

# **Housing conditions of the floating population under the double residential status and the factors affecting them: a case study in Fujian Province\***

**Lin Liyue; Zhu Yu**

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**Abstract:** Based on a survey conducted in six cities in Fujian Province, this paper examines housing conditions of the floating population in their migration destinations and the factors affecting them. The results indicate that the double residential status (i.e. the characteristic of circulation) of the floating population and their “sojourners” mentality have a more significant effect on their housing conditions in the cities, than the *Hukou* system and their individual characteristics. Moreover, this effect leads to the “abnormal” effects of some individual factors including education and income on their housing conditions. Finally, some policy suggestions are put forward accordingly based on the results.

**Key Words:** the floating population; housing conditions; the double residential status

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## **Introduction**

With the deepening of China’s reform and opening-up and its social economic development since the 1990s, the increasing number of the floating population gives rise to a series of related problems concerning their employment, income, housing and education of their children. Recently, governments at all levels have taken many effective measures to tackle these problems and have gradually solved some highlighted ones, such as the delayed payment of the migrant workers and the education of their children.

Habitation is one of the most important conditions in survival and development of human beings; consequently, housing has become one of the greatest concerns of people, especially the floating population, who are far away from their hometowns and are more likely to be insufficiently equipped with stable and appropriate housing conditions. However, an overview of the academic researches concerning the floating population shows that the explanation on their housing conditions is still weak in the related studies, and even less has been done on their housing conditions under the double residential status and the factors affecting them. The double residential status is one of the most important characteristics distinguishing the floating population from local residents of their migrant destinations. In the current studies on the residence of the floating population, it is imperative to examine and present empirical evidences on the housing conditions of

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the floating population in the cities and the factors affecting and determining them as well.

Based on the data collected by the project “Migration trends of the floating population and their effects on China’s urbanization processes” in six cities in Fujian Province, this paper analyzes housing conditions of the floating population in the cities. Trying to answer the questions above, it uses a multi-regression model and estimates the major determinants of their housing conditions and their effects. Finally, based on the analysis, several proposals are made to promote solving the housing problems of the floating population.

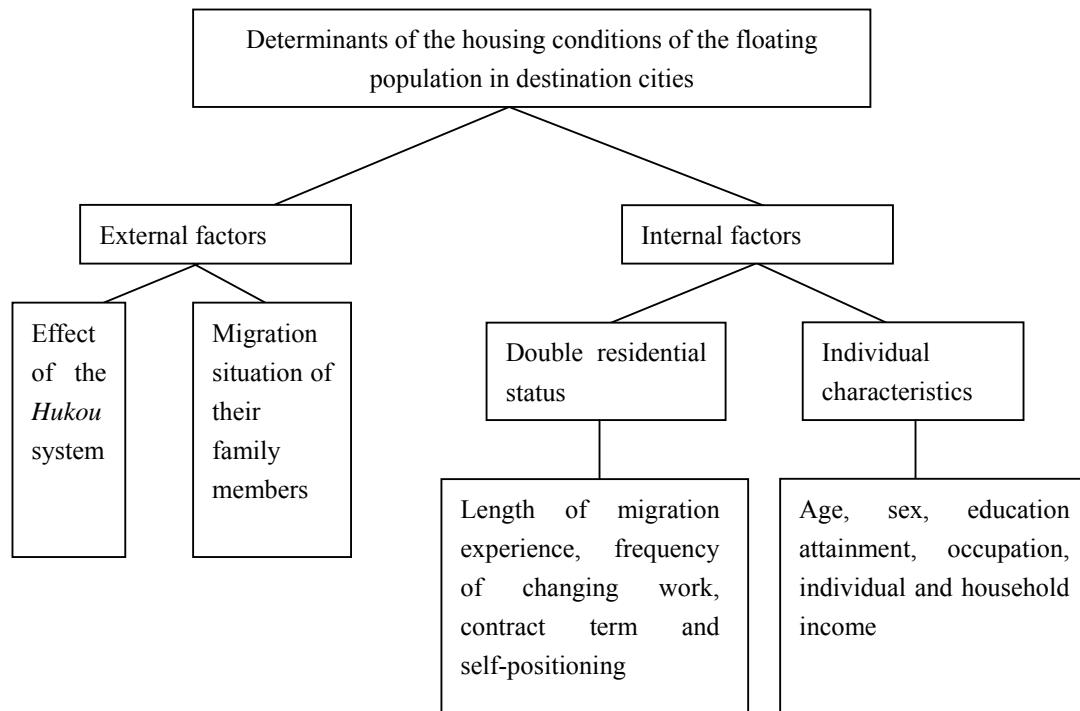
### **Literature review and research hypotheses**

