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Urban-rural digitalization evolves from divide to inclusion: Empirical evidence from China

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摘要：Fostering inclusive digitalization within urban-rural areas is crucial for achieving digital inclusion and urban-rural integration. However, there is still no consensus on the state of urban-rural digitalization (URD) towards inclusion or divide. This study adopts an integrative approach to comprehend URD and introduces a novel Development-Gap-Integration (D-G-I) framework to verify its state. By using data collected from China, we conduct a thorough assessment of URD, encompassing its development, gap, and integration aspects. Our findings unveil a transformative journey of URD in China, evolving from divide to inclusion, propelled by advancing development and diminishing gaps. Despite this positive evolution, the inclusive state of URD in digital applications necessitates further improvement. Additionally, a widening regional disparity in URD between provinces emerges, underscoring the critical need for coordinated regional development initiatives. The results reveal the performance and evolution of URD across geographic space and over time, offering integrative insights for strategies to bridge digital divides and improve inclusive digital ecosystems within urban-rural areas. Beyond the borders of China, the lessons hold significance for other nations earnestly exploring experience for sustainable development of digitalization.

关键词：Digitalization; Urban-rural areas; Digital divide; Digital inclusion; China