn new techniques or being creative enough to start my own business, I will not have a good career in the future."*



Figure 14: minority workers from Xinjiang in the workshop

Besides, working in inland companies has played an essential role in improving the family and social status of ethnic minority women. Female workers pointed out that working outside of Xinjiang increased their income and helped them have a say in their family. Many ethnic minority workers, both husband, and wife agree that the experience of working together outside of Xinjiang has dramatically improved the status of women so that equality between men and women in the family is realized. This experience also helps to cultivate their relationship.

*Interviewee No. 47 (Uyghur, female): "Since we came here, the relationship between husband and wife is better; females dare to say more than before. In our hometown, women rarely go out to work, and men don't have permanent jobs. When men came home, men would ask us, 'where have you been' and 'what have you done' and so on. They would frequently ask us questions in detail, and there will be many quarrels between husbands and wives. Since we came here, take me as an example, my husband and I are not in the same workshop. We say goodbye to each other and then go to work. If we have time, we eat together at lunchtime. If we don't have time, we will eat separately, and he won't say anything. He'd be like, 'you're working with*

*me now' or 'we're doing the same thing.' He also learned from the Han coworkers in the factory and began to pay attention to our wedding anniversary, my birthday, and so on. We would celebrate them together, and there are mutual respects between my husband and me."*

*Interviewee No. 48 (Uyghur, male): "my wife has changed a lot since she started to work. She talks and dresses differently. What I do in the factory, she does the same, and we work in the same schedule. Sometimes her salary is higher than mine, and she works very hard. So, I'll buy her anything she needs. I didn't have much money, our family had financial difficulties before, and I didn't know how to celebrate these anniversaries. I didn't do anything for her before, and we didn't celebrate her birthday or our wedding anniversaries. Now that we are better off, I would give her a gold necklace as a present, and I would buy her flowers and cakes to celebrate together."*



Figure 15: focus group interview with ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang

### c. Improving Language & Vocational Skills

It is found that the language and vocational skills of minority workers have been significantly improved in the process of working in inland companies, which lays a

good foundation for their career development and their entrepreneurship in the future.

In terms of language, for all of the five companies, ethnic minority employees from Xinjiang work together with Han employees from all over the country on the production line, which means that they need to use Putonghua to communicate with other workers. Therefore, mastering Putonghua has become a necessity for minority workers from Xinjiang.



Figure 16: ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang working in the same production line as Han workers in the workshop

The opportunity to work outside of Xinjiang provides an excellent language learning environment for ethnic minority workers to master Putonghua. The factories also arranged special teachers to translate for the ethnic minority workers who have communication difficulties. To adapt to the workplace's work and life as soon as possible, ethnic minority workers also learn Putonghua actively through various methods. We found that some ethnic minority workers in the workshop have a strong accent when talking with local workers in Putonghua. This is because they began to learn and improve their Putonghua after working in inland companies.

*Interviewee No. 49 (Tajiks): "When I first came here, my Putonghua was not*

*good, when I had difficulties understanding it on night shifts, I was embarrassed because I had to call my mentor for help in the middle of the night. After several times like this, I decided to study hard. In the beginning, I communicated with my mentor through body language. Anyway, as long as I could understand the meaning, others express, it was fine. As I worked together with many Han coworkers on the production line here, the more I communicated with them, the more proficient I became. Now my Putonghua has improved a lot. I don't have to worry about language in the future anymore."*

*Interviewee No. 50 (Uyghur): "The locals here have a strong accent (Cantonese). At first, I couldn't understand what they are talking about at all, and I cried several times. I think only when we lose face will we be determined to learn. When I was in my hometown, I had never been so eager to learn anything. So, some of us used pens and notebooks to write down the Mandarin characters and their frequently used meanings related to machines. Whenever we had time, we would write them down and memorize them. Also, no matter when we were in the workshop or when we were shopping outside, we would speak Putonghua with people whenever we could find opportunities. Many people bought "point & read" smartpens, and they used the pens to learn Putonghua like children first learn to read and speak. No matter how tired we were after work, we push ourselves to learn. Anyway, now basically, our Putonghua can meet our own needs."*

In addition to improving Putonghua to better adapt to their jobs and pursue personal values, some ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang began learning English.