Though few in number, several studies in recent years concerning the housing conditions of the floating population and the factors affecting them (Wu and Wang, 2002; Jiang, Pang and Zhang, 2005; Zhang, 2005; Jiang, 2006), have laid a solid foundation for this paper. However, literature review and analysis show that the existing studies have the following two limitations within their analytical frameworks. Firstly, the studies treat the floating population as a homogeneous group, while ignoring the diversification within them and their changing process of development, and the reasons beyond the *Hukou* system and the urban-rural dual structure that result in the floating population’s poor housing conditions. Secondly, the targets of relevant policies are an easier management of the floating population and promoting their settlement in the cities, while neglecting the housing need of the floating population in the migration process under the double residential status. In fact, in the actual migration process, the floating population is not a homogeneous group, and it can be divided into three groups including those who settle down in the cities, keep circulating between rural and urban areas, and return to their hometowns. The floating population with different migration intentions varies from one another in terms of ways of housing-acquisition, housing conditions, housing demands and housing expenses. Therefore, the diversification of the floating population should be taken into account within the system when constructing the theoretical framework, in order to formulate some policy suggestions catering to the floating population with different housing demands. Meanwhile, the existence of the *Hukou* system and the urban-rural dual structure is not the only factor affecting the poor housing conditions of the floating population. Evidence home and abroad shows that even without hurdles like the *Hukou* system, a substantial proportion of the floating population may still choose to return to their hometowns or remain in circulation between places of origin and destinations. Their final destinations are not always the cities where they are currently living and working, which are only temporary residence for them and do not provide them with a sense of belonging. Therefore, it is impossible for these people to buy housing in the migration destinations or to spend most of their income renting well-equipped houses to improve their housing conditions. Therefore, we believe that the housing conditions of the floating population in the cities are not only related to the *Hukou* system and the urban-rural dual structure, but closely related to their “sojourners” mentality as well, in which they regard the present residence as a temporary place and are unwilling to invest in housing under the double residential status (Zhu, 2007). As a result, it is essential to estimate and analyze the practical significance of the double residential status (i.e. the characteristic of circulation) of the floating population and their “sojourners” mentality in their housing conditions and the possible negative effects, in order to provide us with guidelines to take necessary measures. It is also worthwhile to note that in recent years some scholars have discussed the housing conditions of the urban residents and rural-urban floating population in China, and have found that the socioeconomic characteristics of a family (i.e. age, education attainment, occupation, total of family member, etc.) had significant effects on their housing conditions (Jiang, Pang and Zhang, 2005; Yi, 2007). Therefore, to provide a

comprehensive explanation for the influence mechanism of the housing conditions of the floating population, their individual characteristics should be taken into consideration. Not only can it explain the individual differences in housing conditions of the floating population moving into the same city, but it can reveal the factors affecting the housing conditions of the floating population in a comprehensive way.

Based on the above analysis, the following framework is developed in this paper to explain the housing conditions of the floating population in the cities and the determinants affecting them (Fig.1). The dependent variables in the model include ways of housing-acquisition, per-capita floor space, and the housing quality index covering seven aspects of housing. The independent variables can be divided into external factors and internal ones. China’s unique *Hukou* system and the migration situation of their family members belong to the external factors, while the internal factors consist of their individual characteristics including education, employment and income, their double residential status (i.e. the characteristic of circulation) and their “sojourners” mentality. The hypotheses on the interrelation between the main dependent and independent variables are as the followings:

**Fig. 1 A theoretical model on the housing conditions of the floating population**



(1) The existing studies on housing conditions in urban China show that socioeconomic characteristics of a family is an important factor affecting their housing conditions. For example, the older one gets, the better housing conditions one has; those who are better educated or enjoy a higher income are more likely to possess better housing conditions. Based on these results, our research assumes that the individual characteristics including age, sex, education attainment and income of the floating population affect their housing conditions in the cities, with education attainment and income exerting positively effects. Besides, the migration of their family members with them plays an active role in improving their housing conditions, and those moving together

with their spouses and children usually have better housing conditions than those who don't.

