

# The Difference of Consumption Between Urban and Rural Areas in Jiangsu

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**Abstract.** This research delves into the intricate urban-rural consumption disparities within Jiangsu Province, China, over the decade spanning from 2011 to 2021. Specifically, it explores disparities in the domains of food, health care, culture, and entertainment, shedding light on the multifaceted dimensions of inequality in these critical aspects of daily life. The study employs a comprehensive approach, combining quantitative data analysis and qualitative insights, to provide a holistic understanding of the socio-economic factors driving these disparities. The findings reveal a stark divergence in consumption patterns between urban and rural areas of Jiangsu Province. In the realm of food, urban residents have access to a wider variety of choices and higher-quality options compared to their rural counterparts. Disparities in healthcare access and utilization are also evident, with urban areas benefitting from more advanced medical facilities and services. Furthermore, cultural and entertainment opportunities are concentrated in urban centers, leaving rural residents with limited access to enriching experiences. This research is of paramount importance as it underscores the pressing need for policies and interventions aimed at bridging the urban-rural consumption gap in Jiangsu Province. The study's findings have significant implications for regional development strategies, social equality initiatives, and the overall well-being of Jiangsu residents. Understanding the intricate dynamics of consumption disparities is crucial for fostering a more equitable and sustainable future for all residents of the province.

**Keywords:** Urban-rural disparities, Jiangsu Province, Consumption, Food, Health Care, Culture, Entertainment.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Jiangsu Province, located in eastern China, is renowned for its rapid economic development and urbanization over the past few decades. This transformation has led to significant disparities in various aspects of life between urban and rural areas. While urban centers in Jiangsu have experienced exponential growth and modernization, rural areas have encountered persistent challenges in terms of infrastructure, access to services, and overall quality of life.

Food, health care, culture, and entertainment are fundamental components of human well-being and societal development. However, the preliminary research indicates that these essential elements of daily life are not distributed evenly within Jiangsu Province. Urban residents enjoy a wide array of culinary choices, access to state-of-the-art healthcare facilities, and a rich cultural and entertainment scene. In stark contrast, rural residents often face limited options in these domains, resulting in pronounced disparities in living standards and quality of life.

Understanding the reasons behind these urban-rural consumption disparities is crucial for policymakers, researchers, and advocates seeking to promote social equity and balanced regional development.

### 1.2. Related research

Liu studied the consumption structure of urban and rural residents in Jiangsu from 2012 to 2016. The research method used the grey relational degree model. The results showed that urban and rural residents have a high correlation between income and consumption of basic necessities such as food and clothing, but there are differences in consumption capacity. The education, culture, entertainment

and health care consumption of urban residents is more correlated with income than that of rural residents [1]. Zhang utilized SPSS to conduct cluster analysis and factor analysis on the urban and rural consumption structure of 13 prefecture-level cities in Jiangsu in 2019. The results showed that the urban and rural consumption development in different regions is not coordinated, and the urban and rural consumption levels in developed regions such as Wuxi and Suzhou are significantly higher than those in the northwest region [2]. Zhang and Wang conducted a statistical analysis of the consumption structure of urban and rural residents in Jiangsu from 2011 to 2020. The results showed that the income gap between urban and rural areas in Jiangsu continues to widen, the consumption rate of rural residents is higher than that of cities, and the income elasticity of demand for education and cultural consumption of rural residents is relatively low [3].

Wei and Geng applied the ELES model to analyze the consumption structure of urban and rural residents in Jiangsu from 1999 to 2018. The results showed that the marginal propensity to consume food and transportation and communications of rural residents in Jiangsu is higher than that of urban residents, while the marginal propensity to consume education and culture is lower [4]. Using 1991-2010 data, Jiang and Zhao examined urban and rural per capita income, commercial scale, government expenditure, and permanent resident population's impact on consumption in Jiangsu Province via regression analysis. Results indicate that urban resident income and permanent population significantly affect long-term household consumption in Jiangsu, with permanent population exerting a greater influence. Clustering analysis of 13 Jiangsu cities using 2004-2010 panel data categorized them into three groups, revealing distinct urban consumption factors. This suggests that government policies promoting consumption should be tailored to specific regional contexts [5]. Utilizing data from the 1999-2008 Jiangsu Statistical Yearbook, Liu conducted an in-depth analysis using Keynes' absolute consumption function and SPSS 13.0 statistical software. This study focused on comparing the marginal propensity to consume and income elasticity of urban and rural residents in Jiangsu, aiming to identify disparities in consumption structures. Based on the findings, Liu proposed strategies to mitigate the differences in consumption patterns between urban and rural populations [6].

