

A Study on the Housing Tenure Choice Intentions of Youth and Its Influencing Factors from the Perspective of Population Migration: Evidence from a Field Survey in Zhejiang Province, China

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Abstract: China's urbanization has entered the middle and late stages, and young people have become the main force of urban-rural population migration. However, they generally face a dilemma between renting and purchasing housing due to high housing prices and an imperfect rental housing market, with significant differences in housing decisions between migrant youth and local youth. From the perspective of population migration, this paper conducts an empirical study based on survey data of 509 young people in Zhejiang Province, using descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and grouped OLS regression. The results show that the proportion of young people renting housing in Zhejiang is relatively high, and housing purchase pressure has become normalized. Pension insurance, family burden, and housing distress significantly affect youth's housing tenure choice, and higher education can effectively reduce the housing purchase pressure of renting youth. Population migration also shapes youth's housing behavior differently in terms of city hierarchy, individual characteristics, and family structure. This study reveals the internal mechanism of housing tenure choice decisions among youth in developed regions, providing a practical basis for optimizing housing security policies and promoting the urban integration of young people.

Keywords: Population Migration; Youth Rental Housing; Youth Housing; Housing Tenure Choice Intention

1. Research Background

China's urbanization drive has entered its middle and late stages, with young people emerging as the core group driving urban-rural population

mobility. In 2020, the urbanization rate of permanent young residents in China reached 71.1%, 7.2 percentage points higher than the overall national urbanization rate. Large-scale population agglomeration has given rise to rigid and pressing demand for urban housing. Relevant surveys show that 78.4% of interviewed young people face prominent housing pressure, and 84.0% regard housing conditions as the primary consideration for settling down.

Nevertheless, against the backdrop of high housing prices and an imperfect rental housing market, young people are generally caught in a dilemma between renting and purchasing housing. The housing tenure choices of migrant young people affect their urban citizen integration and family development plans. Though local young people are less affected by cross-regional mobility, notable differences remain in their decision-making mechanisms due to household registration restrictions, geographical locations and social security policies. Meanwhile, the household registration system, intergenerational financial support and traditional home-buying concepts further incline young people toward purchasing housing.

Existing studies have extensively explored young people's housing-related behaviors, yet few systematically distinguish the decision-making differences between the two groups from the perspective of population mobility, nor establish a unified analytical framework incorporating characteristics of citizenization stages, leaving the influencing mechanisms insufficiently explored.

From the perspective of population mobility, this paper focuses on the internal heterogeneity among youth groups, explores the disparities in housing renting and purchasing intentions as well as core influencing factors between the two

types of young people. It aims to provide references for interpreting youth housing behaviors, optimizing housing security policies and facilitating the orderly urban integration of young people.

2. Literature Review

The push-pull theory holds that population mobility results from the combined effects of push forces from origin areas, pull forces from destination areas and intermediate obstacles (Lee, 1966). Since the reform and opening up, China has steadily advanced the reform of the household registration system and gradually relaxed policy restrictions on free population mobility, transforming the main obstacles to floating population development from regional access barriers to citizenization dilemmas.

Based on field surveys on floating populations in Beijing and Shanghai, Wu et al. [1] classified their housing acquisition channels into three categories: commercial housing purchase, private market rental housing, and staff dormitories provided by employers. Given the close linkage between the household registration system and urban housing as well as public security systems, coupled with the high access thresholds for indemnificatory housing, most floating populations are unable to obtain housing resources through formal security channels [2], making rental housing their primary housing option in destination cities. Nevertheless, the current underdeveloped housing rental market fails to effectively safeguard the basic housing rights and interests of floating populations, continuously weakening their willingness for long-term residence and residential stability, and further profoundly shaping their housing renting and purchasing intentions and decision-making behaviors.

As a concentrated reflection of floating populations' inclination to settle down permanently in destination cities, the matching degree between housing willingness and individual affordability directly determines their housing decision-making orientation. Relevant research based on the 2016 CLDS data confirmed [3] that housing prices in registered permanent residence areas significantly hinder inter-provincial population mobility, with distinct regional differences that are more prominent in inland regions. Zhou et al. [4] found through micro-data research that the unaffordability of housing caused by high

housing prices exerts a prominent crowding-out effect on floating populations, and high-skilled floating residents without owned houses see their home-purchasing intentions markedly restrained due to housing affordability constraints. By constructing the housing price-to-income ratio for multi-dimensional analysis, Li et al. [5] found that the impact of rising housing prices on floating populations' settlement willingness varies greatly across groups in terms of urban public services, household registration attributes, generational characteristics and migration distance. Such differentiated influences further extend to housing choices, leading to obvious divergence in floating populations' renting and purchasing behaviors.