(2) As one of the material requirements for the floating population to live in the cities, housing is a prerequisite for them to settle down, and it impossible for those without houses to do so. As a result, the floating population with different migration intentions will have different housing conditions in the cities. We assume that the floating population under the double residential status is reluctant to spend too much money on urban housing, because they do not have a sense of belonging to the cities they are working, which only mean temporary places to them. As a result, all this will have negative effects on their housing conditions.

(3) China's *Hukou* system is linked with a series of welfare provision concerning employment, housing, education and social security. Most scholars believe that as an important factor in city life closely related with the *Hukou* status, housing is still difficult to obtain for the majority of the floating population (Chan & Zhang, 1999; Wang Murie, 2000; Solinger, 1999; World Bank, 1997). Therefore, we assume that without urban *Hukou* status, the floating population in the cities cannot integrate into the urban housing system, and this will constrain the improvement of their housing conditions in the cities.

### **Methodology and data sources**

Data used in this paper was collected through a survey conducted in six cities in Fujian Province from August to October, 2006, by the research team of the project "Migration trends of the floating population and their effects on China's urbanization processes" supported by the Humanity and Social Science Foundation, State Education Ministry of China, in collaboration with the Fujian Survey Organization of China State Statistical Bureau. Multiple stratified sampling procedures were first used for selecting respondents. Firstly, six cities were selected: Fuzhou (the provincial capital), Xiamen (a city designated by the State with an independent planning status from the province), Quanzhou and Sanming (two prefecture-level cities), Jinjiang and Fuqing (two county-level cities). Secondly, as the proportion of the number of the floating population employed in the secondary sector compared with that in the tertiary sector was 1.6:1 according to the 2000 census, three enterprises in the secondary sector and two in the tertiary sector with more than 100 employees were randomly selected for each city, following systematic random sampling principles with the number of enterprise employee as the sampling identifier. Finally, based on the record of employees provided by each enterprise, the stratified method ("white collar" and "blue collar") and the proportional random sampling method were used to choose 20 employees from each enterprise. The survey yielded a total of 600 valid responses (Table 1). Though the sample size is not big compared with some related references, the characteristics of the respondents are generally consistent with those of the floating population shown in the 2000 census of Fujian Province and the research report on Chinese migrant workers conducted by the project team of the State Council's Research Center (the project team of the State Council's Research Center, 2006), and can reflect rather clearly the overall situation of the floating population in Fujian Province. The data and the results of the analysis are of certain reference value for understanding the housing conditions of the floating population in Fujian Province and in China's costal areas as well.

**Table 1 Characteristics of the respondents <sup>①</sup>**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>	17-19	7.3
	20-24	36.3
	25-29	24.8
	30-34	17.2
	34-39	8.8
	40-44	4.2
	45-49	1.3
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Male</b>	49.8
	<b>Female</b>	50.2
<b>Places of origin</b>	<b>Fujian</b>	32.5
	<b>Outside Fujian</b>	67.5
<b>Education attainment</b>	<b>Illiterate or semiliterate</b>	1.8
	<b>Primary school</b>	6.3
	<b>Junior high school</b>	49.2
	<b>Senior high school</b>	22.8
	<b>Vocational school</b>	14.7
	<b>College level or higher</b>	5.2
<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Married</b>	49.0
	<b>Single</b>	51.0
<b>Hukou status</b>	<b>Agricultural</b>	81.8
	<b>Non-agricultural</b>	17.8
	<b>Others</b>	0.3

### **Descriptive analysis of the housing conditions of the floating population in destination cities**

#### **1. Housing is mainly acquired through rental housing provided by local residents and by living in the dormitories provided by their work units**

For urban residents in China, there are at least three ways to obtain housing, including purchasing allocated public housing, commercial housing through market mechanism, and affordable housing through participation in “housing project for low-income urban residents” promoted by the government (Wu and Wang, 2002). Since 1999, welfare-oriented public housing distribution system has become a thing of the past. Urban families with average or higher income can solve their housing problem by purchasing commercial housing, and those with low income can purchase

<sup>①</sup> Data in this paper are from those collected by the research team, except those specifically mentioned.