Since the early 21st century, information consumption among urban and rural residents in Jiangsu Province has seen gradual improvement. Du's research, spanning from 2000 to 2009, delves into various disparities in information consumption levels, structures, and conditions. Through meticulous analysis, Du identifies the factors contributing to these differences and subsequently formulates strategies to foster the balanced development of information consumption between urban and rural areas in Jiangsu [7]. Liu used statistical and econometric methods to analyze urban and rural consumption in Hubei province. The research focused on consumption levels, behavior characteristics, and specific categories. Findings indicate varying consumption trends, evolving consumption structures, and factors like income, expenditure, price, region, and income distribution affecting consumption differently. Disparities in urban and rural consumption levels persisted, with an increasing gap after 1998 [8]. Tan focuses on urban-rural consumption disparities in Guangdong, analyzing reasons and proposing measures to narrow the gap, vital for economic development. Key findings: 1. A long-term income-consumption equilibrium exists, with rural income growth strongly stimulating consumption. Urban areas benefit more from long-term policies. 2. Declining rural consumption rates hinder Guangdong's overall consumption, necessitating measures to boost rural consumption and reduce the urban-rural gap. 3. Urban-rural consumption structure varies significantly, with rural basic spending lower and urban spending on culture, education, and entertainment higher, reflecting urban priorities for education and quality of life. Addressing these differences is crucial for economic health and development [9].

### 1.3. Objective

This study aims to analyze consumption disparities in Jiangsu Province, focusing on urban-rural gaps in food, healthcare, culture, and entertainment. The objective is to understand the factors driving these disparities and their implications for residents' well-being. Chapter 2 talks about the concrete

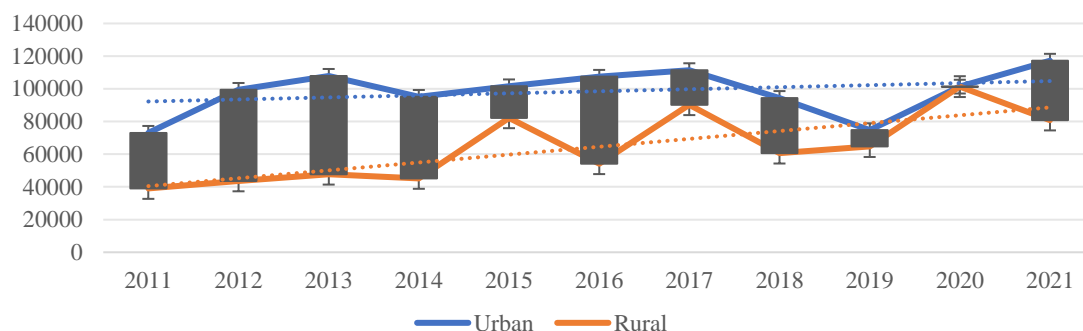
embodiment aspect and reason of consumption difference between urban and rural areas. Chapter 3 explores potential solutions to address these gaps, including targeted policies for rural development, improved healthcare access, enhanced education quality, income redistribution, and consumer education.

## 2. Differences and reasons analysis

### 2.1. Status

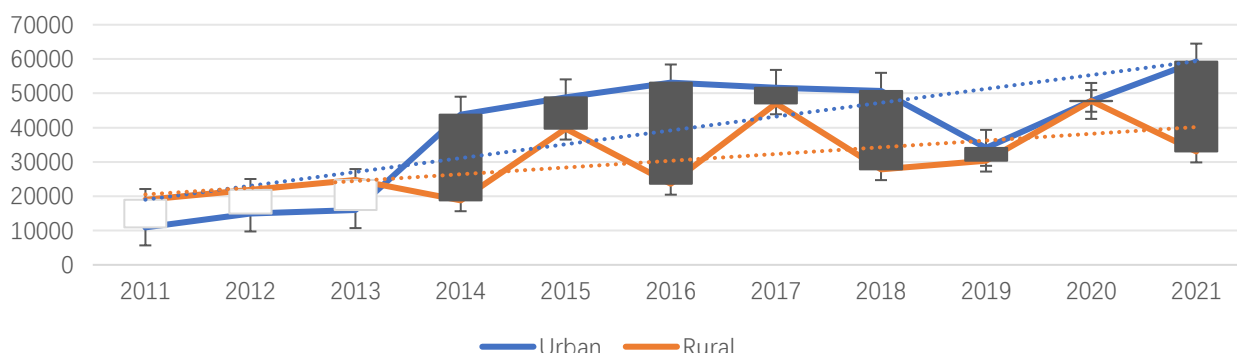
Urban-rural consumption, particularly in the domains of food, healthcare, culture, and entertainment. These disparities have far-reaching implications for the well-being and quality of life of its residents.

