

Digital Dividend or Digital Divide: The Impact of Internet Penetration on Farmers' Well-being

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Abstract

Pursuing happiness for the people is regarded as "the paramount national objective" by the Communist Party of China. The ongoing popularization of the Internet and the continuous advancement of the information age have introduced new opportunities to enhance farmers' well-being. Utilizing data from the 2020 China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), this paper employs Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis to investigate the impact of Internet penetration on farmers' happiness. Additionally, OLS estimation is used to examine the heterogeneous impacts across different regions and age groups, with a theoretical expansion analysis conducted on the underlying mechanisms driving these differences. The research findings indicate that: First, Internet penetration significantly enhances farmers' happiness. After addressing endogeneity issues through variable substitution, the results remain robust. Second, heterogeneity analysis reveals that Internet penetration has a pronounced effect on happiness in eastern regions, a modest increase in western regions, but a relatively weaker impact in central regions. Third, Internet penetration most significantly boosts the happiness of young rural residents, while the happiness of older individuals requires further enhancement. Consequently, this paper recommends accelerating network infrastructure development in western regions, promoting industrial digital transformation, balancing efficiency and equity in Internet penetration within central and western regions, jointly advancing the strategy of eastern regions driving western development, enhancing Internet penetration in central regions, and optimizing the development structure between central and non-central cities. Policy recommendations such as strengthening customized digital training for older adults and establishing an "Internet + community" support network for older adults will continuously improve farmers' well-being.

Keywords: Internet Penetration, farmer, happiness

How to Cite

Zhinan Liu, Wenhui Xu; "Digital Dividend or Digital Divide: The Impact of Internet Penetration on Farmers' Well-being", *AJJR Abstracts*, p. 6, 2025.

