

## **Abstract**

Mental health researchers have long been concerned about the implications of social changes for individual well-being. Rapid social change has been argued to negatively affect well-being. The present paper follows this research tradition and examines the change in mental health status among the urban residents in Beijing, the capital city of Mainland China, over a ten-year period. Both aggregated and survey data were used for analyses. Our findings suggest that as urban reforms are taking at great speed in the past decade or so, a price is being paid at the expense of urban residents' health. National suicide rates stay at a high level. Aggregate data on psychiatric hospital utilization, and attempted suicide and self-inflicted injury in Beijing in particular show upward trends. Results from the two community surveys conducted in 1991 and 2000 further reveal that urban Beijing residents have experienced greater life stress and a decline in mental health during the ten-year period. The decline in mental health between 1991 and 2000 can be partly explained by greater exposure to life stressors in the latter year. These findings suggest that the rapid social changes associated with the urban reforms have indeed caused adjustment problems among Beijing residents. However, the social disorganization perspective is not supported by our data. Social relations in Beijing seem to withstand rapid social changes. Particularly, family relations and relations with coworkers have actually slightly improved over the years. Moreover, social relations only marginally affect the change in depressive symptomatology and the protective function of social relations, particularly relations with family and coworkers, has gained importance.