Most previous studies focused on the impact of single factors such as household registration and housing prices on floating populations' housing decisions. In fact, their housing choices are driven by multiple interacting factors. Yang et al. [6] pointed out that family economic attributes, individual demographic characteristics, mobility features and urban housing prices jointly affect floating populations' housing decisions. Specifically, groups without long-term migration intentions and those migrating without their whole families are more inclined to rent houses. In terms of factor attributes, a study on young migrant groups in Beijing by Sun and Li [7] indicated that ascribed factors including household registration and family economic status exert far greater influences on housing access than achieved factors such as educational background and occupation. Against the backdrop of high housing prices, young people can hardly afford houses relying solely on personal savings, and their housing acquisition is highly dependent on family social connections and intergenerational wealth transfer, which continuously narrows the room for personal efforts to accumulate wealth. Research on young people in first-tier cities by Fan [8] also verified that intergenerational support aggravates the polarization of housing resources among young people and solidifies the urban residential pattern, which echoes the crowding-out effect of high housing prices.

In addition, floating populations' housing intentions are not static. Chai et al. [9] found that floating populations flexibly adjust their housing choices according to urban attributes of destination cities and their own personal conditions. Zhang et al. [10] further

supplemented relevant conclusions through research on floating populations in the Yangtze River Delta: longer migration distance, higher urban hierarchy and housing prices in destination cities make floating populations more likely to choose informal rental housing; while longer migration duration, expanded family size, higher educational attainment and more stable occupation significantly boost their willingness to purchase houses. The dynamic balance between these two sets of factors forms differentiated housing selection patterns.

In general, existing studies mainly target the overall floating population, while researches specifically focusing on youth groups and systematically analyzing their housing decision-making mechanisms remain insufficient. Accordingly, based on empirical survey data in Zhejiang Province, this paper deeply explores the specific impacts of core variables including urban housing prices and settlement willingness on the housing renting and purchasing decisions of young floating populations.

3. Data and Research Methods

3.1 Data Sources and Basic Statistical Characteristics

The data adopted in this study were collected through targeted online questionnaires distributed to young people aged 14 to 35. The

questionnaire consists of four major sections: personal basic information, economic and employment status, family structure and financial burden, as well as current housing situation and housing intention. The samples cover all 11 prefecture-level cities in Zhejiang Province, among which respondents with urban household registration account for 59.3% and those with rural household registration account for 40.7%.

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed, and 514 were retrieved with a recovery rate of 85.7%. After data cleaning including elimination of duplicate values, outliers and samples missing core variables, 509 valid samples were finally retained, with an effective sample rate of 99.0%.

The questionnaire samples show typical demographic characteristics of youth groups, as illustrated in Figure 1. In terms of gender distribution, males account for 55.8% (284 respondents) and females account for 44.2% (225 respondents), presenting an overall balanced gender ratio. The age structure is mainly concentrated in the critical period of career development: the 20-25 age group takes the largest proportion at 31.8%, followed by the 26-31 age group at 28.5%. The 14-19 and 31-35 age groups account for 19.4% and 20.2% respectively, forming a core youth group dominated by people aged 20 to 31.