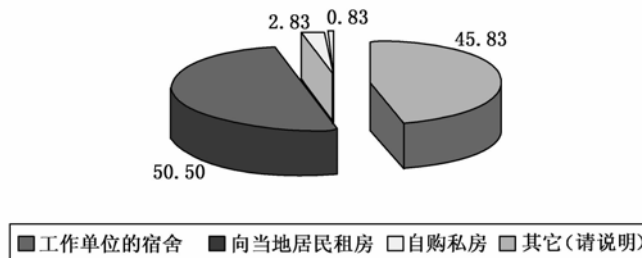
affordable housing with the price guided by the government. In addition to purchasing housing with property rights, rental housing is also a way to solve their housing problems. There are three forms of rental housing, including continuing public rental housing, commercial rental housing and subsidized rental housing developed by the government (Zhang, 2005). Data in the 2000 census in Fujian Province show that in 2000, 70.9% of the family household members of urban residents owned the property rights of their housing. In 2005, though the number of the residents who rent housing increased, 64.0 % of the residents still possessed the property rights of their housing (Table 2). Compared with urban residents, the floating population has rather limited housing choices. Without their own housing, most of them rely on rental housing or live in the dormitories provided by their work units, so only 2.83% of them choose to purchase their own housing (Fig. 2). The low possession of the housing property rights of the floating population reflects their unsettled nature. On one hand, the floating population is excluded from the urban housing system, thus enjoys neither the opportunity of welfare-oriented public housing distribution nor the right of affordable housing and subsidized rental housing; on the other hand, low income, unstable jobs and high mobility make them unwilling and unable to participate in the commercial housing market open to everyone, so it is a practical choice for them to live in the simple dormitories provided by their work units or rely on rental housing.

**Table 2 Ways of housing-acquisition of the urban residents in Fujian Province**

Year	Self-built housing	Purchasing commercial housing	Purchasing affordable housing	Purchasing original public housing	Renting public housing	Renting commercial housing	Others	Total
2000	46.1	8.1	4.5	12.2	10.8	9.8	8.5	100.0
2005	38.3	11.8	4.2	9.7	5.4	21.7	9.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Yearbook of Economy and Society in Fujian Province ----The Volume of Urban Surveys (2006). Fuzhou: Fujian People’s Publishing House.

**Fig. 2 Ways of housing-acquisition of the floating population (%)**



**50.50%-- dormitories provided by their work units**

**45.83%-- rental housing from the local residents**

**2.83% -- buying their own housing**

**0.83%-- others**

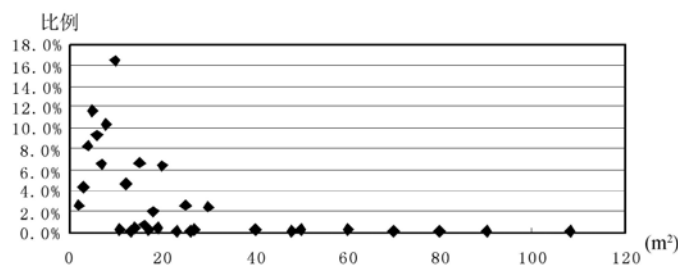
## 2. Poor housing quality and simple housing facilities

Apart from ways of housing-acquisition, housing conditions is also a key factor to measure the housing quality of the floating population. In terms of housing conditions, this paper uses two indexes: (1) The per-capita floor space is used to measure the crowding degree of floor space; (2) The housing quality index ( $=\sum X_i / 11$ ) synthesizes the qualitative description from seven aspects of housing conditions, which uses the following scale<sup>①</sup>. Based on all these, the living quality of the floating population is calculated.