Food, tobacco and alcohol: In the span of a decade, from 2011 to 2021, an encouraging transformation has unfolded in Jiangsu's consumption landscape. The discernible decline in the urban-rural disparity in Food, Tobacco, and Alcohol spending is indicative of a remarkable societal shift. This evolution underscores a more equitable distribution of resources and improved accessibility to these essential commodities. It reflects the region's commitment to bridging the divide and fostering inclusivity in the sphere of consumption, as shown in Fig.1.



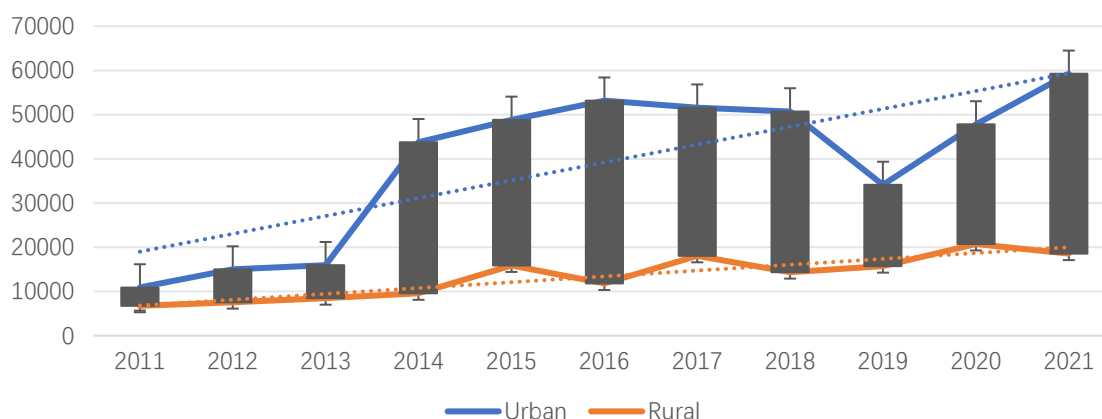
**Fig. 1** Differences in urban and rural food, tobacco and alcohol consumption from 2011 to 2021

Health Care: Examining the patterns of health care consumption in Jiangsu from 2011 to 2021, a fascinating narrative unfolds. Initially, urban areas had lower expenditures compared to their rural counterparts, but by 2012, urban spending had caught up and even exceeded rural levels. However, the latest data suggests a resurgence of the urban-rural gap in medical care expenditures, indicating a dynamic and noteworthy dimension in this region's consumption trends, as shown in Fig.2 .



**Fig. 2** Differences in urban and rural health care consumption from 2011 to 2021

Education, culture and entertainment: Upon analyzing the consumption patterns of Education, Culture, and Entertainment in Jiangsu from 2011 to 2021, a concerning trend emerges. The urban-rural gap in spending within these domains is undeniably widening. This development underscores the critical need for us to address and rectify this growing disparity, as shown in Fig.3.



**Fig. 3.** Differences in urban and rural Education, culture and entertainment consumption from 2011 to 2021

## 2.2. Analysis of Causes

The divergent trends in consumption across different sectors in Jiangsu from 2011 to 2021 can be attributed to a variety of socio-economic factors:

**Educational Return:** Discrimination against rural employees in society leads to a low educational return on investment in rural areas[10], causing rural people to be reluctant to invest in education. Policies should be implemented to reduce urban-rural disparities, improve educational resources and employment opportunities, and stimulate willingness to invest in rural education, ultimately achieving a more equitable social development.

**Healthcare Infrastructure:** The fluctuating urban-rural gap in medical care expenditures can be partially explained by disparities in healthcare infrastructure. Urban areas often have more advanced and accessible medical facilities, which may have initially led to higher urban spending. However, the resurgence of the gap could indicate challenges in healthcare accessibility in rural regions or changes in healthcare policies.

**Migration Patterns:** Migration from rural to urban areas could also contribute to these disparities. People migrating to cities may have better employment opportunities, higher incomes, and a different lifestyle, leading to increased spending on various goods and services.

**Government Policies:** Government policies can have a significant impact on these trends. Policies aimed at reducing urban-rural disparities can lead to a temporary narrowing of the gap, while changes in taxation, subsidies, or healthcare reforms can influence consumption patterns.