*Interviewee No. 51 (Uyghur): "the technical requirements of my present position are higher than that of the previous workshop. The machines require English to operate, so I've been learning English recently. You see, this is a small note for me to learn English. These are the vocabulary used on the machine. Here I wrote down the corresponding meaning in Uyghur. I put these notes in my pocket every day, so it's convenient to take it out to learn when I have time."*

In terms of technology, in these five companies, minority workers from Xinjiang with better language skills are engaged in specific technical requirements. They are no

longer ordinary workers on the assembly line. With their efforts, they have become technicians in the workshop, clerks in the office, and even promoted to the management. Many workers have been promoted. Take an electrical circuit company that we investigated as an example, more than half of ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang are in important tech positions. Their skills and serious, responsible attitude are highly recognized by their employer. In these technical and management positions in the inland companies, ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang can gain relatively high income in a comfortable working environment, improve themselves, change their destiny, and pursue a better life.

*Interviewee No. 52 (Kyrgyz): "I am the monitor of our production line now. Because my Putonghua is fluent and I learn things fast, I became the monitor in charge of the new workers' training. I am crippled in one leg. In the beginning, I was worried that I would not get used to life here, but the factory took good care of me. I used to use Putonghua when I was a driver in Xinjiang, and now I could do some more technical but less laborious work here."*

*Interviewee No. 53 (Kyrgyz): "I came here last year. When I signed up, they told me they were hiring workers. When I came here, our manager asked me to be an interpreter because I speak Putonghua well. About a month later, the manager asked me if I could use computers. They were recruiting clerks. I said I couldn't, but I can learn. He asked me to try to learn for two months. The senior staff here taught me little by little. I started to learn from opening the computer to other skills. Now I have no problem dealing with sheets, editing forms, and color cards. You know, it's much easier and more comfortable to work in the office." (Note: at the beginning of the interview, the worker said that she hoped to interview Putonghua. We respect her choice.)*

*Interviewee No. 54 (Tajik): "Now I can assemble a unit all by myself. It only takes me 15 minutes to assemble a unit. It took two or three hours when I first learned to do it. To do this job, you need to be able to understand the blueprints. The blueprints of each unit are different. At that time, workers who have been to school had chances to learn these. If they learned them well, they could stay in positions like*

*mine. Others who are more qualified are in the quality inspection department. People in similar positions to mine only work five or six hours a day, sometimes even three hours, and the salary is as high as that of the workers on other production lines. The most important thing is that we have technical experiences if we want to do something else by ourselves."*



Figure 17: the factory manager introduces the working situations of the ethnic

minority workers from Xinjiang to the author

*Interviewee No. 55 (Uyghur): "I have been in this company for more than three years. Now, this job is effortless for me. When I first came here, it was like I worked all day and I produced nothing. None of the products I made was a qualified one. Now I am the technical backbone of our factory. The one you just talked with is now my apprentice. This job is well-paid. If we do a good job, our salary could be 7,000 yuan per month or around 6,000 yuan. Our work is effortless, just sit down and print the blueprint."*

#### d. Children's Education

Working in the inland Chinese companies broadens Xinjiang workers' horizons, offers them higher income, improves their qualities for some ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang, and provides opportunities for their children to enjoy high-quality education.

