# Rat person movement challenges conventional work and life values in China



In Zhejiang province, China, a unique lifestyle trend known as the “rat person” movement is gaining attention, offering a fresh perspective on modern attitudes towards work, life, and social expectations. The phenomenon is characterised by individuals who embrace a largely sedentary existence, characterised by minimal ambition beyond basic comforts such as eating, sleeping, and scrolling through digital content.

One prominent example is a woman known as @jiawensishi, who has become something of a symbol for this way of living. Her daily routine involves waking briefly in the morning before returning to bed for extended periods, punctuated by minimal activities such as eating, opening packages, and even showering during the early hours. Describing herself as a “rat person,” she embodies a lifestyle that consciously eschews traditional markers of productivity and social engagement.

The “rat person” trend can be seen as a successor to the earlier “lying flat” movement that emerged in China several years ago. The “lying flat” proponents expressed mild depression and passive resistance to the pressures of materialism and capitalism by intentionally reducing their participation in the hustle-driven work culture. Commentators, including novelist Liao Zenghu, have interpreted these movements as quiet acts of rebellion against societal expectations.

According to the South China Morning Post, the “rat person” identity is increasingly visible among Chinese students studying abroad in the UK. Many such students, confronted with the challenges of grey, rainy weather and high living costs, reportedly choose to stay indoors and minimise social interaction to conserve both mental and physical energy. This adaptation to environmental and economic conditions has contributed to the growth of the movement outside China’s borders.

Despite its anti-hustle ethos, the “rat person” trend has paradoxically begun to intersect with commercial interests. The unofficial mascot of the movement, a cartoon character called Big Rat, has been used on merchandise, generating over one million yuan (approximately US$140,000) in sales. Bloomberg has reported that influencers like Wang Yutong have capitalised on the movement’s popularity to market products such as skincare.

This commercialisation highlights the complex relationship between subcultural resistance and market forces in the 21st century, where even movements opposing traditional capitalism can become commodified. As the trend continues to evolve, it remains to be seen how the “rat person” lifestyle will shape and be shaped by wider cultural and economic dynamics. The Guardian is reporting on this emerging social phenomenon, capturing the nuances of a lifestyle that challenges conventional ambitions while navigating the realities of contemporary life.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://thechinaproject.com/2023/02/22/rat-rat-i-chinese-youth-claim-the-rat-as-spirit-animal-in-latest-internet-subculture/> - This article discusses the 'rat rat' phenomenon among Chinese youth, highlighting a shift towards a more passive lifestyle and reduced work ethic, aligning with the 'rat person' movement's emphasis on minimal ambition and basic comforts.
2. <https://www.whatsonweibo.com/resisting-the-rat-race-from-chinas-buddhist-youth-to-lying-flat-movement/> - This piece explores the 'lying flat' movement in China, a predecessor to the 'rat person' trend, where individuals consciously reduce their participation in the competitive work culture, reflecting a passive resistance to societal expectations.
3. <https://www.whatsonweibo.com/resisting-the-rat-race-from-chinas-buddhist-youth-to-lying-flat-movement/> - The article also delves into the 'Buddhist Youth' mentality, characterized by a passive approach to life and work, which parallels the 'rat person' movement's focus on minimal ambition and basic comforts.
4. <https://www.whatsonweibo.com/resisting-the-rat-race-from-chinas-buddhist-youth-to-lying-flat-movement/> - The discussion on 'involution' in this article sheds light on the societal pressures leading to movements like 'lying flat' and 'rat person,' where individuals opt out of the relentless pursuit of success and materialism.
5. <https://www.whatsonweibo.com/resisting-the-rat-race-from-chinas-buddhist-youth-to-lying-flat-movement/> - The article examines how the 'lying flat' movement serves as a form of resistance against the 'rat race,' a concept that resonates with the 'rat person' movement's critique of societal expectations and work culture.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/94150b8e-f17c-453d-a0e8-a71ef4423b82> - This report highlights the experiences of Chinese students in the UK, many of whom adopt a 'rat person' lifestyle by staying indoors and minimizing social interactions to conserve energy, reflecting the movement's influence beyond China.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/apr/29/the-rat-person-trend-is-here-and-i-thoroughly-approve> - Please view link - unable to able to access data