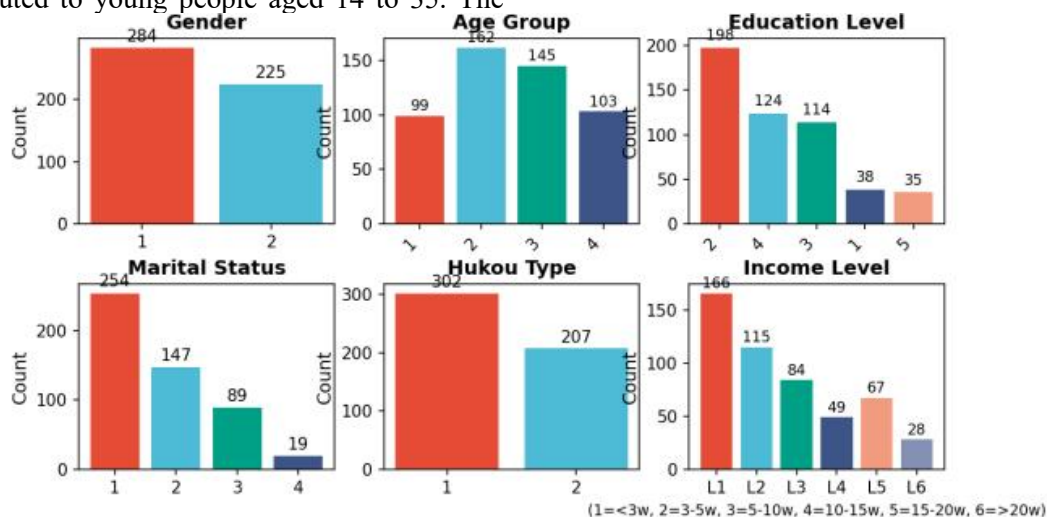


Figure 1. Distribution of Sample Characteristics

Educational attainment shows a trend of higher academic qualifications. Bachelor's degree holders take the largest proportion at 38.7%, followed by those with master's degree or above at 24.5%, college diploma holders at 22.2%, senior high school education and below only accounting for 7.4%, and doctorate holders

making up 7.2%. This distribution reflects abundant human capital reserves of the samples, which is consistent with the reality that economically developed Zhejiang Province is attractive to highly educated talents.

In terms of marital status, unmarried people constitute the main part at 50.0%, married

respondents account for 28.8%, those in romantic relationships take up 17.3%, and divorced or widowed people make up 3.9%. It mirrors the age structure of the samples, who are in the life stage transitioning from being single to starting a family. As for household registration structure, urban registered residents account for 59.3% and rural registered residents for 40.7%, reflecting the household registration differentiation amid urbanization.

The income distribution presents a right-skewed pattern. The low-income group with an annual income below 30,000 yuan ranks first at 33.1%, those earning 30,000 to 50,000 yuan account for

22.6%, and people with an income of 50,000 to 100,000 yuan take up 16.3%, while the high-income group with over 150,000 yuan only accounts for 18.4%. This structure reveals prominent income stratification among young people. Despite the generally high educational level of the samples, most of them are still in the early stage of their careers with limited income.

Descriptive statistics of continuous variables further verify this view. The average income value is 2.63 (corresponding to the income range of 30,000-50,000 yuan) and the median is 2.0, indicating that the overall income level of the samples is not high (see Table 1).

Table 1. Overall Sample Data

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Age Group	509	2.495088	1.022616	2.0	1.0	4.0
Education Level	509	2.842829	1.088076	3.0	1.0	5.0
Income Level	509	2.646365	1.590044	2.0	1.0	6.0
Family Size	509	3.742633	1.128797	4.0	1.0	8.0
Family Burden	509	2.797217	1.655196	3.0	0.0	6.0
Housing Distress	509	3.593320	1.979629	4.0	0.0	8.0

3.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

In this study, the dependent variables are set as follows: (1) current housing status, a binary variable (house purchase = 1, house rental = 0); (2) perceived housing purchase pressure, measured by a 5-point scale (1 = almost no pressure to 5 = great pressure), which is only applicable to renters.

The independent variables cover four dimensions: individual-level factors (gender, age group, educational attainment, marital status, household registration, annual income, working years), family-level factors (family size, family financial burden, number of real estates owned by parents), employment security factors (housing provident fund, endowment insurance), and psychological cognitive factors (housing distress index ranging from 0 to 8, housing price expectation, urban satisfaction).

A multiple regression model is adopted. Following the nested model strategy, variables of personal characteristics, economic factors, family factors, employment security and psychological cognition are incorporated step by step. Odds ratios (OR) and pseudo R-squared values are reported. For the sub-sample of renters, an OLS regression model is constructed with housing purchase pressure as the dependent variable, into which personal characteristics, family burden and urban factors are gradually introduced.

3.2.1 Main analysis: factors influencing current housing status

To systematically examine the explanatory power of different types of variables, three nested models are established (see Table 2). Model 1 only includes individual demographic characteristics; Model 2 further incorporates economic factors and employment security variables on this basis; Model 3 adds psychological cognitive variables to form the full model. Based on the estimation results of the full model, core findings are interpreted in depth.