**Cultural Factors:** Cultural preferences and social norms can influence spending habits. For instance, urban areas may have a greater inclination toward certain forms of entertainment or lifestyle choices that impact spending on Education, Culture, and Entertainment.

**Access to Information:** Access to information and awareness of consumer choices can differ between urban and rural areas. Urban residents may be more informed about the availability of different products and services, influencing their consumption decisions. Therefore, the urban-rural consumption disparities in Jiangsu Province are multifaceted and deeply rooted in income inequality, urbanization dynamics, infrastructure development, government policies, and cultural factors. Addressing these disparities will require a comprehensive and coordinated effort involving government initiatives, social programs, and economic development strategies aimed at fostering greater equity and well-being for all residents of the province.

## 3. Solution Suggestion & Enlightenment

Based on the identified challenges, the following solutions can be implemented to address the urban-rural consumption disparities in Jiangsu.

**Targeted Policy Interventions:** Government policies should be tailored to address the unique challenges faced by rural areas comprehensively. This involves significant investments in rural infrastructure, including road networks, electricity supply, and internet connectivity. Improved infrastructure not only facilitates the transportation of goods and services but also attracts businesses and investment, stimulating economic growth in rural regions. Furthermore, enhancing healthcare facilities and educational institutions is imperative. Constructing and upgrading hospitals and clinics, along with ensuring a sufficient number of healthcare professionals, is vital to guarantee accessible and high-quality healthcare services for rural residents. Simultaneously, modernizing rural schools with proper infrastructure, well-trained teachers, and up-to-date educational resources can help bridge the educational gap between urban and rural areas, making education more appealing and accessible.

**Healthcare Access:** Achieving equitable access to healthcare is essential. In rural areas, healthcare access can be significantly improved through the establishment of mobile clinics that visit remote villages regularly. Telemedicine initiatives can complement these efforts, allowing rural residents to consult with healthcare professionals from urban centers remotely. To further facilitate access, targeted healthcare subsidies for low-income rural households can alleviate financial burdens associated with medical care. Additionally, incentivizing healthcare professionals to work in rural areas through financial incentives or career development opportunities can help address healthcare workforce shortages in these regions.

**Education Enhancement:** Enhancing the quality of education in rural areas is critical for narrowing the urban-rural education gap. Teacher training programs can ensure that educators in rural schools are well-prepared and motivated to provide quality education. Investing in better facilities, including classrooms, libraries, and computer labs, can create a more conducive learning environment. Moreover, introducing innovative teaching methods, such as online resources and distance learning, can overcome geographical barriers and offer rural students access to a broader range of educational opportunities.

**Income Redistribution:** To address income disparities and boost rural incomes, policies should promote income redistribution. Agricultural subsidies can support farmers in rural areas, stabilizing their incomes and encouraging agricultural productivity. Additionally, creating rural job opportunities through programs that invest in local industries, promote entrepreneurship, and facilitate access to credit can generate income diversification and economic growth in rural communities.

**Consumer Education:** Educating consumers in both urban and rural areas about responsible spending is vital. Consumer education initiatives should focus on raising awareness about budgeting, saving, and making informed purchasing decisions. Providing guidance on the value of education, culture, and entertainment as well as the potential health risks associated with excessive consumption of tobacco and alcohol can empower individuals to make choices aligned with their long-term well-being. These initiatives can be delivered through workshops, community outreach, and digital resources to ensure widespread access and understanding.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the decade-long analysis of consumption patterns in Jiangsu spanning from 2011 to 2021 has revealed dynamic trends across various sectors. While the urban-rural gap in Food, Tobacco, and Alcohol consumption demonstrated a positive shift towards greater equality and accessibility, the medical care domain experienced fluctuations with a resurgence of disparities. Conversely, the urban-rural gap in Education, Culture, and Entertainment spending has significantly widened, signaling a concerning trend.

Addressing these disparities necessitates a multifaceted approach that encompasses targeted policy interventions, improved healthcare access, enhanced education quality, income redistribution, and consumer education. Such measures should be aligned with the unique challenges faced by rural areas and aimed at fostering balanced development, reducing inequality, and ensuring inclusive prosperity.

The study underscores the importance of continual monitoring and adaptive policy-making in response to evolving economic conditions, societal shifts, and regional dynamics. Ultimately, narrowing the urban-rural consumption gap in Jiangsu is not merely an economic imperative but a matter of social justice and sustainable development, with the potential to empower all citizens to lead fulfilling lives, regardless of their geographic location.

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