

Housing Quality and Homeownership among Interprovincial Migrant-Headed Households in Vietnam

Evidence from the 2009 and 2019 Population and Housing Censuses

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Background: Internal Migration in Vietnam

6.4 million

internal migrants aged 5+ in the 2019
Census

- Concentrated in the **Southeast**; Binh Duong has the highest net in-migration rate
- Flows toward major cities and industrial provinces
- Housing at destination is a key part of **migrant welfare**

Source: GSO & UNFPA (2020)

What We Know: Two Directions

Localized worker surveys

- Overcrowded, insecure rentals near industrial zones
- High rent burdens, low satisfaction
- “Hộ khẩu” barriers to services and security

Nguyen et al. (2016); Nguyen (2018); La et al. (2019)

National census tabulations

- Fewer temporary or simple dwellings
- Less floor space per person
- Much more likely to rent

GSO & UNFPA (2020)

Gap: no national, two-wave study that separates housing quality from tenure

Research Questions

Question 1: Do migrant-headed households differ from the comparison group in **physical housing quality**?

Question 2: Did the **adjusted difference change** between 2009 and 2019?

Question 3: Does **homeownership** show the same pattern as physical quality?

Conceptual Framework

Migration is selective: movers who head their own household are not a random draw

Quality $\neq$ tenure: a household can rent a well-serviced dwelling without buying it

Gaps can shift: group differences change as markets and infrastructure evolve

Expectations

- No uniform physical-quality penalty for migrant heads
- Renting and physical quality may diverge

Sjaastad (1962); Harris & Todaro (1970); Lee (1966); Borjas (1987); Stark & Bloom (1985); Rosen (1974); Henderson & Ioannides (1983); Massey & Denton (1985)

Data: Census Microdata 2009 and 2019

5.59M

households in the sample

2009: 3,311,067
(111,457 migrant-headed)

2019: 2,279,268
(65,161 migrant-headed)

- **Source:** IPUMS International, harmonized and Vietnam-specific extracts merged one-to-one
- **Migrant-headed:** head lived in another province five years earlier
- **Comparison:** non-movers and within-province movers (abroad excluded)
- **Sample:** heads aged 15–89 with all HQI components observed

Outcome: Housing Quality Index (HQI)

Five components

- Durable walls
- Durable roof
- Flush toilet
- Improved drinking water
- Electricity

$$\text{HQI} = 20 \times (\text{D1} + \text{D2} + \text{D3} + \text{D4} + \text{D5})$$

D = 1 if the household meets the component · equal weights · range 0–100

Not measured: affordability, tenure security, living space, neighborhood

→ floor area, crowding and ownership are reported separately

Empirical Strategy

STEP 1 · LEVELS, EACH YEAR

Blinder–Oaxaca decomposition

Gap = **explained** (characteristics) + **unexplained** (residual)

