



# Critical Review Of The Urban Affair Of The Rural Migrants' Housing Characteristics In The World

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**Abstract:** Rural migrant, as a special group that wandering in the urban area and become the critical urban issue in the world. Through the literature review, the overcrowding, privacy and facility characteristics of the rural migrants' housing in the urban area have seriously problem and need to be improved urgently. Especially the capital and the city as the economic center, the housing characteristics problems are quite severe. Through the critical review, the researcher will pay attention to the three housing characteristics and understand how to determine each of them. Therefore, the researcher wish the local authority could pay attention to the rural migrants in the cities. Based on the critical review, the researcher concludes some methods to the local authorities that how to determine and improve the rural migrants' housing characteristics in the world.

**Key words:** Rural migrant; Housing characteristics; overcrowding; Privacy; Facility

## Introduction

Recently, population's migration activities have become a prominent social phenomenon in the whole world. Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, New York, London etc, as the fast-developed metropolis, attracts a large number of migrants, especially the rural migrants. Until the end of 2006, the total rural migrants in the world were 1.577 billion, an increase of 0.565 billion compared to the population recorded in 2000 (Wang, 2014). Until 2014, the rural migrants in the world reach to 2.630 billion (Table 1). Therefore, such a large amount of the rural migrants migrate to the urban area, their housing characteristics definitely need to be pay attention. In this article, the reviews will pay attention on rural migrants' housing in the whole world and focus on their three housing characteristics like overcrowding, privacy and facility to make the critical review.

Table 1. The Migrants' Population Number in Recent Years in the World.

Year	Population (billion)
2000	1.012
2006	1.577
2010	1.790
2011	2.258
2014	2.630

Source: Wang, Y. (2014) Housing system in the world. *Housing Research*, 1, pp. 257-282.

## Reviews on housing characteristics

### Overcrowding characteristic

Overcrowding is a human reception that is stimulated by social activities and represented by housing characteristics (Baum and Davis, 2006). Some other researchers define overcrowding as a relative availability of a space in terms of area and number of room in a given (Wu, 1996). According to the National Population and Housing Census in Ethiopia in 1984, 39% of the urban population accommodates very crowded houses (PHCE, 1984). Now, the overcrowding problems have become a common issue in the urban areas especially in big cities like New York, London, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai. Therefore, it is necessary for the researcher to carry out this research.

Overcrowding was a problem that started from the World War II and has steadily become a social problem in urban areas up until now (Freedman & Buchanan, 1972). Due to the fast increase of the population, overcrowding in urban areas is a very serious issue. Also because of urbanization, many rural migrants migrate to urban areas and this migration further aggravates the housing overcrowding problem. According to the Stokols (2002), the overcrowding problem in urban areas becomes much more severe in the last 20 years especially in the developing countries. In some big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, four or five people sharing a room are very common. Therefore, due to the overcrowding problem, it seriously disturbs people's sleep, work, personal privacy and so on (Babbie, 2013).

The most common measure of overcrowding is to look into person-per-room or person-per-bedroom in a dwelling unit (Blake & Kellerson & Simic, 2007). Also, before starting the research, it should be noted that people define overcrowding by their common sense, including by the number of persons in a housing, housing size, the ratio of persons to floor space in square feet, location, lot size and structure type (Ambrose, 1996; Baron, 1996; Yang and Wang, 2006).

In China, overcrowding is defined as persons-per-bedroom is a standard of more than two people (Wu, 2010). Also for person-per-room standard, the most acceptable common sense is not more than two people in a room in China. And it could help the researcher to measure the overcrowding in this research.

According to the "Traditional and Alternative Definitions of Overcrowding" (Blake & Kellerson & Simic, 2007), there are four ways to measure overcrowding:

Persons-Per-Room (PPR)

Persons-Per-Bedroom (PPB)

Unit Square Footage-Per-Person (USFPP)

Persons-Per-Room (PPR) by Unit Sq Foot-Per-Person (USFPP)

(Source: ICF International analysis of AHS data, 1985~2005)

Based on this research methodology and research limitations, the researcher has decided to use Persons-Per-Room (PPR) and Persons-Per-Bedroom (PPB) for this current research. The bedroom is typically used for sleeping, while for the definition of a room, the UNCHS (Habitat, 1991) defines it as a

"space in a housing unit or other living quarters enclosed by walls reaching from the floor to the ceiling or roof covering, or at least to the height of two meters and of a size large enough to hold a bed for an adult, that is, at least four square meters". (pp. 281)

In comparing the Chinese overcrowding perspective (Wu, 2010) to the "Traditional and Alternative Definitions of Overcrowding", there are some differences between the two housing overcrowding measurements. For Persons-Per-Bedroom (PPB) measurement, it is similar to the Chinese measurement that a bedroom should not accommodate more than two persons. Meanwhile for the Persons-Per-Room (PPR), the Chinese measurement suggests that it is not more than two people, but the "Traditional and Alternative Definitions of Overcrowding" define a room as accommodating not more than one person.

Huang (2003) states that rural migrants' rented houses in the urban areas of China are indeed, very crowded. He has pointed out that more than 70% of rural migrants' houses accommodate more than three people in a bedroom and the living rooms also tend to be used as a bedroom. He further point out that overcrowding usually happens in the urban areas, especially within the rural migrants' houses. In 1995, the data from Beijing and Shanghai have shown that rural migrants' average living areas in the two cities are only 7.5 and 9.0 m<sup>2</sup>, while the local residents' living areas are three times more than those of the rural migrants.