### 2.1 Small per-capita floor space and crowded living area

The per-capita floor space of the floating population in Fujian Province (Fig.3) is rather small, mostly in the range of 2 to 10  $\text{m}^2$ . This is much lower than 24.8  $\text{m}^2$ , the average net area of floor space of urban residents in Fujian Province in 2005 (Fujian Statistical Bureau, 2006). Therefore, compared with urban residents, the floating population has a much smaller area of floor space, with crowded space as an important housing characteristic. On the one hand, the majority of the urban residents live in the residence they buy for themselves with relatively bigger floor space; on the other hand, a part of the floating population live in the dormitories provided by their employers with small floor space. Besides, in most cases, some members of the floating population will choose to work in the cities, leaving other family members staying in their hometowns. This pattern of circular flow shows that they do not regard the cities as permanent places for living and cannot have a sense of belonging to the cities. As a result, to save living expenses, they do not incline to buy their own housing or rent housing with large floor space in the cities. The characteristic mentioned above is also evidenced by international migration especially the migration of illegal immigrants, who immigrate to those countries not for getting permanent residence, but for earning in a short time as much money as they can. Take Holland for example, most of the illegal immigrants there choose to live in single rooms, whether they own the housing or rent it, with few choosing more independent living types and many spending little on housing (Burgers, 1998).

Fig.3 Per-capita floor space distribution



### 2.2 Incomplete housing facilities and poor housing conditions

Based on the calculation of the housing quality indexes, the average housing quality index of the floating population is 0.55 (Full mark = 1.0), which shows their incomplete housing facilities and

<sup>①</sup> Selection of indexes in this scale takes as reference the selected standards of the housing quality indexes in Wu and Wang (2002). For gas/liquefied gas, 0 = not equipped, 1 = equipped; For tap water, 0 = not equipped, 1 = equipped; For housing purpose, 0 = for both living and working, 1 = for living only; For kitchen, 0 = not equipped, 1 = share with others, 2 = independent; For shower facilities, 0 = not equipped, 1 = share with others, 2 = independent; For the comparison with those in their hometowns, 0 = inferior, 1 = the same, 2 = superior.

poor housing conditions. To get a better understanding of the housing conditions of the floating population in the cities, Fuzhou, Quanzhou and Xiamen were selected as examples to make a comparison between the housing conditions of the floating population and those of the local residents. Table 3 reveals that there is a great gap between the housing conditions of the floating population in these three cities and those of the local residents in terms of per-capita floor space and housing quality index. This is not only related with their exclusion from the urban housing system, but with the household strategy of the floating population themselves, who believe they are only sojourners to the cities (Nelson, 1976; Goldstein, 1993; Solinger, 1999). They concern more about whether or not the housing is located in a convenient place for work, rather than the floor space and housing conditions. The supplementary survey<sup>①</sup> conducted in the previous three cities in July, 2007 by the research team shows that more than 50 % members of the floating population have the above concern, with less than 27 % regarding floor space and housing conditions, 17 % regarding rent and 4.7% regarding better education for their children as their major concerns respectively. Generally speaking, only those who plan a long-term stay in the cities are more willing to spend money on better and stable housing. In our survey, 44.4 % members of the floating population who incline to settle down in the cities concern more about the housing conditions than that of those who choose to return to their hometowns (15.1%) or keep in circulation (21.5%). The fact identifies with our point that the floating population, who regard themselves as sojourners to the cities, display different behavior patterns from the local residents in household strategy, and are reluctant to spend their meager income on better housing conditions.

**Table 3 Regional differences of housing conditions of the floating population**

	<u>Floating population</u>		<u>Local residents</u>	
	Per-capita floor space	Housing quality index	Per-capita floor space	Housing quality Index
<b>Fuzhou</b>	10.86	0.68	32.50	0.85
<b>Quanzhou</b>	9.62	0.56	30.30	0.70
<b>Xiamen</b>	11.18	0.65	35.40	0.79

(Note: P < 0.0001.)

Source: (1) Statistics Yearbook of Economy and Society in Fujian Province ----The Volume of Urban Surveys (2006). Fuzhou: Fujian People’s Publishing House. (2) Calculated from the data of the 2000 census of Fujian Province.