*Interviewee No. 56 (Kyrgyz): "When I came here, my son was about to go to primary school, since the education here was much better than that of Xinjiang, I took him with me. I thought that if my son can go to school here, I would stay. If not, we would go back home. Once my manager knew that he drove us to a school and handed my son to the teacher. My son was in the first grade when we came here, and now he is in the seventh grade. The manager arranged for my son to go to school here for free. Moreover, because he respects our eating habits, the factory also takes special care of us, that's what I can never forget. We plan to work here for a few more years. We won't go back home until my son finished his education here. We hope our child can continue his schooling here to receive a better education."*

*Interviewee No. 57 (Kyrgyz): "on the one hand, we came here for economic reasons. More importantly, we want to give our children a better environment. It's a pity that we didn't pay much attention to study before. So, we want our children to have a chance to receive a better education. We asked whether our children could be arranged to go to school here, and we came here only when we know that they could*

*help with our children's education. My child is eight years old; he goes to primary school here. There are 10 Xinjiang workers' children who have to go to school in the factory. Some of them go to kindergarten, and others go to primary school. Because there are many school-age children here, the factory has arranged a car for us. We can bring meals to our children at noon and pick them up after class at five o'clock. People are taking special care of them. Small kids who go to kindergarten play in the game room nearby, and the others study in this conference room, waiting for us to come off work."*

We found that to meet the needs of ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang. They hope their children receive education in the provinces they work, the government, companies, and other individuals have been putting great efforts to provide them with conveniences through various ways. The workers' children can enjoy high-quality education for free and are taken great care of in terms of diet habits, daily commute, and after-class tutorial.

#### 4. The Future Plans of the Workers from Xinjiang

During the interviews, we learned that Xinjiang workers have various and detailed plans for the future. Despite the differences in their plans, the experience of working outside of Xinjiang has become a significant influence on their plans. In this section, we categorize workers' plans into three types, as shown in the figure. 45% of the workers hope to continue working in inland companies to earn more money, 31% plan to use their savings to start a business in their hometown, and 23% plan to permanently live in Guangdong province.

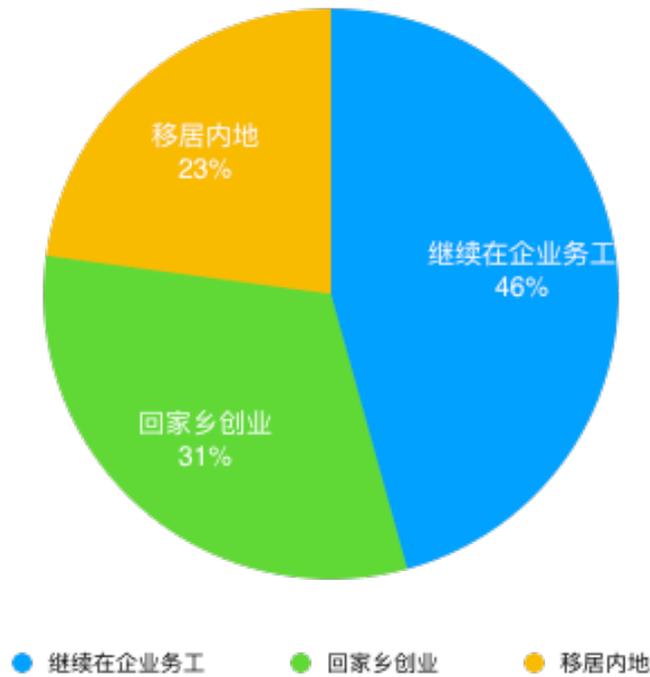


Figure 18. The proportion of ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang' plans

a. Continuing to Work for More Years

To increase family incomes and have their children receive better education, many ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang said they would continue working in inland companies in the next two or three years. At the same time, they also said that they would choose to return to their hometown in the long turn because their relatives and friends all live in their hometown, they have bought houses in their hometown, and they have to take care of the elders. Most of the workers who choose to work for a few more years are middle-aged in their 40s to 50s. Our research finds that most workers in this age group are couples or families. They tend to use their income for savings, buying property, and their children's education.