(1) Paradoxical negative effect of endowment insurance: welfare dependence or enhanced mobility? The probability of home purchase among young people with endowment insurance is merely 32.5% of that of those without endowment insurance ($(OR=0.325, p<0.001)$), representing the strongest and most counterintuitive effect among all variables. Traditional theories expect that endowment insurance, as an indicator of stable employment, facilitates home buying by improving loan eligibility and certainty of future income, whereas the empirical results show the opposite trend.

From the perspectives of sociology and population mobility, this paradox reflects the dual impacts of welfare systems on youth mobility. On the one hand, young people covered by endowment insurance are mostly

employed in public institutions or large formal enterprises with stable careers, so they have less incentive to accumulate wealth via home ownership for elderly care, which weakens the traditional home-buying mindset. On the other hand, institutional barriers still exist in the cross-regional transfer and continuation of endowment insurance. To maintain career and residential mobility and avoid sunk costs and spatial lock-in brought by home purchase, young

people prefer flexible rental housing, which conforms to the core feature of "space of flows" in the network society. In addition, the crowding-out effect of high housing prices in core cities of Zhejiang such as Hangzhou and Ningbo makes it unaffordable even for highly educated young people with stable jobs to buy houses despite their willingness, further reinforcing the negative effect of endowment insurance.

Table 2. Key Predictor Data

Variable	M1 OR	M1 95%CI	M2 OR	M295%CI	M3OR	M3 95%CI
Gender (Male=1)	1.344	[0.96, 1.89]	1.312	[0.94, 1.84]	1.257	[0.90, 1.75]
Age Group	0.849	[0.70, 1.03]	0.800	[0.61, 1.05]	0.795	[0.60, 1.06]
Education	1.038	[0.87, 1.24]	1.071	[0.89, 1.29]	1.035	[0.86, 1.25]
Married (Yes=1)	0.733	[0.48, 1.12]	0.883	[0.57, 1.37]	0.782	[0.50, 1.22]
Urban Hukou	0.862	[0.55, 1.35]	0.814	[0.58, 1.14]	0.770	[0.54, 1.10]
Income	—	—	0.873	[0.74, 1.04]	0.844	[0.71, 1.00]
Family Size	—	—	0.950	[0.76, 1.18]	1.002	[0.80, 1.26]
Family Burden	—	—	0.856	[0.72, 1.02]	0.819	[0.68, 0.99]
Housing Fund (Yes=1)	—	—	1.117	[0.72, 1.73]	1.044	[0.67, 1.62]
Pension (Yes=1)	—	—	0.345	[0.22, 0.55]	0.323	[0.20, 0.52]
Work Years	—	—	0.821	[0.70, 0.96]	0.876	[0.75, 1.02]
Housing Distress	—	—	—	—	1.141	[1.03, 1.27]
Policy Awareness	—	—	—	—	1.247	[0.79, 1.96]
City Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	1.103	[0.79, 1.55]
Pseudo R ²	0.014		0.075		0.088	
AIC	702.9		665.7		662.9	
N	514		509		509	

(2) Inhibitory effect of family burden: crowding-out mechanism of intergenerational support Each unit increase in family burden (number of elderly dependents and children to support) reduces the probability of home purchase by 18.5% (OR=0.815, p<0.05). This finding contradicts the "six wallets" theory. Although multi-generational families may provide more financial support for home purchase, the responsibilities of supporting the elderly and raising children simultaneously squeeze young people's disposable income and savings capacity.

From the perspective of intergenerational equity, this reveals the inherent contradiction of Chinese familism. The younger generation are beneficiaries of resources from the older generation in the form of home-buying financial gifts, while they also undertake intergenerational support obligations. When family burden rises, the inhibitory effect of family responsibilities outweighs the supportive effect of intergenerational financial aid. Especially under the "4-2-1" family structure consisting of four

elderly people, two working-age adults and one child, young people are trapped in the sandwich-generation pressure, turning home purchase from improved housing demand into extravagant consumption. Moreover, although expanded family size raises the demand for larger living space, improved housing purchase is hardly achievable amid high housing prices. Young people thus tend to rent houses and adjust living space flexibly to adapt to family changes, which further lowers their willingness to purchase houses.