**Regression analysis on the determinants of the housing conditions of the floating population**

Based on the descriptive analysis above, this paper uses SPSS 13.0 for data processing and model estimation, chooses two typical housing indexes---- per-capita floor space and housing quality index to measure each sample’s present housing conditions, and uses multi-regression model to examine

<sup>①</sup> The research team conducted a supplementary survey on the floating population in Fuzhou, Xiamen and Quanzhou in July 2007, by means of questionnaires and interviews. The objects of the survey are members of the floating population working in small enterprises and self-employed ones, who are not covered by the project of Ministry of Education of China. According to the distribution and employment of the floating population in Fujian Province, 320 questionnaires were sent out in proportion to their distribution in the three cities with 300 valid ones received.

the determinants. The results of the multivariate regression models showing the effects of independent variables on the floating population's housing conditions are presented in Table 4. Model 1 and model 2 are multi-regression equations with per-capital living space and housing quality index of the samples as dependent variables respectively, for the purpose of finding out the main determinants of the housing conditions of the floating population. Though the effects and the directions of most independent variables are generally consistent with the previous theoretical hypothesis, several variables produce results inconsistent with the hypothesis, which deserve a thorough analysis.

Firstly, in two variables relating to the effect of the *Hukou* system---- The place of *Hukou* registration and the *Hukou* status, the effect of the former on the per-capita floor space of the floating population is statistically significant in model 1, while others do not have statistically significant effect. The fact that the floating population from urban areas has better housing conditions than those from rural areas may lie in the following reasons. Those from urban areas can adapt themselves more easily to the urban life, have a much clearer self-positioning and are more likely to settle down in cities, and at the same time, they have better economic conditions and are more willing to improve their housing conditions, which are also evidenced by the results of the survey. In the survey, 51.2 % members of the floating population from urban areas choose to settle down in this city, while only 31.5 % of those from rural areas make the same choice. Meanwhile, 11.4 % members of those from urban areas regard themselves as the local residents, much higher than that of those from rural areas (4.3%).

Secondly, fewer independent variables concerning individual characteristics and family background are significant. Some variables (sex, spouse, and migration situation of their spouses and children) have significant effects on their housing conditions, while others (marital status, age, occupation and income) do not. It is worthwhile to note that though education attainments of primary school and junior high school have significant effects on their housing conditions, the direction of these effects is negative, opposite to our hypothesis. The fact that female members have better housing conditions than male members is because that they prefer a long-term stay in the cities, regard cities as permanent places for living, thus have stronger settlement intentions in the cities and are more willing to spend money on improving their housing conditions. Whether or not the migrants move with their family members also has a statistically significant effect on their housing conditions, for compared with those who migrant alone to the cities, the migrants with spouses or even the whole families together will possibly incline to settle down in the cities in the future. Therefore, they regard urban housing as permanent place for living and survival, and are more willing to spend money on improving their housing conditions.

Finally, in the independent factors regarding the double residential status, all the selected variables have significant effects on the housing conditions of the floating population in the cities. For instance, length of migration experience has a great impact on housing conditions, to be more specific, if their length of migration exceeds two years, they will have better housing conditions than those with less than two years' migration experience. Besides, frequency of changing work, contract term, self-positioning and migration intention all reflect the stability and mobility of the floating population, and have great effects on their housing conditions. To be exact, those who change work less frequently and have longer contract term will have better housing conditions, because they usually have stable jobs and low mobility in the cities, and are more likely to settle down there. Housing conditions is one of the necessary material conditions for settlement in the cities, so in order to obtain better housing conditions they will display the same housing strategies and consumption behaviors as the urban residents. The members of the floating population who

regard themselves as urban residents and those who plan to settle down in the cities in the future usually have higher indexes on per-capita floor space and housing quality than other members. They have accepted city lifestyles psychologically and practically, so they can integrate more easily into the urban life and have a stronger sense of belonging to the cities. Compared with other members of the floating population, they can more easily afford living expenses of the cities in terms of social network and economic ability, and are able and more willing to spend money on housing in the cities. The effects of the variables above show that the temporary residence of the floating population and their “sojourners” mentality are of great importance to their housing conditions.