*Interviewee No. 58 (Kazakh): "If there is nothing to do in my hometown, I plan to work here for another two or three years. I can save money here. Except for the money we spent, my wife and I can save 70,000 yuan per year. Anyway, we won't work here for the rest of our lives. We still have relatives and friends at home. I think one's hometown is the best place in the world for him."*

*Interviewee No. 59 (Kyrgyz): "I have three children. One of my children just find a job, my daughter is now in a university in Urumqi, and the other child is studying in our hometown. So, I plan to work here until all of my children graduate from university. I spend four or five hundred yuan a month. Most of the money is spent on my children because they are still in school. We also bought cattle to rear in our hometown, which also helps us save some money. Since we began to rear cattle this year, my husband stayed in our hometown. We used to come here together."*

*Interviewee No. 60 (Kyrgyz): "we planned to go back next year because my mother is not very well and I am the eldest son of my family, but my child does not want to go back. He goes to school here, and he told us he doesn't want to go back. He is used to the teachers and classmates here. Indeed, the education here is really good, but if I don't go back, if anything happened to my mother and as the eldest son I was not around, I'll be despised. Now I think I will go back home and let my wife stay with my child and work here."*



Figure 19: Interviewing with Xinjiang Kazakh workers in the workshop

## b. Settle-down

When they work outside of Xinjiang, ethnic minority workers experience a hospitable climate and witness the development of the model province of reform and opening-up. The long-term experience of working and living in the eastern coastal areas has gradually led to migration. Some of the minority workers from Xinjiang have plans to settle down in the short run. These workers are mainly young people around 20-35.

*Interviewee No. 61 (Uyghur): "I plan to buy a house here next year. I don't think I would go back. I'll take my parents and children to live here. The environment here is so good. The air is moist and fresh. Green plants can be seen everywhere, and we all have a steady income here. I went to see houses for sale with the manager of my factory last time. As a local, he knows where to buy good houses. Good houses in our county are only about 10,000 yuan per square meter. My wife and I have saved 290,000 yuan in the past three years. I was told that we workers working in the factory could also apply for a mortgage. So (my plan is that) we apply for a mortgage to buy a simple-decorated house, pay the down payment first, then we take our families here to live together."*

*Interviewee No. 62 (Kyrgyz): "I think I'll continue to work here in the future. I like this place. I plan to settle down here. This is the most developed place (in China). I can learn new things every day. Working while studying, it feels so good."*

## c. Coming Back Home to Start a Business

Many ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang expect to have their own business in the future. Working outside of Xinjiang enables them to save the money they need for starting their own business, understand market demand and the development of society, and improve their vocational skills.

*Interviewee No. 63 (Tajik): "Plans? We have many great plans. We have saved some money in the past two years. We plan to go back to our hometown, open a*

*supermarket together next year. There is no supermarket in our hometown. To open such a supermarket, you need to invest a large amount of money. My friends and I here, if we opened such a supermarket in our hometown together, I'm sure we will make a fortune!"*

*Interviewee No. 64 (Uyghur): "I know a woman who owns a beauty salon here when we went shopping together, and we passed by her salon. My hair was not very good at that time, so I went to her salon for help. She likes me very much. Since I talked with her for a long time when I went there for hairdressing, I became very interested in the hairdressing industry. She trains people and gives them a certificate. I hope to save enough money to learn some skills from her and then go back to Hotan to open a big beauty salon. Though there are also beauty salons in Hotan, the beauty salon here is equipped with advanced machines. Salons in Hotan doesn't compare with salons in here."*

Moreover, we were told in the interview that many ethnic minority workers who had worked in these five companies before now have a successful business of their own. Having saved enough money, they returned to Xinjiang to start their own business, which enjoys great success.