(3) Positive feedback loop of housing distress: anxiety-driven decision or capability screening? Each one-point rise in the housing distress index (range: 0–8) increases the home purchase probability by 14.2% (OR=1.142, p<0.05). At first glance, this verifies the demand-driven hypothesis that housing distress promotes home purchase: rental-related troubles including frequent relocation, rent pressure and residential instability stimulate home-buying intention and translate it into actual purchase behavior.

Furthermore, comparisons among nested models

indicate that the influence of marital status on home purchase is significantly weakened after controlling for economic variables ((OR=0.71) in Model 1 vs. (OR=0.89) in Model 2). It suggests that marital status does not affect housing purchase decisions directly, but exerts indirect effects through mediating variables such as income and family burden. The correlation between life course events and housing decisions is mediated by economic resources.

The housing provident fund fails to reach statistical significance in regression analysis ((OR=1.04, $p>0.05$) in Model 3). The main reason lies in the high multicollinearity between housing provident fund and endowment insurance ($r=0.68$), both of which symbolize employment in formal sectors. The strong negative effect of endowment insurance masks the potential promotional effect of housing provident funds on home purchase.

3.2.2 Group Analysis: Influencing Factors of Home Purchase Pressure among Non-homeowners

Non-homeowners, namely renters, constitute a major participant group in the housing market, and their home purchase pressure directly reflects the severity of housing accessibility issues. This section targets the renter sample ($n=296$) and adopts the OLS regression method to systematically analyze how personal characteristics, family burden and urban factors affect home purchase pressure.

Among 293 renters, home purchase pressure presents an obvious right-skewed distribution. 39.2% of respondents report extremely high pressure (Level 5), while merely 7.2% feel almost no pressure (Level 1). The average pressure score stands at 3.74 ($SD=1.28$). The distribution indicates that housing purchase pressure is a prevalent dilemma faced by young renters.

A hierarchical modeling strategy is applied with influencing factors added progressively. As shown in Table 3, Model A incorporates personal characteristics and income ($R^2=0.063$). Model B further introduces family burden indicators ($R^2=0.079$), ($\Delta R^2=0.016$). Urban factors are finally included in Model C ($R^2=0.087$), ($\Delta R^2=0.008$).

The final Model C reveals that educational attainment is the only statistically significant predictor. Regression results demonstrate that home purchase pressure is jointly shaped by the dual effect of education and marginal effect of family burden. Educational level exerts a significant negative impact on housing pressure ($\beta=-0.212$, $p<0.01$), meaning higher academic qualification corresponds to lower purchase pressure. This finding aligns with human capital theory: highly educated individuals generally have stronger income-earning capacity and financial literacy, enabling more effective housing purchase planning. It also illustrates how educational inequality extends to the housing sector. Less educated groups suffer from both income disadvantage and heavier housing pressure, resulting in double deprivation.

Model B shows family burden, measured by the number of elderly dependents and children, has a marginally significant positive correlation with purchase pressure ($\beta=0.090$, $p<0.05$), yet the effect turns insignificant after adding urban variables ($\beta=0.090$, $p>0.05$). It reflects China's unique intergenerational family obligation structure. Under the 4-2-1 family structure, young adults need to support both elderly parents and raise children, leading to superimposed effects of housing demand and family burden. The coefficient of family size approaches zero, suggesting housing pressure is driven by actual care responsibilities rather than sheer household population size.

Table 3. Construction and Results of Regression Models

Variable	ModelA	ModelB	ModelC
Constant	4.504	4.150	4.567
Gender (Male=1)	-0.262(0.144)	-0.254(0.153)	-0.283(0.157)
AgeGroup	-0.037(0.061)	-0.049(0.067)	-0.047(0.073)
EducationLevel	-0.203***(0.050)	-0.217***(0.061)	-0.212**(0.067)
Married (Yes=1)	0.196(0.161)	0.162(0.166)	0.138(0.167)
UrbanHukou(Yes=1)	-0.254(0.142)	-0.237(0.143)	-0.242(0.146)
AnnualIncome	0.051(0.049)	0.055(0.049)	0.059(0.050)
FamilySize	-	0.036(0.058)	0.022(0.065)
FamilyBurden (Elderly+Children)	-	0.090(0.048)	0.077(0.050)
HousingFund (Yes=1)	-	-	-0.047(0.166)