Adequate housing should be able to achieve privacy and avoid overcrowding. Some researchers tend to equate overcrowding with space, because overcrowding always refers to the high living density (Ying, 1998). Stokols (2002) refer to overcrowding as a psychological concept with a motivational base. He has also stated that

"Overcrowding is a personal reaction, not a physical variable also it is a personal feeling and in relation with spaces". (pp. 208)

Therefore, due to the high living density in big cities, the overcrowding problem can seriously affect people's living conditions which include sleeping, working etc. Due to the overcrowding, people tend to feel unhappy, worried or even have some psychological problems. Renting private houses is a key housing choice for rural migrants. Wu also states that the rural migrants tend to save cash and many people share houses. Thus many rural migrants live together leading to the congested housing.

In China, rural migrants usually occupy very less space compared to urban local residents. Each rural migrant only occupies one third of the average housing area compared to local residents. Stated by Ding (2005) the migrants, especially rural migrants usually live in super crowded housing in comparison to their own homes in their hometowns. Two researchers conducted their research in United States

between 1980 and 1989 and they found that accommodating more than one person per room is common. Krivo (1995) states that migrants live in crowded houses because they simply have no other choices.

In conclusion, the prevalence of overcrowding among rural migrants may be attributable to several factors and show the clear direction for the researcher to carry out this research. First off, the finance limitation has forced the rural migrants to migrate in cities and rent small houses, thus overcrowding cannot be avoided. Second, the rural migrants adopt some economic strategies to bring money to their hometown and save on daily expenses. For the rural migrants, they do not care too much about the overcrowding problem (Knodel, Chayovan, and Siriboon, 1992).

### **Housing Privacy Characteristic**

For housing privacy characteristics, the function of housing (residential only or residential, work and others) could seriously affect human's personal privacy. Housing privacy is related to overcrowding. Limited personal space could definitely affect residents' privacy. If many people live in a very crowded house, the individual privacy cannot be guaranteed. Also, some people as also use their houses for business or as storage, and thus the residents' privacy will definitely be disturbed (Valins, 2001).

Pader (1994) has defined the privacy concept and stated that the personal privacy has four types. They are solitude, intimacy, anonymity and reserve. Altman (1996) states further that the four types of privacy could affect human's satisfaction level. He has made another point that personal privacy inside housing is definitely related to overcrowding. Later, many researchers have declared and supported this argument that personal privacy inside housing can be affected by overcrowding (Bharucha and Kiyak, 1992). Walden (1981) has carried out a housing privacy research and concluded that residents' housing privacy is affected by the crowded state.

Chan (1997) investigates the residents' housing privacy level in Hong Kong and is able to derive that Hong Kong people's housing privacy is much affected by overcrowding.

Generally, the lack of housing privacy can give living condition negative side effects. If one's housing privacy is affected, the people will suffer from emotional reaction (Epstein, 1994). Housing privacy could define a self boundary or private area for residents. If residents' housing privacy is affected, their living condition will be affected also.

Bateson (1998) have done housing privacy research and suggested that housing privacy should be maintained and protected, but if residents' housing privacy is invaded, people's physiological needs will be affected. Thus, people will feel shameful and embarrassed. Finally, human's living condition could be affected.

In China, the rural migrants live in a very crowded house, so their housing privacy will definitely be compromised. Ma (1998) conducts a housing privacy research in Beijing and declares that many rural migrants tend to use their houses for business purposes. They indicate that two thirds of the rural migrants' housing privacy are seriously affected in Beijing. Meng (2009) has done a research in Shanghai, stating that more than 76.7% of rural migrants in Shanghai rent houses and share with other people. Among these rural migrants, more than 12.8% of rural migrants use their home space to do business. She also points out that because of rural migrants' poor financial state, the majority of rural migrants do not care about the housing privacy problem. In China, some big cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, the rural migrants just need a place to live without any consideration on other aspects of life. Therefore, the researcher could consider these factors in this research.

In conclusion, the previous researches on housing privacy illustrate the heterogeneity of the housing privacy and the variety of perceptions held by academic scholars and researchers. The similarities among these housing studies represent that rural migrants' housing privacy is highly affected by overcrowding. Therefore, so many previous studies both prove that the lack of housing privacy could affect their living condition and it show the clear path for the researcher to carry out this research.

### **Conclusion**

Among the developing and developed countries, the rural migrants usually tend to migrate to the big cities and live there temporarily. Therefore, the housing facility problems will gradually surface for this group. Due to the fact that the public housing system is carried out well in many countries, the rural migrants could enjoy the better houses with good facilities. Meanwhile in China, due to the lack of attention given by the government and together with large population, the public housing system is still under-developed. To improve the housing facility for rural migrants, China should do something to improve the public housing system. Thus, the rural migrants could enjoy living in better houses to improve their overall living condition.

However, the rural migrants' housing characteristics are not bad in their hometown, and it is much better than the housing in urban area. Due to the living density is not high and the rural migrants prefer to build the houses in their land. And the housing size is much bigger than in the urban area. Therefore, the overcrowding is not always happen. Also, the housing privacy problem is highly minimized. For the housing facility, due to the rural migrants prefer to invest money to improve the housing facility in their hometown. So, the housing facility inside their houses is much better than in the urban area (Stokols, 2002). But due to the high economic development in urban area together with the attraction to search for new job opportunities, therefore, many rural migrants decide to migrate to the urban area.

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