➤ Unexplained ≠ discrimination or causal effect

STEP 2 · CHANGE, 2009 → 2019

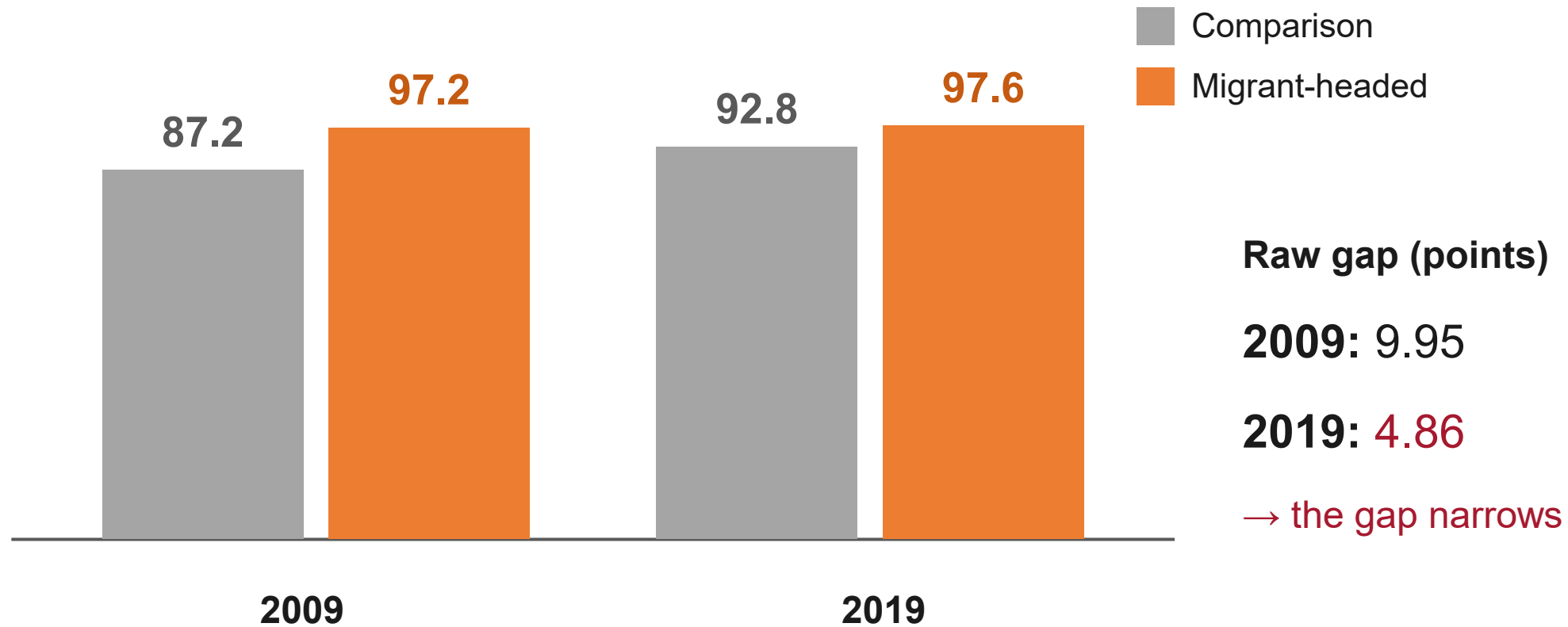
Pooled, fully interacted OLS

$$HQI = \alpha + \delta M + \gamma Y2019 + \lambda(M \times Y2019) + X'\theta + \mu + \varepsilon$$

➤ λ = change in the adjusted migrant gap

Controls: education, age, age², sex, marital status, Kinh, urban, 39 province fixed effects · household weights · SEs clustered by province · **associational, not causal**

Result 1: Migrants Score Higher on HQI



Higher on Every HQI Component

Households (%)	2009 Comp.	2009 Migr.	2019 Comp.	2019 Migr.
Durable walls	91.8	97.4	93.0	98.7
Durable roof	97.1	99.0	84.8	91.2
Flush toilet	55.7	92.4	88.7	98.7
Improved water	93.8	98.2	97.8	99.7
Electricity	97.6	98.8	99.7	99.9

Largest gap: flush toilet in 2009 — 92.4% vs 55.7%

Result 2: Far Lower Homeownership

Owns dwelling (%)

2009

Comparison



Migrant

33.6

2019

Comparison



Migrant

21.6

Floor area per person

2009: migrants have more
29.7 vs 22.6 m²

2019: migrants have less
18.4 vs 29.8 m²

Result 3: Blinder–Oaxaca Decomposition

HQI gap (C – M)	2009	2019
Comparison mean	87.21	92.78
Migrant mean	97.16	97.64
Raw difference	–9.95	–4.86
Explained	–6.26	–2.30
Unexplained	–3.69	–2.57

Share explained by characteristics



2009: 62.9% explained



2019: 47.2% explained

All $p < 0.001$ · negative = migrants higher

Result 4: Did the Adjusted Gap Change?

Migrant head, 2009

+3.69

SE 1.156 · p = 0.003

Significant

Migrant head, 2019

+2.57

SE 0.761 · p = 0.002

Significant

Migrant × 2019

-1.13

SE 1.079 · p = 0.304

Not significant

➤ Smaller in 2019, but the pooled model **cannot reject an unchanged gap**

Result 5: Urban vs Rural (Exploratory)

URBAN

Migrant head (2009) **+1.05**

Migrant × 2019 **−0.73**

SE 0.232 · N = 1,648,030

Significant decline ($p < 0.01$)

RURAL

Migrant head (2009) **+6.22**

Migrant × 2019 **−1.35**

SE 1.819 · N = 3,942,305

Imprecise — not significant

➤ Not a formal test that urban and rural trends differ

Policy Implications

1 · MAINTAIN

Basic services in fast-growing destinations

- Water, sanitation, electricity, durable housing
- But physical quality is only one dimension

2 · EXPAND

Secure, affordable tenure

- More affordable rental housing
- Stronger tenant protection
- Easier access to housing finance and land-use documents

Goal: a **wider range of stable housing options**, not ownership for all

Limitations

Repeated cross-sections: cannot separate household change from changing migrant composition

Household heads only: excludes migrants living as non-head members in shared or informal housing

Basic-adequacy index: HQI omits affordability, tenure security, neighborhood and space

Endogenous migration: estimates are conditional differences, not causal effects

Conclusion: Good Housing ≠ Secure Housing

1. Migrant-headed households have **higher HQI** in 2009 and 2019
2. The gap narrows, but the **adjusted change is not significant**; clearer decline in urban areas
3. They are **far less likely to own** — tenure is a distinct dimension of welfare

Thank you!