**Table 4 The results of the multi-regression on the determinants of the housing conditions of the floating population in migration destinations**

Independent variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	Beta	Sig.	B	Beta	Sig.
<b>Hukou status (ref=agricultural)</b>						
Non-agricultural	1.078	0.042	0.509	0.074	0.014	0.830
<b>Place of Hukou registration (ref=country)</b>						
City	3.192	0.153	0.018**	0.39	0.282	0.168
<b>Sex (ref=female)</b>						
Male	-4.319	-0.217	0.000*	-0.528	0.247	0.034**
<b>Age group (ref=20-29 years)</b>						
Others	0.537	0.027	0.621	-0.214	-0.054	0.353
<b>Marital status (ref=single)</b>						
Married	0.042	0.046	0.285	0.316	0.238	0.181
<b>Spouse (ref= not in the same city)</b>						
In the same place	2.410	0.107	0.042**	0.561	0.124	0.043**
<b>Children (ref=not in the same city)</b>						
In the same city	2.349	0.118	0.056***	0.589	0.148	0.018**
<b>Occupation①(ref=white collar)</b>						
Blue collar	-2.087	-0.070	0.218	-0.402	-0.067	0.259
<b>Education attainment (ref=illiterate or semiliterate)</b>						
Primary school	-5.428	-0.159	0.090***	-1.225	-0.188	0.069***
Junior high school	-6.229	-0.322	0.032**	-0.989	-0.255	0.078***
Senior high school (Vocational school)	-4.554	-0.224	0.126	-0.736	-0.181	0.243
College level or higher	6.183	0.116	0.146	0.166	0.016	0.853
<b>Household monthly income (ref=1502-2000 Yuan)</b>						
Below 1500 Yuan	-1.577	-0.053	0.296	0.367	0.058	0.043
More than 2000 Yuan	-1.854	-0.087	0.197	0.438	0.103	0.148
<b>Individual monthly income (ref=801-1000 Yuan)</b>						
Below 800 Yuan	-0.248	0.07	0.218	0.262	0.058	0.377
More than 1000 Yuan	1.447	1.064	0.288	0.609	0.150	0.034**
<b>Length of migration experience</b>						

<b>(ref=more than two years)</b>						
Less than two years	-2.257	-0.106	0.018**	-0.308	-0.078	0.079***
<b>Frequency of changing work</b>	-0.215	-0.076	0.012**	-0.071	-0.097	0.019**
<b>Contract term</b>						
<b>(ref=longer than 3 years)</b>						
Less than 3 years	-2.461	-0.010	0.078***	-1.831	-0.040	0.051***
<b>Self-positioning (ref=city residents)</b>						
Hometown residents	-3.561	-0.174	0.052***	-0.724	-0.191	0.033**
Both city and hometown residents	-1.486	-0.074	0.405	-0.618	-0.165	0.06***
<b>Migration intention (ref=settlement)</b>						
Keep in circulation	-1.847	-0.095	0.173	-0.212	-0.057	0.274
Return to hometown	-3.126	-0.151	0.033**	-0.075	-0.084	0.043**
<b>R2</b>		0.200			0.207	
<b>F</b>		3.277			2.949	

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(Notes: \* P < 0.001; \*\* P < 0.05; \*\*\* P < 0.1.) ①The paper divides the occupation of the floating population as “white collar” and “blue collar”, the former referring to those managerial, technical, office staff and others, the latter including service workers, production workers in manufacturing, construction, transport and others.