*Interviewee No. 65 (Uyghur): "Of course there are successful people, there is a couple who have worked there for more than two years. Once I went to remit money with the husband, so I remembered it well. Together he and his wife had a saving of more than 190,000 yuan. At that time, his wife was pregnant and was about to give birth, and they planned to go back to Xinjiang. We all agreed that they shouldn't squander their money. They should make good use of the money. When they went back, they bought a car, and the husband became a taxi driver. Now they have a stable income every month. We still phone each other a lot, and he always tells me that he's doing good and he's really happy now."*

### III. Conclusion

Through field research in five companies employing ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang in Guangdong Province, we acquire a greater depth of understanding of the reasons for Xinjiang minorities to work in inland companies, of their daily work and life, and their working experiences' significance. In general, the report draws the following conclusions.

First of all, the research confirms that there is no "re-education," "forced labor," or "surveillance" as is claimed in the ASPI report in any aspects of the employment of the ethnic minorities from Xinjiang. The reasons for their decision to work in inland Chinese companies, under the premise of the Socialist Market Economy with Chinese Characteristics and the free migration and movement of people, may well be that ethnic minority people from Xinjiang are attracted by the "*pull*" of the hospitable natural environment, social development, high-income job opportunities and high-quality educational resources in inland provinces. Meanwhile, they are also "*pushed*" away by the harsh ecological environment, the backward social and economic development, and the low-income in their hometown compared with the more developed inland Chinese provinces. Ethnic minority workers from Xinjiang work in companies in Guangdong and other developed provinces on their initiative. This flow of the Xinjiang workforce exemplifies the classic Push and Pull Theory in demography. Observations of ethnic minority workers' daily work and life have shown that the workers' labor rights have been safeguarded. The workers' rights, including equal employment, payment for labor, paid vacations and rest days, social insurances, occupational safety, freedom of religious beliefs, freedom of using one's languages, etc. well-protected.

Meanwhile, they enjoy extensive welfare the same as other Han workers, such as team building, group tours, birthday gifts, wedding presents, etc. Moreover, field research finds that those companies show significant considerations for ethnic minority workers' interests in their diet habits, children's education, family reunions,

vacations, and transportation convenience. The fact that ethnic minorities from Xinjiang are free to leave their workplaces after work, to hang out and have dinner with friends, to go shopping and traveling, and to find lodgings outside of their workplaces have proved that their life in inland companies has no connection with "restriction of movement" or "surveillance" in any form. It can also be confirmed that the free choices are assured as reflected in their personal experiences of changing their employer according to their own needs and preferences.

Secondly, labor transfer is one way of achieving excellent results in national poverty alleviation. It increases the income of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang and improves the workers' vocational skills and language capacity to a large extent. More importantly, working outside of Xinjiang helps broaden workers' horizons while labor transfers effectively promote the western region's development and provide valuable global poverty alleviation experience. Being at the forefront of reform and opening-up, Guangdong province not only offers minority workers from Xinjiang generous salaries and promising job opportunities but also helps them understand the development of society and the civilization so that they can actively engage with the process of modernization and readily accept the modern way of production and ideas on their initiative. The ethnic minority workers attach great importance to their experience of working outside of Xinjiang. Their jobs support their families to live a better life, and the working environment encourages them to improve their language capacities and vocational skills. The social welfare they enjoy provides their children with a high-quality education. Some of the workers intend to continue to work in inland companies where they receive generous salaries, and some decided to settle down in Guangdong province with their families to enjoy the development of modernization. The others plan to use their income to realize their ambitions of entrepreneurship... No matter how they prepare for their future, all Xinjiang ethnic minority groups aspire to pursue a better life.

Finally, even though these five companies are in full compliance with all labor laws and have fully protected all ethnic minority workers' labor rights. These companies offer competitive salaries for the Xinjiang workers, many of whom left

their hometown to work in these companies as they were attracted by the payment. Unfortunately, in the name of protecting human rights, the alleged "forced labor" accusations and sanctions imposed against the companies that hire ethnic minority workers have threatened the labor rights of the ethnic minorities from Xinjiang.