

Housing Tenure and Residential Mobility in Urban China: Analysis of Survey Data

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Abstract

Twenty-plus years of reform have brought about a highly complex system of housing tenure in urban China. While the traditional work unit housing under rental occupancy remains the dominating tenure mode, an increasing number of urban households have become owners under various forms of subsidized homeownership. Also there is now a segment of the population who directly buys or rent in the open market. The present paper analyzes data derived from a survey of movers to newly completed "commodity housing" in Beijing and Guangzhou conducted in 1996. The findings show that despite the many attempts at privatization and commodification, in Beijing private housing has become almost non-existent after move. In Guangzhou the open market sector is better developed and a sizeable number of households have opted to move from subsidized to non-subsidized housing. Household income, CCP membership, and type of enterprise are found to be significant variables underlying this tenure change. The findings also reveal that while the direction of movement is significantly related to the current tenure, apparently it is unrelated to whether the move involves a change in tenure status.