In general, the model indicates that the double residential status of the floating population has a more significant effect on their housing conditions in the migration destinations than the *Hukou* system and individual characteristics; in a sense, the existence of the double residential status is the cause of the insignificant and even “abnormal” effects of the latter two. The existing studies on the housing conditions in urban China (Yi, 2007; Jiang, Pang and Zhang, 2005) find that education attainment and income has a significant and positive effect on housing. However, from the results of the two models, it does not apply to the floating population under the double residential status. For them, a higher education attainment does not necessarily mean better housing conditions. Only when the education attainment of the floating population reaches college level or higher, they can have a positive but insignificant effect on their housing conditions. Furthermore, income does not have a significant effect on their housing conditions, either. That is to say, higher income does not necessarily guarantee better housing conditions. This fact may result from the following two reasons. On one hand, the majority of the floating population makes a living in the cities by selling labour, and in the participation of the city work and life they play a relatively single economic role, other than the role of a member of the society. Therefore, even those who are better educated or have higher income will not have a sense of belonging to the cities; instead, they just regard the cities as their temporary residence. They usually do not have high expectations for their housing, so if their housing conditions can satisfy their basic needs of living, they will feel satisfied and are reluctant to spend more money on it. Instead, they may prefer to save money through hard work in the cities and then return to their hometown building their own houses or buying housing in the counties near their hometowns. At present, in China’s central and western regions, many migrant workers go back to the counties near their hometowns purchasing their own housing (Sina, 2007). On the other hand, the majority of the floating population do not regard themselves as urban residents, so they take people in their hometowns as reference group instead of those urban residents, whose good housing conditions will not give them a sense of loss and will not force them to improve their housing conditions. In the interviews, some members of the floating population believe that the housing in their hometowns is the real embodiments of their housing conditions.

Those who can build houses with several floors in their hometowns are considered to be capable and respectable, with a higher socioeconomic position in their villages accordingly. The interviews show from another perspective that, our conclusions are different from those in the existing studies on housing conditions in urban China because the double residential status of the floating population has a great impact on their housing conditions, which is an important determinant usually neglected in the previous studies. The insignificant and even “abnormal” effects of the individual characteristics including education attainment, income and age actually reflect this phenomenon.

### **Conclusions and policy implications**

Analytical results in this paper show that compared with local residents, the floating population face limited housing choices, crowded floor space and inferior housing conditions. In all the alternative variables, the double residential status (i.e. the characteristic of circulation) of the floating population and their “sojourners” mentality have a most significant effect on their housing conditions in the cities, which provide important policy enlightenments for analyzing the determinants of their housing conditions. That is to say, those housing policies aimed at the urban residents and permanent migrating population do not all apply to the floating population, therefore, in the future policy-making the government should take into consideration the double residential status (i.e. the characteristic of circulation) of the floating population, their “sojourners” mentality and their different housing demands from the local residents.

At present, governments at all levels have taken some measures to solve the housing problems of the floating population in the cities, but the measures are not completely consistent with their housing intentions. For example, in some areas migrant workers have been covered by the housing provident fund system, but in fact not all of them are willing to participate in it. According to the survey conducted by China Economy Weekly in Beijing, only those young members of the floating population who plan to settle down in the cities are willing to participate in the system (Sina, 2007). Therefore, the government should respect their different intentions including settling down in the cities, keeping in circulation and returning to their hometowns, and spare no efforts to satisfy the housing needs of the floating population in different migration patterns. Firstly, for those who want to settle down in the cities, the similar housing policies to those of the urban residents can be made. For instance, (1) For those who are capable of purchasing housing, the government should consider making some housing policies similar to the affordable housing system; (2) For some who are temporarily unable to afford the housing, the government should also include them into the subsidized rental housing system for urban residents with lowest income; (3) For those who cannot afford the housing temporarily and are unqualified for applying for subsidized rental houses, the government can provide them with some affordable housing for rent, granted with a certain proportion of housing rent subsidies. Secondly, for those who plan to return to their hometowns or keep in circulation, the government should make some related policies based on their own intentions to satisfy the housing needs of the floating population in temporary migration pattern. For example, (1) For those who plan to build or buy housing in their hometowns, the government should make some effective policies in terms of tax, land and fund-raising channels, to help them settle down and buy housing in the nearby counties or build their own housing in their hometowns; (2) For those who plan to continue on rental housing in the cities, the government should also include them into the subsidized rental housing system for urban residents with lowest income. Meanwhile, national or local standards for social housing renting should be regulated regarding buildings, facilities, sanitation and environment, and a mandatory regulation should be made on the

implementation of the lowest standard; (3) For those who live in the dormitories provided by their employers, related departments should prescribe that all the employers should solve their housing problems and establish uniform standards concerning rooms, facilities, ventilation, lightening, bathroom, kitchen, dining room and telephone room, etc. For some members of the floating population who work in the same unit with their spouses, housing units suitable for couples should be offered if possible so as to provide them with legal protection in housing conditions.

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