PriceExpectation (Higher=Up)	-	-	0.010(0.050)
CitySatisfaction	-	-	-0.157(0.092)
N	293	293	293
R ²	0.0641	0.0798	0.0874
AdjR ²	0.0444	0.0539	0.0517
F-statistic	3.26	3.08	2.45

4. Profound Impact of Population Mobility on Youth Housing Tenure Choice

Population mobility exerts profound impacts on young people's choices between renting and purchasing housing. At the city level, in high-price core cities of Zhejiang such as Hangzhou and Ningbo, youth income growth lags behind housing price hikes. High-income young residents prefer renting to maintain mobility. In small and medium-sized cities with moderate housing prices, steady employment and income boost home purchases.

In terms of mobility types, young inter-provincial migrants are mostly forced to rent housing in high-cost cities, while their willingness to buy houses can be easily fulfilled in small and medium-sized cities. Rural-urban migrant youth face severely restrained home-buying intentions in high-price cities, and relaxed household registration restrictions raise their home purchase likelihood in smaller cities. From the individual-family interaction perspective, older young people have a higher probability of buying houses, whereas younger generations tend to rent. Families relocating as a whole barely afford housing purchases in high-cost cities, yet joint family support facilitates home buying in small and medium-sized cities. Youth with heavy family burdens can only partially realize home purchase capacity in cities with sound public services.

Regarding employment and income interaction, employment security generates a paradoxical restraining effect on home purchases in high-price cities. Young people with unstable jobs are forced to rent due to unaffordable housing. Such influence declines markedly in small and medium-sized cities.

5. Research Conclusions and Discussion

Based on survey data of 509 young people aged 19 to 35 in Zhejiang Province, this study systematically analyzes discrepancies and influencing factors of youth housing tenure intentions from the perspective of population mobility.

Results show that local young people are

generally prone to renting and commonly suffer heavy housing purchase pressure. 57.6% choose rental accommodation, and 72.3% of renters endure substantial purchase pressure. Home buying heavily relies on intergenerational support, and housing distress has become a prevalent issue.

Traditional influencing factors lose strong explanatory power. Endowment insurance, family burden and housing distress emerge as core determinants, differing distinctly from conventional housing theories. Youth housing decisions follow two major logics: intergenerational family embeddedness and employment mobility constraints. Intergenerational wealth transfer coexists with shared family responsibilities. Amid frequent population flow, employment security tends to sustain residential mobility rather than lock residents into home ownership.

Zhejiang's features of skyrocketing housing prices and massive population flow weaken hukou restrictions and distort the effect of high educational attainment, forming unique housing decision patterns among youth in economically developed regions. Housing is closely linked with urban integration. Residential instability serves as a core barrier preventing young people from permanent settlement and social inclusion, highlighting housing's vital role in citizenization. This research has limitations. Samples are confined to Zhejiang with an overrepresentation of highly educated groups, failing to reflect national youth housing conditions. Cross-sectional data cannot capture dynamic changes in housing decisions. The study focuses on quantitative analysis, lacking in-depth qualitative interpretation of inner psychology and subjective experience.

Future research can expand coverage for cross-regional comparisons among eastern, central and western China, adopt panel data to track housing decision evolution, and combine quantitative and qualitative methods to explore underlying mechanisms.

Targeting the construction of youth-friendly cities and the reform of the dual

rental-and-purchase housing system, relevant suggestions are put forward. First, scale up inclusive childcare and community elderly care services, and improve the socialized sharing mechanism of intergenerational responsibilities to ease youth family pressure. Second, facilitate cross-regional transfer and continuation of endowment insurance and housing provident fund to eliminate institutional mobility barriers. Third, strengthen supervision of the rental housing market and tenant rights protection, and upgrade rental housing quality. Fourth, abandon education-oriented housing subsidies, prioritize undereducated, low-income and less family-supported youth, and increase the supply of public and indemnificatory rental housing. Fifth, implement differentiated policies in line with urban characteristics. High-price core cities shall prioritize indemnificatory rental housing supply, while small and medium-sized cities balance home purchase support and rental security. The measures aim to resolve youth's housing dilemma and help young people achieve stable urban settlement and citizen integration.

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